

148. Then you think that a duty of 25 per cent. on manufactured hats would effectually shut out the goods at present obtained from England during the bad season?—It would shut them out entirely. The importer would come to us, then. Of course we do not wish to interfere with soft felt; it is only with what are called belltoppers and hard or stiffened felt hats.

149. You get in all raw materials free?—Yes.

No. 104.

Evidence of Mr. CHARLES HILL, Hat and Cap Manufacturer, before the Commissioners on Local Industries, at Wellington, 1st June, 1880.

THE trade is in a very satisfactory state, and does not require any further assistance. All the raw materials of the industry are now relieved of duty, and the protective duty of 15 per cent. is quite sufficient. I have thirteen persons employed. Journeymen earn about £3 per week at piece-work; girls, 15s. At these rates the trade is a profitable one. I have no particular easement that others have not. I cannot use water-power. My remarks refer to that branch of the trade which is suitable to New Zealand. There are other branches which cannot be successfully carried on owing to the price of labour. The better class of goods can compete successfully with the imported article; we can actually sell hats of the best quality cheaper here than they are sold in London.

No. 105.

Evidence of Mr. HENRY KRAUSE before the Commissioners on Local Industries, at Wellington, 2nd June, 1880.

MR. CHARLES HILL and Mr. Henry Krause brought samples of English and French-made felts, made from the fur of rabbit-skins, and used for hat-making. One firm—Messieurs de Clermont and Co., 11, Rue Barbette, Paris—are purchasers of rabbit-skins to any extent; also many firms in London.

*Mr. Henry Krause* gave the following evidence: I have only been ten months in this colony. I am a furrier and fur-cutter by trade. I know the value of rabbit-skins. A bale of rabbit-skins contains about 3,000 skins; they are worth from 6d. to 2s. 4d. per pound in the London market. Their value depends entirely on how they are prepared when in a green state. After the skin is taken from the rabbit, I would first remove the lumps of fat adhering, then put it on a wire; but the wire must not stretch the skin more than 4 inches in width. For this the skin, if cut open, is doubled up; but, if not cut open at all, it should be stretched the long way and not in the width. The skin should be prevented from wrinkling and be perfectly straight at both ends, so that when the skin is opened to be manufactured it forms a parallelogram. The wire used should resemble in shape a wire hairpin, and not wider at the head than the points. By using a wire of this shape it prevents loss of fur at the ends of the skin, where, if not dried out flat, it must be cut off, to enable the fur-cutter to get the skin into the machine. It is then hung up to dry the same as is now done. After it is thoroughly dry the wire is taken out, and if there is any more grease upon it, which is generally about the legs, it must be removed. Then the skins require to be classed into real winter skins and summer-skins; the latter are also classed into two sorts. They are then baled, and, if baled in the manner described, ought to reach London in first-class condition, if kept dry. I can buy skins in Invercargill from 1s. to 1s. 9d. per pound for winter skins; summer skins are very worthless in Invercargill at present. If the fat is not entirely removed from the skins, I place them in a large drum, hung upon an axis; inside this drum I place a little dry sand and sawdust; a slow fire is lit underneath, the drum is slowly turned, when the fat on the skins is melted and absorbed by the sand and sawdust. The skins are then taken out of the drum, carefully shaken to remove the sand, &c., and put into the bale. To prepare and pack 3,000 skins into a bale would cost—for sand and sawdust, 1s. 6d.; coals, 1s.; labour, four hours, of two men, 7s. 6d.; pressing, 1s. 6d.: total cost bale 3,000 skins, ready for shipment, 11s. 6d. Therefore, say a bale of good winter skins, landed in London, costs 1s. 8½d. per pound, including freight and charges, they would readily realize from 2s. to 2s. 4d. per pound in that market—that is, carefully prepared as stated above, and landed in a dry state. The trade in England, France, and Germany is now so largely increased that the demand for rabbit-skins is very great, and the price has advanced very rapidly—in fact, skins are becoming scarce. It seems to me that, looking at the rapid manner in which the rabbit has overrun some parts of the Crown lands of the colony, it would bring a large revenue to the Crown by charging so much a skin for every rabbit destroyed, and allowing the rabbits to breed, even supposing it would have the effect of driving the sheep out of the country. I have shown that a large and lucrative trade can be done in rabbit-skins that would handsomely pay any man or any company to undertake, and that would pay a handsome sum per annum to the Crown for the liberty to kill rabbits over the Crown lands. If it was possible for me to obtain a small portion of the Crown lands to try the experiment of creating an industry out of rabbit-skins, I am positive a large and lucrative business could soon be established, and I could afford to pay the same rent to the Crown as is now done by the sheep-owners. It would, of course, be useless to have any country that was not suitable for breeding rabbits; but I should say that about 2,000 acres of such a country would be enough to try this industry for the present.

I R O N .

No. 106.

MR. EDWARD METCALF SMITH to the Chairman and Members of the Royal Commission on Local Industries.

SIR AND GENTLEMEN,—

New Plymouth, 17th March, 1880.

I have the honor to state the following application to you as members of the above Commission, and to state for your information, for nine years I have been endeavouring to point out to the people of the Colony of New Zealand, and every Government that has been in power, that the whole