

*To Mr. Luke:* The machinery is patented, and we cannot make it here. I understand that in Australia they copy it, but by the time they copy it the Americans have got better machines. We got some machinery from Australia, but it has been scrapped; it never worked satisfactorily.

*To Mr. Forbes:* In connection with our industry the only hindrance we find is in connection with the special machinery.

*To Mr. Hudson:* If we had sufficient labour we could handle considerably more of what might be called perishable fruits. If we got a canning plant we could put out the same quantity of produce with twenty or thirty hands which is now put out with a hundred hands. It all goes through automatically. The import duty on the machinery is prohibitive; it is 33 per cent. The result of our not being able to get the machinery is a material loss to the district and to the fruitgrowers in the district. The machinery is patented in America. If you get a machine out here and pay a man to copy it, the cost would be great to make one.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* As to the use of electrical energy in our industry, I may say that we must have steam for cooking and preserving.

*To Mr. Craigie:* We employ a hundred hands at the busy time. We advertised for fifty hands recently, and we only got seven. They are going hop-picking presently. We cannot get girls or boys; they are very scarce.

*To Mr. Hudson:* We would employ between two hundred and three hundred if we could get them. We would want them as well as the machinery. Peas are podded by machinery.

*To Mr. Forbes:* We had a very large trade with South America when the war broke out. We have had a difficulty in regard to labour all the time; we have not enough hands.

*To the Chairman:* The wages of women in the factory is from £1 10s. to £1 15s.; the working-time is forty-five hours a week. In regard to railway freight, I may inform the Committee that jam sent from a local factory to any station on the line goes under "B" rates, but if it is sent from another factory—not a local factory—it goes under "A" rates.

W. R. B. VASS, Quarry-manager, Takaka, examined.

I wish to refer to marble and slate, but the principal question I shall deal with is copper.

*The Chairman:* Mr. Vass communicated with the Committee some time ago, and we applied to the Under-Secretary, Mines Department, for information regarding a copper lode which Mr. Vass brought under the Committee's notice. The reply of the Under-Secretary, Mines Department, was to the effect that nothing was known of the copper lode referred to, but that the local Inspector of Mines had been instructed to report on the lode, and that a copy of his report would be furnished to the Committee as soon as it came to hand. We informed the Under-Secretary of the date of the sitting of the Committee at Nelson, but so far we have not received the report.

*Mr. Vass:* The Inspector was there last Friday, and he intended to put the report in hand, but, of course, he has a lot of other work to do. First, I want to bring up the question of marble. I do not mean to say anything about the building-marble, because I know the Government have £10,000 invested in building-marble; but I wish specially to allude to marble for decorative work. Considering the quality of my marble, I think the Government ought to give me a fair share along with others. We have the greatest variety of marble, and our quarry is the handiest. My marble, as I have said, is not a building-marble, but it is suitable for interior decorative work. I got a small order, and had to supply it within ten days; but that was hardly fair. They knew it would take a little time to get it. They had plenty of time to give the order. I got an order for twenty-four blocks, but immediately after I got the order it was cancelled. The other people have had large orders, and they have plenty of marble, and I have not. I wish to call the attention of the Committee to the question of slate. Mr. Morgan said that he found iron-pyrites in the slate, and that its presence militated against the slate. I think that Mr. Morgan has a "bee in his bonnet" in regard to iron-pyrites. He did the same in regard to marble. There is no outside building-stone in the world free from iron in some form or other. I mentioned that I had put in marble at His Majesty's Theatre, Wellington, and in the Royal Insurance building. The Home slate contains iron-pyrites. Mr. Morgan says the slate would not be suitable for roofing-purposes because of the iron-pyrites; but let me point out that corrugated iron is used for roofing.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* The slate exists there in enormous quantities. It is as large as any slatefield in the north of Scotland, where I come from. I am satisfied as a practical man that it is good slate; it will take the same finish as the imported slate. Pyrites can be seen in the Scotch slate. I do not know whether the Government authorities saw the red sample of marble. I am the only person who has red marble in New Zealand. Unfortunately, I have not the means to develop it. The marble is handy to the sea. I could not supply 14 ft. blocks of that kind, but I could supply 20 ft. blocks, if necessary, in some varieties. I have an unlimited supply in large sizes of the grey and the dark varieties.

*To Mr. Luke:* I have had large experience in this business in Scotland, and I have visited the Italian quarries. From my experience in Scotland I can say that commercially the New Zealand deposits offer sufficient inducements for development, especially in view of the increased price of Italian marble. These marbles are not like the Italian marbles: they are like the Belgian and French marbles. The Italian marble is white. There are no more defects in our marble than there are in the French and Belgian marbles.

*To Mr. Sidey:* I have a forty-two-years lease of the land. The deposit is at Takaka; it is half a mile nearer to the sea than the other quarries. All that I ask is that the Government should give me a good order, and give me plenty of time to carry it out.

*To Mr. Hudson:* I have been connected with marble-works all my life. At present I am working "on my own," and all I ask is fair consideration from the Government in respect to orders.