

475. You think climate will not affect the matter?—No; I have worked in Victoria and enjoyed good health, and worked hard.

476. There seems to be an opinion that work must centre in Australia. A hundred years hence, shall we not have a sufficiently large population to hold our own?—That may be so; but in the meanwhile our trade might have to go to the dogs.

477. Yes; but try and look at it from the standpoint of a nation, and not of an individual trade: would we not be able to hold our own as a people against the Australians a hundred years hence?—I think we might be able to hold our own even now were there equal conditions.

478. What is likely to be the great motive-power for driving machinery a hundred years hence?—I do not know about that.

479. You think electricity need not be considered?—I do not think that would alter the cost of production much so far as our trade is concerned.

480. Do you think we have unrivalled facilities for creating electric power?—Yes; our water.

481. And is that not to be the great power of the future?—I think so; but I do not think that would tend to alter the cost of production of boots very much.

482. *Mr. Roberts.*] Have you any idea what the proportion of the imported article is to the manufactured article?—No; Mr. Brown has dealt with that part of the question.

483. Is there no reason why you cannot produce cheaper here? Is your machinery antiquated, or the factories too small? Surely 22½ per cent. is sufficient protection?—We have to import some of the fine leathers. The machinery we have here is not so far advanced as that of other countries; it is now coming in, but is not here yet. The higher rate of wages is one thing against us.

484. Do you think the higher rate of wages is sufficient to prevent you producing profitably with a 22½-per-cent. duty?—Manufacturers can produce profitably. There is no doubt about that; they never had a period of prosperity like that for twenty years past.

485. How do you account for the large importation in 1899?—Various causes led up to importation. Sometimes it is done for ulterior purposes.

486. *Mr. Millar.*] In the importation of boots, O's to 3's come in free of duty?—Yes, I think.

487. Gum-boots are included in that line?—Yes, I think.

488. You are not aware whether New Zealand has exported a large quantity of boots?—I believe they have exported a small quantity.

489. You quite agree with what Mr. Brown said with regard to the trade?—Yes.

490. This matter has been pretty well discussed throughout your trade?—Yes.

491. There is a unanimous opinion that intercolonial free-trade would be ruinous to the New Zealand boot trade?—Yes; that it would jeopardize our trade to a great extent.

492. From a social point of view, can you see any advantage to be gained by federation?—None at all. I think our social standing is far better than in Australia.

493. From any point of view you can only see disadvantages in federation?—Yes.

494. *Mr. Beauchamp.*] I have been informed by bootmakers in the North Island that through competition from America they have ceased the manufacture of certain boots: have you a similar experience in Dunedin?—I do not know of any. I do not think it could be to any great extent with the protective tariff of 22½ per cent.

495. *Mr. Luke.*] Do you think it possible to produce these higher grades of leather in time?—I do not know.

496. Supposing they raise the scale of wage in Australia under federation, with our superior advantages which we are told we have in this colony for manufacturing, do you then think we could compete against the Australian manufacturers in boots and shoes?—I do not think we could with the large centres.

497. Supposing we could build up a big business?—Then I think we could compete if on equal terms.

498. Do you think the advance in popularity of American boots is due to prejudice against the locally made article?—No; I believe it is due in some measure to the superior finish that is given to them. They are light in texture, but I do not think they are nearly as serviceable.

499. What do you think would be the effect of federation generally on manufacturing trades?—I believe the same thing would apply.

500. Have you looked into the question from the political standpoint? Would we be at any disadvantage?—I think we would be. We would not have our wishes met in the manner that we have now.

501. *Hon. Major Steward.*] If your contention is correct—that under federation we should be at a disadvantage to compete with Victoria, which would result in your business going to the Victorians no matter what conditions were subsequently imposed on Australian trade—there would be great difficulty in bringing it back to New Zealand again?—Yes, that is so.

WILLIAM HOOD examined. (No. 18.)

502. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are the president of the Workers' Political Committee in Dunedin?—Yes.

503. How long have you resided in New Zealand?—I came to New Zealand twenty-six years ago. I left again in 1884, and went to Melbourne, where I stayed eight years. I then come back here, where I have been ever since.

504. What is your occupation?—I am an upholsterer.

505. Have you considered the question of New Zealand federating or not with the Australian Commonwealth?—Yes; principally as far as it relates to trades and industries. I also considered the matter when it was under consideration there.

506. Kindly state the conclusions you have arrived at, and your reasons therefor?—From the national point of view, I believe almost everything is in favour of New Zealand federating with