

66. *Mr Alison.*] Assuming that the goods which the Harvester Trust or any other American trust can supply to the colony could be supplied or were being supplied from England at the same price, would you then say the same duty should be placed on the English-manufactured goods?—We will leave that till the occasion occurs.

67. You are not prepared to offer an opinion with regard to that question?—Not at the present moment.

68. Since this Harvester Trust has been formed, have the prices of agricultural implements sold in this colony—that is, the prices all round—been reduced or increased?—I think that either Mr. Willis or Mr. Mitchell would be better able to answer your questions about the prices of the implements than I am.

69. Are you aware that a number of industries in this colony are seriously falling off because of the labour conditions in New Zealand being so much more liberal than those in the leading countries?—I am not aware so. That is information to me.

70. If that is so, would you suggest that there should be a higher protective duty placed upon the imported manufactured goods?—I would not be prepared to suggest any course until I found out that it was as you state.

71. But assuming that that were so?—I say I consider it unwise on my part to assume anything in the meantime.

72. (To Mr. Mitchell). Since the trust has been formed have the prices of agricultural implements been increased or reduced?—As I have indicated already, since implements have come under the control of the trust they have advanced slightly in price—for instance, there is one that one firm was handling, the Deering reaper-and-binder. That sold last year at £35, but notice has been received that it must be sold for £40 as from the 1st October. That is one instance where the control of the machine has passed into the hands of the trust.

73. Have the goods generally which the local manufacturers are competing with been increased in price since the trust was formed?—No. Of course, our contention is that it is the policy of the trust to, in the beginning, reduce prices so as to capture the trade, and then, when they crush opposition, they set about recouping themselves. That has been our experience of the methods of the trust in other countries.

74. Has the trust reduced prices since it commenced operations in New Zealand?—The trust now sell at slightly lower prices than the local manufacturers can, and, in addition to that, they give terms up to four years.

75. Since the trust was formed have the prices of agricultural implements supplied by it been reduced or increased, as against those locally manufactured?—You refer to the prices of implements handled by the trust?

76. Yes?—The prices of implements handled by the trust have slightly receded.

77. What implements are manufactured locally which the Harvester Trust can compete with?—We have drills, disc harrows, cultivators, ploughs, harrows of all kinds, and several other smaller lines.

78. *The Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] I do not think the witness quite catches your meaning, Mr. Alison. (To witness): What farming implements are made in the colony that the trust supplies?—We manufacture ploughs, harrows, cultivators, wagons, threshing-machines, drills, binder-twine, and harness, of the articles enumerated in the trust's list; and, in addition to those in their list, we manufacture sundry machines which are special to New Zealand, such as burrow-drills, disc ridgers, and many machines of that class, in addition to drays, wagons, Cambridge rollers, and other machines of very bulky proportions, which, on account of their selling-price and the space that they take up, are not largely imported or dealt in by the Harvester Trust at the present time.

79. *Mr. Alison.*] Can you tell the Committee the prices charged by the Harvester Trust for the articles which they supply and which are manufactured in New Zealand, as against those charged by the local manufacturers?—No, sir; I cannot answer that question just at the moment.

80. Can any of those who accompany you?—I doubt whether they can.

81. Then, do you say that if a 40-per-cent. duty is imposed upon all agricultural implements, or implements which are imported from America, the local manufacturer can compete successfully with the American manufacturer?—We believe he can.

82. Do you suggest there should be any increased duty placed upon English-manufactured goods?—No. The employers have a proposal, we understand, that half the duty should be levied against England, but our concern at the present time is directly with the operations of the Harvester Trust. English competition or any other competition we have up to the present time been able to battle against; it is against the competition of the trust that we seek protection.

83. Can you tell the Committee how many workers are employed throughout the whole colony in the manufacture of the goods on which you are asking for the imposition of a 40-per-cent. duty?—Well, there are between five and six hundred hands engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements alone in Christchurch; but as to the other articles, such as binder-twine or harness, I have not a record of the number. Our contention in this connection is that the list of articles they publish is so comprehensive that it practically touches every department of industry.

84. It has been stated by one of the witnesses that the workers employed in the manufacture of agricultural implements in America work nine hours a day. Do you know the number of hours they work per week?—That is the daily average. As we consider ours an eight-hour day, we speak of theirs as a nine-hour day. Mr. Barr spoke about the hours.

85. (To Mr. Barr): You say that the artisans employed in the manufacture of implements in America work nine hours a day. What hours per week do they work?—An average of fifty-four or fifty-five—say, fifty-five.