

There are many articles we import in our business which the colony for many years cannot produce, and in which no amount of duty can possibly enable the local manufacturer to successfully compete with the importer. The only effect in such cases that an increase of duty could have would be to increase the price of the article to such an extent that very few people would be able to purchase; and, as this applies to all the better class of furniture, trade would be paralyzed, while no good would result either to the manufacturer, the mechanic, or the public at large. Take, for example, one common article of furniture that is to be found in almost every house in the colony—a common American cane chair. An attempt has been made by more than one firm here to produce these, and machinery has been brought at considerable expense to bear upon their production; but all has signally failed to produce an article at anything even approaching the price of the imported article. The price of this chair, manufactured in America, after paying duty, $16\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., together with all shipping and other charges, is 7s. (made of oak): now, to produce this chair in the colony the timber, in either red pine or kauri, would cost 3s.; caning and cane, 3s.; turning, 2s. 6d.; labour—making, 3s. 6d.; and varnish and varnishing, 1s.; total, 13s., as against a better article in every respect at 7s. So that, to protect the local manufacturer here in the case cited, you would require, in addition to the present high rate of duty, nearly 100 per cent., and then the importer could successfully compete. This is by no means a solitary case: the same could be applied to almost every article of our best furniture. Take another example: a lady's small worktable, which we retail at £3 10s., could not be produced in any factory under at least £8. Were the cry of our protection friends given effect to, the consequence would be that the people, instead of being able to furnish comfortable homes at a reasonable price, would require to pay nearly double; and, instead of doing a thriving trade, our business would be crippled, and the door closed against many a mechanic who is now earning a comfortable living. We do not believe it is the working-men that are clamouring for protection: we believe they have too much good sense, and are able to see the evil results that a protective duty will bring upon them. We believe that the cry is raised by a few manufacturers and others interested, who would, if possible, have our ports closed in order that their particular factories might flourish; and, in order to elicit sympathy from other quarters, they raise the popular cry, "What shall we do with our boys?"

Now, gentlemen, we would respectfully invite you to pay a visit to our warehouse and factory, and there witness for yourselves what our boys are learning. There you will find them, some of them working journeymen, others learning to become tradesmen, in all the departments connected with our business; but none, as our protection friends would have them become, mere tools to run certain labour-saving machines, as can be seen in some factories in Dunedin at the present time, growing up with no more idea how to produce any article than the machine they are tending. And this is the position longed for and advocated by our ardent and enthusiastic protection friends that our boys should occupy.

Gentlemen, in conclusion, let us say that we look upon protection with grave alarm, as being a principle, if carried into effect, that will result in the greatest evil that can possibly befall a young colony like ours; and that, so far as our business and manufactory is concerned, we have no need of a protective tariff to nurse and bolster it up, but would respectfully submit that the present duty on furniture should be reduced to its old rate of 11 per cent., which is as much as the public can afford to pay, especially in these depressed times.—We have, &c., NORTH AND SCULLAR.

1. *Mr. Stevens* (to *Mr. North*.)] The old duty was nominally 10 per cent., was it not?—Yes.
2. But practically 11 per cent. ?—Yes.
3. I understand you to say that you are able to give your boys and people in your factory a thorough training: I suppose that they are apprenticed ?—Yes.
4. They serve their time and come out complete mechanics ?—Yes.
5. And you say that in other factories they are employed in a different way—namely, running labour-saving machines. Now, I would ask you why labour-saving machinery is applicable in the one class of factory and not in the others?—Because we do not manufacture such a class of goods as the labour-saving-machine factories make.
6. What are the classes of goods they are used for?—These labour-saving machines are applied principally to making the commonest class of goods that can possibly be manufactured. That is the reason why we, as manufacturers, do not employ much machinery to produce cabinet furniture: in fact, we cannot produce good cabinet-work by machinery.
7. Do these other factories also make good cabinet furniture ?—By hand, but not by machinery.
8. They employ, I suppose, a certain number of apprentices also ?—Some of them do.
9. Or only fully-trained and experienced mechanics ?—Some do; but wherever they can employ boys they do so, and then employ skilled workmen to finish their work.
10. Is there any part of the material that you use—what I may call the raw material—in your manufactures which is at present subject to duty of any kind?—Yes, there is the imported cedar, which we manufacture our work with. I think there is a duty of 2s. per 100 feet on it; and that, I think, may be easily reduced. However, it is not a very large tax. We are not such bigoted free-traders as you may say; but we think our imported goods should make a fair contribution to the revenue, and imported timbers the same. We do not ask that the cedar should be admitted free of duty. The duty is, as I have said, only 2s. per 100 feet—it was formerly 1s.—and the public at large do not feel any effects from that duty.
11. Is there anything else?—Imitation of hair-seating, 10 per cent.
12. Do you use these things?—Yes. Hair-seating might be admitted free. I think that in a colony like this, in fact in none of the colonies, we shall ever be able to make hair-seating. The consumption of it would not warrant any one erecting the machinery. It would, in fact, require as much to make hair-seating as to manufacture carpets. I would like to point out to you, gentlemen, the chair that I allude to in our written remarks now before you [holding up an American cane-bottomed chair]. This chair is a common chair of the description I allude to. Chairs of this exact description are imported here by the merchants for 7s., as we say in our statement. The timber of this chair, as you perceive, is oak. We have no oak in this country. Oak is a very strong and durable wood. If we made this chair here we should have to use kauri, or red pine, or cedar. The timber in this chair, at the very