

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WELLINGTON.

TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY, 1895.

\*(1.) BENJAMIN DANKS examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A coir-mat and matting manufacturer in all its branches.
2. How long have you been engaged in the trade?—Since 1842, when the trade began in London. I have been four or five years in Wellington.
3. How many hands do you employ?—At present I cannot keep one fairly employed, but I should be able to keep at least twenty or thirty.
4. What articles do you manufacture?—Mats and matting of various kinds. We complain mostly of the Indian gaols; labour to them is of no value. I have a statement here if you would like to look at it.

COST TO MAKE.						
12 coir door-mats, No. 3 size—						
Material, 72lb., at 3½d.	...	...	...	...	...	£ s. d.
Wages, 45ft., at 4d.	...	...	...	...	...	0 19 0
						0 15 0
						£1 14 0

COST TO IMPORT.						
12 coir door-mats, No. 3 size —						
Invoiced	...	...	...	...	...	1 2 6
Duty and freight, 20 per cent.	...	...	...	...	...	0 4 6
						1 7 0
Balance in favour of import	...	...	...	...	...	0 7 0
						£1 14 0

- 4A. That means a dozen mats can be produced by you for £1 14s.?—That would be the actual net cost.
5. And a dozen can be imported under the present tariff for £1 7s.?—Yes.
6. In other words, the importer can undersell you by 7s. a dozen?—Yes.
7. Have you any information to give the Commission as to the total value of this particular article as imported into the colony?—They are quoted at £1 5s. a dozen, *plus* the allowance of 10 per cent.
8. Do you know the total quantity that comes into the colony?—No.
9. What relief do you wish in the matter?—That some restraining influence should be placed upon the importation of these goods.
10. Is your estimate of the cost of the imported article based upon the cost of the article manufactured in the gaols?—No; on the market cost of the material and free labour.
11. I do not think you quite follow me. You complain of being brought into competition with the article manufactured in gaols, where labour costs nothing?—Yes; more especially Indian gaols.
12. I wish to know whether your estimate of £1 7s. is the cost of articles so manufactured, or the cost of articles manufactured in England or elsewhere by free labour?—I gave £1 14s. as the cost here.
13. That is the cost here. If the cost of a dozen mats imported is £1 7s., then the difference is 7s. Do you mean that the articles which cost £1 7s. are the articles which are manufactured in gaols?—Yes.
14. Do you know what the cost would be if purchased from the manufacturer in London, who employs free labour, and imported here?—That would mean 20 per cent. added—£1 14s.
15. It does not affect the £1 14s. at all. Supposing you had to buy the goods at the wholesale manufactory in London, what would be the cost to you to land these goods in the colony duty-paid?—I estimate them at something like £2 a dozen.
16. *Mr. Tanner.*] If made in England?—Yes.
17. *The Chairman.*] Then, I understand the direct importer can undersell you by 7s.?—I have given the actual cost of labour and materials; I have given nothing to the manufacturer.
18. If you import goods at £2 a dozen you do not sell them for £2?—My object is to manufacture here, not to import.
19. If you could manufacture them for £1 14s. a dozen as against the English manufacture, then you require no assistance?—Nothing at all against a dozen mats of free-labour manufacture.
20. It is only against the prison labour you have a grievance?—Yes, that is all. Free labour I have nothing against.
21. *Mr. Hutchison.*] What is this coir?—It is the fibre of the outer husk of the cocoanut.

\* NOTE.—The numbers placed before the names of witnesses show the order in which they were examined. Where the numbers are not immediately consecutive the fact indicates that the witnesses represented by the missing numbers did not return the reporter's manuscript in time for the evidence to take its proper place.