

TUESDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1892.

Mr. WILLIAM CABLE, Ironfounder, examined:—

1. *The Chairman*]. You are aware of the purpose for which this Committee has been appointed?—Yes.

2. Will you now kindly give an expression of your opinion in regard to the possibility of so dealing with the iron industry as to encourage the manufacture of iron without unduly depressing or injuring other industries connected with the working of iron throughout the colony?—My opinion is that the country is not sufficiently developed for that industry to be started.

3. In what way?—There is not the population.

4. And there is not the market?—There is not the market.

5. Well, these are matters which those persons seem to have already considered, and they are satisfied to the contrary, because at the Onehunga factory they have already expended a large sum of money, and it is the intention of the proprietors of that foundry to remove to Collingwood, where they have already acquired a large interest in hæmatite, coal, and other requisites for manufacturing iron. What they say is this: Although labour here is higher, the facilities for providing all the raw material required is very much greater than in Europe, consequently with a little help in the way of the tariff they would be able not only to compete, but to supply a very superior article to anything that is imported, and this Committee—several members of this Committee—are satisfied that hæmatite, and the iron that has been manufactured at Onehunga, is really as good, if not superior, to the best iron imported. I dare say you have seen some of it yourself?—We use the Onehunga bars.

6. That is the position that industry now stands in before this Committee. Of course it is not our place, Mr. Cable, to inquire into their business; they give sufficient guarantee of their *bona fides*. I dare say you will agree that it would be an immense benefit to everybody, not only connected with the industry, but in the colony, to use all the iron, if we could produce those things ourselves. They say, without difficulty they can produce railway-iron, plate-iron, wrought-iron, and other iron, and supply it. This is shown by the samples they produce. Everyone agrees that it is very superior iron: The consensus of opinion is that, although there may be a difficulty as to producing the ironsand-pig at a paying price, there seems none at all with regard to the hæmatite?—Well, I have no data to go upon as to what you propose to do.

7. The proposition is to put a tariff upon the raw material—bar-iron, sheet-iron, plate-iron, ship-plates, galvanised-iron sheet, and all those materials. The proposal is to levy a duty of about 20 per cent. Of course we shall be very glad to hear anything you have to say on the matter. Your industry is already protected, is it not?—Well, that is so.

8. How will you be affected by protection being given to the industry before you?—Well, I am not in favour of a duty being put on the raw material. I consider it will unnecessarily hamper the development of the country generally for the benefit of a few. While there is no protective tariff we have the full advantage of reaping the benefit in the latest iron manufactures, and we take advantage of it.

9. Do you think it would injure the foundries and ironworkers if a duty was put upon ship-iron, ship-plates?—Yes.

10. Upon ordinary sheet-iron—black-iron?—Yes.

11. Galvanised-iron?—Well, as to the galvanised-iron, I do not give any opinion.

12. You would not object to it?—I simply do not know anything about it.

13. It would not affect your trade?—No.

14. Now, what do you say about the ordinary rod- and bar-iron?—Well, it would simply increase the cost of it to the whole community, the market being limited. This is the point I wish to direct your attention to—the small market in New Zealand. The mills could not possibly afford to stock the many and varied forms and sizes, and the consequence is they could not possibly have rolls for all sections of bar-iron. I therefore object, as a practical man, as the scheme is to my mind purely visionary.

15. To suit all classes of iron?—Yes; it is simply impossible. At Home they can turn out plates of such a size that it would be simply an impossibility to make them here. It would be a hardship to have to pay duty on material, more especially that which could not be manufactured in the place. There is one thing I should like to mention: There is no proposal to make mild steel here. Now, I would protest against any duty being put on mild steel, simply because of a proposal to make iron here.

16. I understand your protest would go very strongly against any duty being put upon any product that could not be manufactured in the colony?—Yes, most decidedly, especially on products that materially assist colonial industries.

17. Anything further?—No; I think that is all.

18. *Mr. Tanner*]. Have you used any of the Onehunga iron?—We have used bars that have been rolled from scrap.

19. English scrap?—Yes.

20. You have used none of the native product?—Well, we have used bar-iron, what I understood they have been rolling out of scrap. They did not give us any information. They do not say what they make the iron of.

21. What is your opinion of the quality of the bar of hæmatite produced?—It is fairly good.

22. Is it equal to anything imported?—It is not equal to Lowmoor or Swedish. I refer to the time before they started to make iron.

23. You protest against any duty being placed on mild steel?—Yes.

24. Are you aware that the people in Auckland, by late experiments, claim that the iron they produce is equal to the best mild steel?—No, I am not aware that they have done so; but the mere fact that they claim that is no proof that it is so.