

44. Is it a fact or is it not a fact that the bootmakers are the poorest-paid class of artisans in the colony?—I would not like to say that.

45. *Mr. Bedford* (to *Mr. Willis*).] I think you said that the preferential tariff had operated injuriously to the local manufacturers of agricultural implements. Is that to any extent?—I was simply quoting them from a report.

46. Do you know to what extent it has operated injuriously?—I could not answer the question. Perhaps *Mr. Charters* could.

(To *Mr. Charters*): Has it been anything serious?—I can only say, as chairman of the joint committee, that I took all this evidence, and the reference to the preferential tariff in the report is in connection with certain raw material which comes in free otherwise, but coming from America it is subject to the preferential tariff of 10 per cent.

48. Is there much stuff imported from America?—A good deal.

49. You still have to import the raw material?—Yes. With regard to boots, I would like to say that the comparison between the boot trade and the agricultural-implement trade is hardly fair, because the raw material required in the boot and shoe trade is found in the colony, and the rest of the stuff used in the manufacture of boots, such as grindery, is imported duty-free.

50. (To *Mr. Mitchell*): In view of the methods that this trust employs in crushing out competition, do you think a 40-per-cent. duty would do any good? We find a great disparity between the prices they ask for implements—for instance, they sell for £50 in America the same implement that they sell here for £25, and for £140 in the Argentine the same implement that they sell for £80 in Australia. If they seem bent on crushing out competition at any cost, do you not think they would get over the 40-per-cent. duty?—There is not the slightest doubt that we should be in a 40-per-cent. better position. We make our request as modest as possible in the hope that Parliament will see just exactly what we want and grant us concessions accordingly.

51. Do you think it would keep them out at all?—Well, where they secure a tremendous advantage over us is in the extent and nature of their selling organization. It is competent for them to sell six times as much as the local manufacturers can, and if they could be taxed so as to make it impossible for them to keep the selling-staff on the road that they have at present, we feel that our representatives would have a better chance of doing business. If the customer were not pestered day in and day out by the trust's representatives, we feel that would be going a very long way towards attaining the object we have in view.

52. You think the trust are in the habit of selling at less than cost-price?—Their object is not so much to sell under cost-price in the meantime as to sell on long terms, which is practically the same thing.

53. Are there any implements of importance, apart from drills, that the trust brings on to the market and competes with you with?—Yes, there are a great many. We have them specified. There are ploughs, hoes, axes, shovels, spades, harrows, cultivators, wagons, rakes, engines, threshing-machines, mowers, reapers, drills, ropes, binder-twines, harness; there are various machines.

54. *Mr. Alison* (to *Mr. Barr*).] I understood you to say that the imposition of a tariff would only be a palliative?—Yes.

55. And that legislation must be introduced to prevent trusts getting any footing in the colony?—That is so.

56. Does your Council recommend that legislation should be introduced by which all goods supplied by the Harvester Trust shall be manufactured in the colony?—If at all possible. The platform of the Trades and Labour Council is that the manufacture of all goods should be nationalised.

57. That would mean that neither the trust nor any other manufacturing firm outside the colony should be allowed to import similar goods to those which you refer to: is that not so?—I do not altogether follow you. We want to make it perfectly clear that although our platform is the nationalising of the manufacturers of this colony—the necessities in particular—we recognise the fact that there is no hope of getting that in the immediate future—that that is in the dim and distant future—and in the meantime we must take as strong measures as we possibly can to serve the interests of the employees and workers here—in fact, of the people generally. That is the reason why we recognise the fact that a tariff is not a thing for all time. I wish to make this clear, so that when we ask for something else we shall not have it thrown in our teeth that we asked for this tariff.

58. *The Chairman*.] I presume you are now speaking as an individual and not as a member of the deputation?—I am speaking as the representative of the Trades and Labour Council.

59. The deputation, I understand, ask for a 40-per-cent. duty on the American importations?—Yes; we also ask for that.

60. That is the request of the deputation?—Yes.

*Mr. Alison*.] What you advocate then is the imposition of a 40-per-cent. duty upon all agricultural implements, is it not?—Imported implements—American, mark you.

62. American only?—Yes.

*Mr. Willis*: We do not ask for any duty if similar articles are not manufactured here.

63. *Mr. Alison* (to *Mr. Barr*).] You ask that 40 per cent. be imposed on all agricultural implements imported from America which can be manufactured in this colony, or which are being manufactured in the colony?—Which are being manufactured in the colony.

64. And if the same goods are manufactured in Great Britain, you ask that a duty shall be imposed upon those also, to the same extent?—That has not been dealt with. We have not dealt with the Old Country up to the present. We are only dealing specifically with America.

65. *Mr. Tanner*.] With the United States only?—By "America" we mean the continent of America—wherever the trust has a hold on the American continent.