

proprietor of the factory, and he considers that at present he is very much handicapped, inasmuch as the imported article is unduly placed in competition with his production. He is willing to submit his iron to any test, and is willing to send some down for Government experts to report upon. I have received a letter from him to that effect. He has interviewed the Premier, and he considers the manufacture to be one that ought to receive some consideration. I desire to place my evidence on record in connection with the matter. I know that a great many people are employed who would otherwise be out of work. It is also a benefit to the iron industry at Onehunga.

6. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Can you state approximately the quantity produced?—The Premier has the particulars. I can get that information for the Committee from Mr. Samuel Parker.

7. *Mr. E. M. Smith.*] Did Mr. Parker state that if the Government would impose an import duty he would double his trade at once?—Yes, I think there is no doubt about that. In a letter I received from him last evening, he asks that the Government should have it used in Government works wherever it is required, so that the public might be made aware of its value as iron for roofing and other purposes. He is desirous of submitting it to a test by experts.

8. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] What extra duty does he mention?—He does not name anything special. I can get you the particulars.

9. *Mr. E. M. Smith.*] Do you know the amount of money he has expended in erecting works at Auckland?—I can supply that information later on, as I cannot now tell you from recollection. We had full information put before us when a deputation waited upon the Premier.

10. *The Chairman.*] Would you recommend that Mr. Parker should be communicated with by the Committee in order that he may give a statement for himself?—I think if you would be good enough to send him a telegram he would forward you full information in connection with the timber trade. I wish to state to the Committee that, from information I have had sent me lately, the timber-mills at Auckland have discharged many of their hands; that they are now doing only about half the usual work, and this is attributable in a great measure to the following cause: that the Victorian Government have placed a heavy import duty on sawn timber, while they admit the timber in balk free. The consequence is that the millowners are sending away the bulk of their timber in balk.

11. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Can you tell what the extra duty is?—I cannot mention what is the extra duty. What makes me anxious to come before the Committee on this question is that I have received letters from persons in Auckland who were employed in the timber trade informing me that the mills are not more than half-worked. The timber trade is one of immense importance to the northern district of Auckland. Hundreds of men will be crippled, and the most serious consequences will ensue if no action be taken in the matter.

12. *Mr. Duncan.*] Do you think that having an export duty on balk timber would meet the difficulty?—I think it would. I do not know that it would be quite as satisfactory as having our sawn timber admitted free to Victoria; but I consider that it would lessen the evil very considerably. I cannot lay too much stress on the fact that it is a very serious matter to us in the north.

13. *Mr. Tanner.*] Has not the exportation of balk timber largely increased within the last few years?—It has. That information the Committee will be able to get from the export returns.

14. Is there not a danger of the northern forests being denuded by this great export?—I should not like to express a decided opinion upon that, but I should say this: that, most decidedly, it would be more rapidly denuded of timber by being taken down and sent away in balk, than if it were worked in the colony.

15. Has the export increased the price of timber for local consumption during the last six or eight years?—No, not materially. Of course the effect it has is this: if there was no demand for timber for export, the mills would be closed for a time. They could not sell it locally at a loss; but it has not within the last few years gone up to an unreasonable price. The average price between first and second class would be about 10s. per 100ft.

16. Is most of the timber exported to Australia kauri timber?—The bulk of it is.

17. And the exportation of balk timber is growing?—Yes; that is the complaint. In justice to those persons who would argue on the other side, I ought to say that in the extreme north of the colony there are a number of small settlers who find it an advantage to fell a few trees. They have no means of working up the logs into sawn timber. They dress a few logs, which dealers buy from them and ship them away. In fairness I ought to mention that this is an advantage to a comparatively few people, but that is a small matter when compared with the injury that is being done in the other direction.

18. *The Chairman.*] Do you think the putting a duty on balk timber would very much diminish the quantity of timber exported?—It would diminish the quantity of timber exported in balk.

19. Would that not mean the throwing of a number of people out of employment?—No; in my opinion they must have the timber in Victoria whether they get it in balk or sawn; they require our kauri timber in any case.

20. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Are you in a position to say whether this proposal for an export duty on balk timber is made with the concurrence generally of those who are interested in the trade, or has it come from one or two quarters only?—It would chiefly come from those employed at the mills who are working the timber, but I know from some persons who are engaged in the timber trade that they are in favour of it. I am not prepared to say how the proprietors of the Kauri Timber Company would view it.

21. They are the principal employers?—Yes; but we ought to consider those employed in working the timber.

22. Yes; but we have got to hear all persons' views on the matter?—I think this is a question upon which Mr. Mitchelson and Mr. Cadman, who are both connected with the timber trade, would be able to give valuable information.