

306. Is the freight to Australia much of a handicap?—Not so much; it is more a question of labour.

307. But, if there were federation, would not there be a vastly increased output, and would not that compensate for the shorter hours and higher wages?—Well, the question of labour comes in, because labour now is fully employed in almost every trade, especially in the engineering trade.

308. Then, you could not produce much more even if you got larger orders?—Not in the present state of trade.

309. Has your trade been injured by the shortening of hours and the increasing of the wages?—I think almost every trade has been handicapped in that way.

310. It has diminished the output?—Yes.

311. But still you say all the men are employed?—Yes, fully employed.

312. *Mr. Roberts.*] Have you employed labour in Australia yourself?—No.

313. You have no practical experience to guide you in coming to the conclusion that a working-man can do a better day's work here than in Australia?—I have had a good many men from Australia working for me here at the same class of work, and they could turn out more work here than there.

314. Therefore your experience in that direction has been only acquired from information you have obtained from men who have gone from here to there?—Yes, and from the amount of work they did in my employ.

315. *Mr. Millar.*] You said just now that you considered our manufacturers were handicapped by the higher wages and lower hours: in what way are they handicapped?—We are working shorter hours for one thing, and we are restricted—

316. You work forty-eight hours?—Yes. In Australia they work nine hours a day.

317. They work eight and three-quarters here, do they not?—Yes; that is only forty-eight hours a week. We give the half-holiday, which comes to the same thing.

318. You are working the forty-eight hours a week?—Yes, against their fifty-four.

319. And yet every man you can employ is fully employed now?—I am only speaking generally of the engineering trade.

320. You have had to send over to the other side for men?—That has been entirely on account of the progress of the dredging industry during the last two years.

321. Coming down to the agricultural-implement makers, their wages are smaller than in any other branch of the engineering trade: is that not so?—Blacksmiths are paid the same rate of wages in the implement trade as they are in the engineering trade. Of course, engineers in the implement trade are not required to be of the same class of skilled men that they are in the engineering trade; therefore there is generally about 1s. a day difference between those men working in the implement-shops and those working in the engineering shops.

322. You have a number of lads in the agricultural trade?—That has been so in the past.

323. Who has curtailed it?—The present legislation.

324. What legislation?—The unions only allow one boy to three men, and whenever you bring the matter before the Arbitration Court, of course the union is upheld.

325. Your agricultural-implement makers are not bound by any agreement in force in the colony?—Reid and Gray are one.

326. How?—They were before the Court.

327. They were never attached; there was never an award given against Reid and Gray?—I understood there was.

328. There has never been an award given against Reid and Gray; therefore, so far as the law is concerned, they have not been hampered in any way by legislation?—Of course, it applies to every trade in the colony.

329. Well, trade has been very brisk in the colony. Our export of manufactured articles greatly increased last year?—I am not prepared to refute that.

330. That looks as if all trade is in a very healthy condition?—But it is quite possible that the increased output on the other side has been materially increased also; but, at any rate, I think the present legislation is hampering manufactures of all kinds.

331. And yet, although they are hampered, they have never been so fully employed?—That is on account of the dredging, and things are very busy all over the world.

332. Going away from the engineering trade, in every other trade the same conditions pretty well apply—the trouble is to get both men, boys, and girls, on account of their being fully employed?—I admit that.

333. Then, the hampering has not done them any injury?—It has simply stopped trade. There is not the same amount of export to New South Wales in connection with the manufacturing trade as there was eight years ago.

334. Well, the total value of manufactured goods exported from this colony last year was £80,000, as against £63,000 the year before, or an increase of £17,000 for the year?—I am only speaking of the implement trade.

335. *Mr. Leys.*] Mention was made by a previous witness of the importation of dredges into the colony. As I understand your evidence, that importation is not because you could not have made them here, but because your shops were so fully employed that there was not the labour to make them: it was not because you could not compete with Australia, but because you could not get through the work in time?—Up to two years ago our labour was not so fully employed as it has been during the past two years, especially in the engineering trade, which I think has been entirely owing to the number of dredges wanted for the colony.

336. It has been stated by a previous witness that New Zealand could not compete with Victoria in the construction of dredges—that dredging appliances were being manufactured in Australia and sent here. I understand from your evidence that the reason for that is because you