

formed what is called a Chamber of Commerce of the bookbinding section, and these gentlemen agreed to a regular scale of charges right through the trade. That was brought about simply because one employer employed a few boys; and another, to get the better of him, employed a few more boys; and so on, until the position was this: that the man who employed most boys could make the lowest charges. Well, if there was a scale of charges here which the employers agreed upon—and they did try this to a certain extent, I believe—if they were to do that, then I take it the matter would be in their own hands.

16. Supposing the price at which a manufacturer can produce an article by employing a certain number of boys is £1, and that the importer cannot produce that article at less than £1 1s., and is, therefore, shut out of the market; you then change the position, and, by compelling the employer here to employ less boys, the price of producing the article is raised to £1 2s., then the importer would step in and take his trade away from him, because, as I have shown, he is able to produce at £1 1s. How then would you propose to enable the local manufacturer employing local labour to compete with the importer?—Well, I cannot very well answer that question, because the employer at Home might do it at less than £1 1s., and we come back to the question again. This man may work under entirely different conditions.

17. Do you mean the local manufacturer might work under certain conditions, or the importer?—The importer. I take it that below certain conditions men should not be asked to work.

17A. That is the position. If, as you say, the employers at Home choose to work their establishments on these very lines—at very cheap rates—I do not think that we should in any way ask our colonists to work under conditions that these employers at Home insist on their men working?—That is the only reason I can give you, because there is no finality in it. If, as you say, the employers at Home are able to do the work for £1 1s., they can reduce it to any scale they like, and then you, according to the statement you have made, might bring the conditions of these men down. I contend this: that you cannot expect men to work below a certain living wage. I take it there is no remedy for your position. I am not able to put forward one, anyhow.

18. Take the case of a tinsmith who employs skilled labour, and who only employs this skilled labour for a portion of the year. How do you propose that he should take his apprentices under indentures, and pay them all the year round, when he is only able to employ them for a portion of the year?—That is rather an awkward question, but I take it that is a position which very seldom occurs. I believe it is possible to regulate the number of boys that he requires. If he understands his position properly it is easy for him to employ the number of boys that he could keep all the year round and teach them their trade. I take it that employers do not employ boys simply because they may get the men's trade. I take it they will employ men to do that, and still have their staff of boys that they have agreed to teach. An employer should not apprentice indiscriminately a number of boys to do men's work. An employer, in undertaking to teach a boy his trade, should take boys for that purpose, and not have an indiscriminate number of boys to do essentially men's work.

19. The position you take up is this: in the case of a man being overtaken by a rush of work, what would he do?—My answer is that, if he is a fair employer he will employ skilled men to do it. No employer should seek to compete in the market with apprentices. That should be done by skilled workmen.

20. Are there many boys apprenticed in your trade?—In some cases the whole of the skilled work is done by boys in this colony.

21. What do the boys get as a commencement?—The first year sometimes 5s., sometimes 7s., sometimes 10s. The wages vary from 5s., and the maximum is £1. It might in some cases come to £1 5s. when they are men.

22. I do not mean boys; but how many apprentices are employed?—That is entirely a matter for the employer who apprentices a boy. There is no scale. Generally, the first year, 5s.; the second year, 7s. 6d.; the third year, 10s.; the fourth year, 12s. 6d.; fifth year, 15s.

23. *The Chairman.*] About a half-crown rise each year?—Yes; and the last year £1.

24. *Mr. Buchanan.*] What are the journeymen getting?—The journeymen average from £1 10s. to £3 per week, according to skill.

25. The boys, I suppose, generally live with their parents, or they could not live on these wages?—Yes, I dare say they do, or with their guardians.

23. The statement was made by the President of the Trades and Labour Council, before this Committee, that he would not send his boy into the country prospecting and to work sixteen hours a day, and that, therefore, he was obliged to put his boys into a trade in the town. Boys in a country district get varying wages. I have known none of them to get below 5s.; usually it is from 7s. 6d. to 10s. for boys of say fifteen years of age, with their food and lodging, but not including washing. Would you consider the boy apprenticed to a town trade such as yours, or the country boy paid as I have stated, to be the better off?—Well, there cannot be any question about who is better off. The boy that is found in food and lodging in the country is undoubtedly better off than the boy in the town. The only thing that prevents boys going into the country is that they have to leave their homes, in some cases; not for any particular liking they have for home, or any desire to stay, but because their parents desire them to stay at home to learn some skilled trade—something to keep them in the family circle; they have often to stay at home against their wish. I know a great many cases where parents have had chances of sending their boys into the country, and have refused to do so on that account. I believe the boy working for 5s. a week in the country, with his food found, is better off than the boy working in the town at the present time. That is why we want the Master and Apprentice Bill passed—to make the position of the boy in town more comfortable. There is very little encouragement now for a boy to learn any skilled trade. Boys acquire a certain knowledge of a trade, and then it is of no use to them nor to their employer