

the trust, in the way of carriage, importers' charges, and importers' profits, not sufficient protection for the workers, provided the manufacturers get the raw material in free?—No, sir; I think we can very safely say No to that question. The cost of bringing a fifteen-coulter drill—that is, what we call an average-sized drill—from the headquarters of the trust in America to any distributing centre in New Zealand is—within one or two shillings—£2 5s., while the amount that our employers pay on a fifteen-coulter drill from Lyttelton to New Plymouth is £4 4s., so that the matter of distance is no safeguard.

24. Take ordinary agricultural implements: how much per cent. does it cost to import them from America, do you think?—Those are figures that I have not got exactly. I could get the information in half an hour.

25. Including all charges, do you think it could be set down at less than 25 per cent.?—I am not in a position to say definitely what the figures are.

26. How much duty would you want put on the implements to enable you to compete against any imported machinery?—We have gone into the question, and we reckon that about 40 per cent. is as little as would enable us to successfully compete with the trust under present conditions.

27. The bootmakers manage to do with 22½, I understand: would you require more than they do?—Yes.

The Chairman: They have 33½ per cent. on foreign boots.

28. *Mr. Hardy.*] Would you require, then, more than the bootmakers do in order to enable you to compete?—Yes. We consider that about 40 per cent. is what is necessary to place us on an equal footing with the wares of the Harvester Trust.

29. Do you think the imposition of this duty would increase the price of the machines to the farmer?—No; we think it would decrease it, because it would enable us to put in more plant on account of the increased demand and so make production cheaper, and the logical conclusion of that is a lower retail price. As an implement-maker I say that if we could have an absolute guarantee that our output of drills next year would be double what it is this year, we could produce those machines 10 per cent. cheaper than we are doing at the present time.

30. The company that you represent sells us the Southland drill?—Yes.

31. And the price of that is about £40?—About £45.

32. You think your company will be able to reduce the price of that provided the other machines are kept out?—Yes, I think so, and the employers have already given an assurance that in their opinion that could be done. As works-foreman I can quite indorse the view taken by the manufacturers that that could be done.

33. If it is considered advisable for the House of Representatives to protect you by a duty, would you object to the imposition of ½d. on the 4 lb. loaf in order to enable the farmer to get more for his wheat?—Personally, I would not; but I could not pledge the workers as to that.

34. *Mr. Laurenson* (to *Mr. Willis*).] You stated that reapers-and-binders which sell here at £25 sell in America at \$250—practically £50. Is that the retail price?—That is the retail price.

35. Could you give us any information as to the retail price which farmers have to pay for agricultural implements in America where the trust has complete control, as against the retail price here, where there is competition?—The only information I have here is what is contained in this report, which I read.

36. The only information you have is that in the one case of which you know, a machine that sells here at £25 sells in America at £50?—That is so. There is the other case of a harvester which is sold in Australia for £80, and in the Argentine for £140.

37. (To *Mr. Mitchell*): You said that prior to the advent of the Trust into New Zealand the Deering binder was sold to the farmers at £35?—Yes.

38. And that since the advent of the trust, when they have had complete control of that article through its not being manufactured locally, they have raised the price to £40?—Yes.

39. You said something about the Plano binder?—Yes; that is another binder that is now controlled by the trust. We sold it last year at a price as low as £28—from £28 to £33. That machine is now controlled by the trust, and is going, I understand, to be withdrawn from the local market. It is their intention, I understand, to handle only two machines instead of five.

40. (To *Mr. Barr*). You spoke of the hours worked in America. What are the hours of the men engaged, say, in agricultural-machinery works in America?—The average throughout America is nine hours a day. There are parts of America where they work about ten hours.

41. What wages do the artisans employed in those works get in America, roughly speaking, as against those paid to other artisans?—Taking it on the average there it not a great deal of difference.

42. They get about the same pay?—Yes; but there are places where you could point out underpaid shops, just as you will find underpaid shops anywhere, at which the wages are starvation wages. The Massey-Harris Company, for instance, were always notorious for paying starvation wages. I have seen wages as low as £1 8s a week—that is a starvation wage for America. Taking it all over, there is not much difference between the wages paid there and those paid here. But the system is entirely different. There is no practical artisan there; they are simply machinists.

43. *Mr. Hardy* asked if it were true that the bootmakers had to be content with a duty of 22½ per cent., whereas the duty asked now for the agricultural-implement people is 40 per cent. Can you tell us in what condition the boot trade in New Zealand now is—is it flourishing or languishing?—It is fairly flourishing, I take it, in the meantime—that is, in Christchurch; I can only speak of it there. A federation was formed some time ago, and I find from that that in other parts of the colony the trade is not all that could be wished. There is such a large importation of boots into the colony that they consider that if the duties were increased they would all be employed in all parts of the colony, and it would be beneficial to the colony. They are not satisfied with the present duty.