

under the same percentage as leather goods. Since the war all supplies from Europe have been cut off, and I have had to keep the whole of the trade going from the North Cape to the Bluff. It has been a hard task. Still, we have held our heads up. We had a fine chance to exploit New Zealand, but we did not do so. We have also introduced a steel stirrup-bar, locally made. It is superior to the one that used to be imported from England. We are introducing this bar all through New Zealand. Since the war the Japanese have sent in a number of saddle-shapes and other things. I have no protection in my favour. The Jap will get in wherever he can, and I am afraid that if gets into this line we will have to close down unless we get protection. Under protection we can put more machinery down and increase our hands, which means more wages and more money spent in the Dominion for material. We claim that if Australia can give 30 per cent. we ought to be put on a level with the leather-merchant. The duty is either 22 per cent. or 25 per cent.

*To the Chairman:* We have six hands outside the three members of the firm—myself and my two sons. If we had the protection we ask for the trade would increase considerably. English saddletrees are coming in, and I suppose it will mean that we will have to fizzle out. I have been established here for seventeen years, and it has been a dogged fight all through.

*To Mr. Forbes:* The demand for saddles is increasing, despite the motor traffic. I do not know where all the saddletrees go to, but there is always a demand for them. As importations begin I shall feel the competition very severely. Before the war there was little difference between the price of the English article and the local article. The English article looked better, but was not superior.

*To Mr. Hudson:* There are no other firms engaged in the manufacture. The Australian tariff is 30 per cent. If I took my machinery to Australia to-morrow I would have that tariff in my favour. Some of the big Sydney firms would be pleased if I went there.

DAWSON SMITH, representing New Zealand Viticultural Association, examined.

We are here to-day to represent the interests of the New Zealand wine industry. It was originally started about fifty years ago by the late Mr. Wendell, and also by the Marist Brothers who landed here from France about that period. Mr. Wendell started his industry in Auckland, and the Marist Brothers started theirs in Hawke's Bay. The vines that they used were some which had been brought over from France and some imported from America. They had a very uphill fight for a number of years, owing undoubtedly to some extent to the prejudice which you would naturally expect in respect to an article of that description made in the colony. It was not until twenty years ago that the Government began to recognize that there would possibly be something in the New Zealand wine industry if it were fostered. At that time they started several experimental stations, notably one at Waerenga, and also in other parts of New Zealand, to start this wine industry in conjunction with other agricultural pursuits. They engaged an expert, Signor Bragato, an Italian; and these experimental stations, I believe, were placed under his supervision. He imported stocks specially on which to work the different classes of vines suitable to this climate. For your information I may state that the colder the climate the less the amount of alcohol in the wine, and *vice versa*. At these experimental stations they planted the vines they had imported from France and America, and in the course of a few years grapes were produced from which wine was made. The expert toured the Dominion exhibiting the grapes and exhibiting the wine that had been made, and giving information to the settlers to encourage them to take up the planting of poor lands in the Dominion, more especially the gum lands and lands suitable for nothing but fruitgrowing. For the information of the Committee I may state that in regard to vine-growing for wine the poorer the soil the better; but in the case of grapes for dessert, that is another thing altogether. To push this matter forward the Government issued a book of something like sixty pages, of which I have a copy, entitled "Viticulture in New Zealand." That book was issued by the Viticultural Division of the Department of Agriculture, the Department then being under the control of the Hon. T. Y. Duncan, Minister of Agriculture. When the Government invested something like £50,000 in this industry by way of experimenting, and when the expert encouraged settlers and intending settlers to take up this branch of industry, you would naturally think that they intended to make it a national industry. I may state that Auckland light wines are being extensively used throughout New Zealand, especially for invalids, for they are pure and very suitable for those unaccustomed to strong drink. Waerenga is the only experimental farm of the Government that has shown a profit, though many of the things that it does are unprofitable. Its profit comes solely from the grapes and the light wines it produces, the demand for which is very great. Land that was originally despised and which was worth only a few shillings an acre is now under grapes, probably the most highly productive in the Auckland Province. With cheap land in the Auckland District returned soldiers would have a most profitable undertaking—a light, congenial business, demanding less capital than many other occupations. The vine can be brought to profit quicker than any fruit-tree, except, of course, the berry fruits. Soldiers will have seen in France how grapes can be grown to perfection on the poorest of soils, and how the general use of light wines takes away the drawbacks to the use of alcohol. At the present time many people are discouraged from using the light wholesome wines made in several places in the Auckland Province owing to the restriction on the wine trade. People are generally compelled to pay high prices in hotels and from merchants for inferior imported wines. Greater facilities for the purchase of local wines are urgently needed—such, for instance, as an extension of a bottle license. The wine-drinking country is never a drunken one. Wine over a certain alcoholic strength need only be sold in hotels; but the light wine, under a stipulated strength, should be allowed to be sold freely by shopkeepers and others, very much the same as is done in France. Such a policy