

*Mr. Barkas:* If you ask my individual opinion, that is exactly it, only much better expressed than I could do it myself.

*Mr. Hornsby:* There are many anomalies existing, and the only way to put them right is to have the whole thing readjusted and placed upon a business and scientific basis?

*Mr. Barkas:* That is exactly the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce. It is the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce that the railway tariff should be scientifically adjusted to the needs and for the benefit of the country.

*Mr. Hornsby:* At present it is a Chinese puzzle?

*Mr. Barkas:* There is no question about that.

*To Mr. Craigie:* The Chamber of Commerce has many times represented these grievances to the Government, and the reply has usually been that the matter would be taken into consideration. There is no doubt that the question of road transit, and the added convenience of road transit, should be taken into consideration. They tell me that the railway tariff was made between thirty and forty years ago. Since the railway tariff was made there has been a great improvement in connection with traction-engines. Although the conditions have changed, the Railway Department has apparently remained in the old groove.

*To Mr. Sidey:* I think sea competition will have to be taken into consideration.

*To Mr. Luke:* If you look at the report of the Engineers, you will find that Lyttelton Harbour has just about reached its capacity. I think you will find before long that there will be three main ports on the east coast of the South Island—Lyttelton, Timaru, and Port Chalmers.

*To Mr. Craigie:* Before the war the freight overseas from London to Port Chalmers, to Timaru, and to Lyttelton was the same.

#### A. WASHER examined.

The question I wish to bring before you is the fishing industry. I am not connected with it, but I have taken a great deal of interest in it, and I have got a great deal of information from the fishermen. I suppose that you are aware that next to Japan New Zealand has some of the best fishing-grounds in the world. I am going to ask if you can assist this important industry. Fishermen find that it costs a great deal of money prospecting for fishing-grounds. The fleet which we have here at the present time might be called a mosquito fleet; the boats are small, and are scarcely capable of going out any distance. Can the Committee help in getting the Government to engage a trawler, with some responsible person to take charge and report upon the fishing grounds and industry? Some years ago the Government asked Professor Prince, of Canada, to report upon the fishing industry of New Zealand. I remember reading a statement in the paper that he had reported that some forty miles off the coast of Timaru there are some of the best fishing-banks off the coast of New Zealand. Our boats are scarcely able to go out such a long distance. We suggest that the Government should make advances to our fishermen on the same principle as the advances made to settlers. That would enable the fishermen to get larger boats and better fishing-gear. An increased supply of fish would mean a reduction in the cost of living to the people. The industry might also provide employment for a number of returned soldiers. As to Timaru, we have splendid markets in Christchurch and Wellington, but the question of reconignment at Lyttelton is at present a drawback in the east of Wellington. I think also it would be a good thing if the Government could see its way to reduce the duties on fishing requirements. The railway charges on crates of fish might also be reduced; at present the charge for the carriage of fruit is much lower. In New South Wales the Government expended a considerable sum in connection with fishing-trawlers.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* I believe that in some parts of the Old Country they have special insulated carriages.

*To Mr. Craigie:* I think the Government might also consider the question of assisting in connection with insurance on the boats.

#### W. R. PEARSON, Timaru Chamber of Commerce, examined.

I have been asked by my committee to report on the island fruit trade as affecting Timaru and districts. In the South Island we have been at a great disadvantage in securing fruits during the war period, the principal cause, no doubt, having been the scarcity of freights to carry the produce. We have paid as high as 7s. freight and railage per case from Auckland within the past year. Passing the war period and taking in the previous six years, we have found the island fruit trade very unsatisfactory—the faulty packing and want of up-to-date steamers to carry the fruit being, in my opinion, a great drawback to the development of the island trade. Some exporters' brands, owing to the excellent quality packed, from both the Cook and Fiji groups, obtain keen competition in the markets here, but these are only a portion. A great quantity of bananas arrive in New Zealand that should never have been packed for shipment. I have handled bananas as a wholesale merchant for the past ten years, and in very many instances have had to repack whole lines, owing to the mixed quality in cases. In striking contrast to this trade is the organized supplies of stone-fruits from Central Otago: every case is packed according to grade, and the top layer in any case represents the quality of the whole case. When the firm of Morton and Pearson started in business ten years ago the total quantity of case stone-fruits arriving in Timaru from outside districts did not amount to over 2,500 cases for the four months January to April. Now, owing to our system of distribution and making the price within the reach of all consumers, coupled with the splendid system of packing adopted by growers, the consumption at the present time is over 20,000 cases for the same period. I submit there is no reason why similar results should not obtain in regard to the handling of the