

Cook and Fiji trade, and so enable the Dominion consumers to obtain ample supplies of bananas and oranges of good quality at reasonable rates. I would respectfully suggest to the Commission that, as the Cook Islands are part of our Dominion, special attention should be given to fostering the fruit trade there. An expert should be sent there to make a full report on the whole system, and his recommendation, as far as possible, should be put into practice. I would further suggest that the Cook Island fruit be carried at the same rate on our railways as New-Zealand-grown. I feel certain that with careful business supervision the Cook Island trade can be increased tenfold, and so give our public ample supplies of the best fruits at prices within the reach of all. As regards apples, South Canterbury is well suited for growing apples, several well-established orchards in the district producing fruit of excellent quality. Late varieties, such as Lord Wolseleys, Sturmers, Ballarats, and Washingtons, give very good results, and keep well into the late months of the year.

To Mr. Hudson: I understand that a considerable quantity of bananas arrive in New Zealand which would be prohibited from sale in the Sydney and Melbourne markets. I could not say whether any disease coming in would be a menace to the local trade, but I think it would be worth while for the Government to go into that matter.

To Mr. Sidey: I recognize that the shipping difficulty is a grave one, and should be rectified.

To Mr. Craigie: I am satisfied that if the same conditions existed at the Cook Islands as obtain here in regard to the grading and inspection of fruit the island fruit trade would increase tenfold. I think the Government should inquire into these matters.

H. W. MENERE, Furrier, examined.

I represent a new industry—the fur business—and I think the Committee can assist me in regard to raw skins. At the present time a skin to be manufactured into a fur lands in this country free of duty. If the skin is dressed or tanned the duty from the British dominions is 25 per cent., and from America 33 per cent. What I want is this: The same duty applies to a made-up article—finished, satin-lined, and completed—as to a tanned skin, and we have to do practically the same amount of work on a tanned skin as on a raw skin, yet there is no difference between the tanned skin and the made-up article. The duty on fur goods is 25 per cent. I would like to get the tanned skins in at the same rate as the raw skin. The skins have to be dressed, and there is not a skin-dresser in New Zealand. If we can import dressed skins at a lower duty and make them into furs here with New Zealand labour it would greatly assist us. I suggest a higher tariff on the made-up article and a reduced tariff on the tanned or dressed skin—that is, the tariff on the raw skin. I do not see why we should not get dressed skins in free, the same as raw skins, because there is no one here to do the dressing. On Saturday I imported sixty-three skins from New York. Three were dressed, and the duty cost me £19 18s. 6d. On the sixty raw skins the duty was £2 15s., and I have as much work on each skin as on the dressed skins. Unmade tanned skins should be placed in the same category as raw skins—free. It pays me better to import furs made up from Australia, finished and completed, than to import from Australia the tanned or dressed skin. It pays me to get them made there, and I would like to get them made here. Then, can you assist me in regard to cottons and silks for the finishing of these articles? Is it possible to reduce the duty on the silk and cottons used in the manufacture? I also ask the Committee to assist me to get the machinery from America. Rabbit-skins are undoubtedly going to pay the farmer as well as sheep. A raw rabbit-skin is worth 5s. in America to-day. Mr. R. S. Black, exporter, of Dunedin, told me he got 20s. per pound for raw skins. Our rabbit-skins go from here to Belgium or France, where they are dressed, and sent back as Coney seals. I have opened a branch in Christchurch, and I intend to open in other places in New Zealand. I would like the machinery to come in free. I employ ten hands, and if my requests are granted I could employ a hundred. It would be a good industry. I am sending six rabbit coats to England on the 11th.

CHRISTCHURCH.

MONDAY, 3RD MARCH, 1919.

THOMAS WADDELL, Engineer, further examined.

The Chairman: Mr. Waddell, who has already given evidence before the Committee, informs me that he is in receipt of information that the Railway Department proposes to export steel scrap, which he is willing to purchase and use in his foundry in Christchurch. He is importing an electrical plant for the utilization of such scrap.

Witness: The Railway Department has informed me that the scrap is not available, but I am informed that the Railway Department has applied to the Controller of Customs to export 400 tons.

The Chairman: I suggest that we telegraph to the Minister of Customs on the matter, setting out the desire of the Committee that the scrap should remain in the Dominion. Mr. Waddell is open to purchase it for cash, notwithstanding that his plant is not yet erected.

To Mr. Hudson: My price for the scrap is 35s. per ton in Wellington. I have no idea what the Department has been offered for the scrap for export. It is evident from the correspondence which I lay before the Committee that the scrap has been sold to Burns, Philp, and Co.