

I have seen bricklayers working on a building at 104 in the shade, and I have seen men working in the factories under the same conditions. I have worked at 104 in the shade behind a screen with the gas alight.

205. Would you do less work under those conditions than you do in Southland?—You have to do it or go to sleep. You have to work as hard as you can.

206. I was told by the manager of the Kauri Timber Manufactory in Sydney, who employs a large amount of labour, that he can get one-fourth more work out of New-Zealanders when they arrive in Sydney than he can get from New-Zealanders who have been there a few months or a year, because they come down to about the same level after a time as the Australians—that their working-power was greater at the start than later on: is that so?—It would be just the same if you got an Australian workman over here. They naturally try to do as much as they possibly can when they start work. They come down to the same conditions as prevail in the country they work in, which is not the climate altogether.

207. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You said you represented four hundred men: can you say how far you represent the opinions of the majority of those men in the views you have expressed on this occasion?—I take a great interest in this matter, and I believe the opinions I express to-day represent not only my own opinions, but those of 90 per cent. of organized labour here. Nearly every man I have met is opposed to federation. The question has been placed before them, and they appointed me to come here as their delegate and express their views.

PETER LINDSAY GILKISON examined. (No. 4.)

208. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a flour-miller and grain-miller generally.

209. If you have considered the question of New Zealand federating with Australia, will you kindly give the Commission your views upon it?—Well, I have not considered the matter very much, excepting from a business point of view. I think, if we do not federate, that our trade will be hurt. I think we ought to federate if we do not have to pay too much for it. It will certainly hurt our trade if we do not, and Australia goes against us. We export a large quantity of oatmeal, principally to Australia, the larger portion of which goes to Sydney. Our individual export this year has been from 1,500 to 2,000 tons of oatmeal, valued at £9 a ton. We are the only oatmeal exporters of any consequence in Southland, and we have sent more this year than formerly. We export principally to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and a little to Western Australia. The greater portion of it goes to Sydney. I think we have everything to gain and little to lose by federating, seeing that in this country we produce three times more than they produce on the other side. I have not considered the political aspect of the question. With regard to the flour question, some people think that if the present duty was taken off the flour it would bring about competition with the other side. I do not agree with that, because our wheat is quite as good as their wheat. We cannot turn quite so much flour out of a bushel of wheat as they can, but we can turn it out quite as good in regard to quality.

210. *Hon. Captain Russell.*] Supposing you were not in the oat trade, would your views be affected at all?—They might.

211. As a matter of fact, you view the question—possibly, properly—from the point of view which would affect your firm in your town?—Decidedly. I have not considered it from the colonial standpoint, but I am quite satisfied that nine-tenths of our Southland farmers would vote in favour of federation.

212. Supposing you had to devote yourself to growing wheat, barley, mutton, or beef instead of oats in Southland, would that seriously affect Southland?—If we were not to get an outlet for oats in Australia at all it would never pay to send them to England.

213. What is the average price per bushel of oats, year in and year out, in Southland?—This year the farmer has been getting, on an average, about 1s. 5d. to 1s. 6d., and last year scarcely so much. The average price would be about 1s. 4d.

214. Do you know at what price it would pay to convert oats into mutton?—It depends upon the price of sheep. At the price sheep are now it would pay to make them into mutton.

215. Then, if the average price to the farmer is not over 1s. 4d., is there not an outlet for oats in the freezing-chamber?—I could not say. A great many people here growing oats will not do that. They simply grow oats because the crop suits the climate.

216. You say it is impossible to send to England?—Unless the price there is high.

217. What is the average price there?—About £1 4s. to £1 5s. a quarter. In London, 2s. 9d. to 3s. a bushel. The freights are very high: you cannot get the boats under from £2 to £2 5s. a ton: £2 is a very fair average.

218. What is the freight to Australia?—Roughly, 3d. a bushel, or 10s. a ton.

219. Then, with regard to wharfage and exchange to London?—The exchange is much higher, and London is an extremely expensive port to send to.

220. *Mr. Roberts.*] You know that during the past year the price of oats in Victoria has been very much lower than for previous years?—Yes.

221. Has the lower price of oats decreased the price of oatmeal in Victoria?—Not very much. It has affected the quantity imported, but not the price, because the New Zealand oatmeal always commands a higher price than oatmeal made out of Victorian oats.

222. Is your export during this year about the average?—It has been higher than it has been formerly.

223. *Mr. Millar.*] You said just now that nine-tenths of the farmers would be in favour of federation?—Yes; because from a commercial point of view the bulk of them look to Australia for a market.

224. Do you think it would be advisable for the colony to hand itself over absolutely to Australia by means of federation for the sake of saving to this colony an export trade of £3,000?—