

very remunerative prices. Last year they competed against us, with the result that one firm that had been making over a thousand dozen millet brooms a month went into bankruptcy. They dump their brooms here even in the face of a 25-per-cent. duty. Then there is the position as to bristles. In 1908 an Act was passed permitting by regulation the prohibition of animal-hair. In 1915 the present Government brought this into force without intimating the fact to those affected—the brushmakers—but verbally conveying the instruction to the shipping companies. The first intimation my company had of it was that the contractors in Australia told us that the shipping would not take the goods, because they had been informed that its importation had been prohibited by the Government. We have no objection to any regulation respecting these materials if applied to brushware made from the same things. This the Minister has declined, only subjecting the raw materials but not the manufactured article. I leave with the Committee the correspondence which has passed between the Department of Agriculture and myself with reference to the prohibition of the importation of bristles and hair, and the utter absence of any provision respecting brushware made from the same materials. The latest suggestion from the Department is that the bristles and hair imported should be analysed for fear of introducing anthrax or some other trouble, and I say there is not the slightest need for it. [Samples produced.] I wish to add that the Australian Government is more alive to the interests of the local manufacturers by insisting upon, say, brushware from Japan being stamped with its place of manufacture. Just recently a big parcel came to Australia and was not labelled, and it had to be returned to Japan.

J. M. BENTON, representing Hogg and Co. (Limited), Timber-merchants, examined.

We are joinery-manufacturers, moulding-producers, and steam benders. We wrote to the Hon. Mr. Fisher in 1913 with reference to irregularities in the tariff. We pointed out to him these facts: "We have invested in the last six years large sums of money in the erection and outfit of our respective factories, which are complete and fitted with the most up-to-date machinery for the purpose of producing spokes, naves or hubs, bent shafts and poles, bent wheel-rims, and other similar coach and carriage builders' material, and we regret to say that the financial result has not been encouraging, largely in consequence of competition from others who are more favourably circumstanced in Australia. The present tariff (see item 431) provides for the admission of ash, hickory, lancewood, and beech 'free of duty,' but curiously enough the grey and spotted gum which we have to get from Australia for rims and shafts is charged 2s. per 100 ft. duty under item 206 of same tariff, while shafts and rims made in Australia from the same timber are admitted free. The anomaly here is so obvious that we believe it has only to be pointed out to you in order to have it rectified. We should be allowed to import free of duty all grey or spotted gum we require if sawn to the sizes suitable for manufacturing the articles above referred to. We desire further to urge that we have a fair claim to some measure of protection on the manufactured article also. Ours is one of the very few industries which have been struggling along without, in our opinion, having received fair consideration, and if we are to have any chance against our more favourably circumstanced competitors in Australia this protection is necessary. There is a great deal of waste unavoidable in working up timber into sound coachbuilders' material, and you will at once see how seriously we are handicapped as against the Australian manufacturer, sitting as they do beside the original source of timber-supply, where their loss by waste is not increased by shipping-charges. Moreover, the Australian market is a very large one, and consequently the Australian manufacturers have a large output, which enables them to produce at much lower cost than we can, while the cost of sending their manufactured article to our market is little, if any, more than we have to pay for bringing the raw material. According to the present tariff (item 212) dressed shafts, spokes, and felloes are said to be dutiable, but this apparent protection is entirely annulled by item 433, which provides that the same articles in the rough are to be free. Now, the only difference which is made is that 'dressed' is held to mean 'planed,' while 'rough' is 'unplaned'; and you will easily understand that a coach-builder does not care twopence whether his shafts and rims are planed or unplaned, seeing he has to dress them all over again, rounding off, shaping, and finishing to suit his job. We trust you will inquire carefully into this matter and have the tariff amended so that all wheelwrights' shafts, poles, spokes, naves, and wheel-rims shall be subject to 20 per cent. duty if bent or turned to shape, whether they be dressed or rough—that is, planed or unplaned." The Minister replied that our representation would receive consideration. It is a question of protecting our labour. Our wage-sheet is a high one, our plants are big, and the upkeep and general production require a great deal of watching.

J. A. SLIGO, representing the Gold-mine Owners' Association of Otago and Southland, examined.

Never in the history of mining in New Zealand has the industry been conducted under greater difficulties. The position has been brought about chiefly by the condition pertaining since the commencement of the war. Everything that is used in the production of gold or other metals has increased in price until the purchase of some is prohibitive. As you are no doubt aware, the Government, shortly after the war started, practically commandeered all gold by prohibiting its export, except through the Dominion Government. Wool, beef, mutton, antimony, scheelite, and other products were also similarly treated, with this difference, that the price given was a very large advance on the prices obtainable previous to 1914. As a matter of fact, in some instances the prices were almost doubled, and had the effect of enabling a greater profit to be made than was possible in ordinary way of business. On the other hand, the high cost of production without an equivalent increase in value has in the case of gold-mining, and in particular gold-dredging, had a most disastrous effect. Mines which were on a paying footing and directly