

1390. You refuse to consider it from any other standpoint than that of to-day?—I can only speak of the present time, and as to how it would affect me.

1391. *Mr. Leys.*] I suppose you take an interest in public questions in New Zealand?—Very little: I am not much of a politician.

1392. Not in public affairs, even as affecting the colony?—No, I have been too busy to do that.

1393. Are you not aware of the Conventions and referendums on the matter in Australia?—I never thought they would federate with this colony, and therefore I never troubled my head about it.

1394. You are engaged in a manufacturing industry, and yet you say you do not know the condition of the same industry in Australia?—No. I know there is a very large firm there—namely, John Lysaght and Co., Sydney—whom I would have to compete against, but I am the only manufacturer in New Zealand of wire netting.

1395. Do you think we could send our goods there and compete with them?—That is a broad question. We could send a representative over there to make a report.

1396. What is your opinion?—I think it could be worked if we selected the proper person.

1397. And you think we could influence the Federal Parliament to such an extent that they would attend to New Zealand business in the way we desired?—I should not like to pass an opinion on that point.

JOHN BRADLEY SHACKLOCK examined. (No. 34.)

1398. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What business are you engaged in?—General ironfounder.

1399. How long have you resided in New Zealand?—All my life practically—thirty-six years.

1400. Is your establishment a large one?—I think it is the largest in the colony of the kind, employing 105 or 110 hands.

1401. Could you give the Commission your opinion as to how federation would affect the manufacturing industries of this colony?—Of course, provided the conditions were the same in Australia, we could compete with them in our particular trade.

1402. What do you mean by the conditions being the same?—I mean the cost of the raw material, wages, &c.

1403. Are they not the same at present?—No. I think the wages just now are a little higher in New Zealand. A few years ago they were about the same in Dunedin and Victoria.

1404. Can you import the raw material here as cheaply as they can in Australia?—I think in Sydney they have a little the better of us, but, as far as I can see, there is not much difference in the freights on such material as pig-iron.

1405. Can you see any advantages which would arise through New Zealand federating with Australia?—I believe, as far as my own business is concerned, that the market would be enlarged. We have had to refuse a few orders because of the high tariff in Victoria. Personally, I believe in federation. I think it would be for the good of the colony as a whole, although it might seriously affect some industries at the start.

1406. Please tell the Commission why you believe it would be for the good of the colony as a whole?—Because we would be part and parcel of a larger nation, and I think we would be better governed from one centre than from many centres.

1407. You believe in central government?—I do.

1408. Are we not part of a large nation now?—Yes.

1409. Then, what would be the gain in belonging to Australia?—The expenses of management would be lower per head of population.

1410. But there would be still the State Government of this colony: would there not be additional expense incurred by the creation of the Federal Government?—Yes; but that would be one of the preliminary expenses.

1411. But that would be the least expense: why do you think the expenses would be cheaper and the cost of government less?—As far as my experience goes, taking a business view, it seems to me that a business or a country is better managed from one centre than from two or three; and what appertains in business, I take it, will apply to the government of a country.

1412. *Mr. Leys.*] Do you think it probable that the States will be abolished ultimately?—It is a probability that might happen.

1413. Assuming that were so, do you think our fifteen representatives there would be a better body than our New Zealand Parliament for developing the resources of the colony?—I think they would be quite efficient.

1414. Do you think we can get representatives of various industries to go over there and devote their time to parliamentary life, or do you think they would become professional politicians?—I take it that our representatives would be representatives of the people in all industries.

1415. From what class do you think the representatives would be drawn?—I cannot say. The matter is in the hands of the people, and they can elect whatever class they like. I presume, when a man is voting, he does not look at the class.

1416. Then, do you think that a Parliament composed mainly of Australians could arrive at the same knowledge of New Zealand affairs that our Government has?—They would be guided by the representatives of New Zealand.

1417. Are you sure they would?—If I were an Australian I would be.

1418. With regard to your industry, do you not think you might have some opposition, say, in the northern markets from the Australian manufacturer if there were free-trade?—We might have; but still, if we were part of the Commonwealth, things would adjust themselves in time, and it would only be a matter of time when the conditions would be the same in Australia as here, and then we would be put on the same footing.