

our sawmills. Then we have a person who comes forward and forms an association called an Engine-drivers' Association, and now they threaten to bring us before the Conciliation Board. We have the Conciliation Board in connection with the yards, then the carters' dispute, and now the engine-drivers and the joiners, I understand, are coming before the Arbitration Court; so there is one everlasting worry in connection with this matter. In anticipation of a rise being granted by the Conciliation Board, we raised the price of timber, with this result, that many of us have to complain that orders have stopped; people say, We cannot go in for building with the timber at the present price. Then, we are in competition with the outside trade. They can supply timber at 6s. 8d. per hundred. In buying from the settlers, for 9 ft. girth logs we are paying 6s. 6d. and 7s. per hundred. The Americans can supply the sawn timber, ships' slings, at 6s. 8d. In Sydney they are selling retail at 7s. 9d., timber up to 40 ft. long. Already thousands of sleepers are being landed in New Zealand, which means money leaving New Zealand, whilst we have timber fit for the purpose. The Americans can now deliver sawn timber at about the value we pay the settler for his logs. Oregon pine can be delivered in New Zealand at from 7s. to 8s. per hundred, whilst we are paying 6s. 6d. for logs, one-fourth of which we lose in manipulation. When we buy those logs at 6s. 6d. we lose at least 25 per cent. of them. American doors can be landed here, duty paid, cheaper than we are selling doors at; and we cannot sell them less in consequence of the irksome conditions under which we work. In conclusion, I say here that this country wants a rest from this continual state of irritation, and if not speedily alleviated we shall find that a general stagnation in all the industries will set in, resulting in such a condition of depression that the condition of this colony from 1887 to 1890 will be nothing compared to it.

Mr. JAMES HUTCHEN, of Messrs. Stewart and Co., Wellington, examined. (No. 13.)

*Mr. Hutchen:* We are situated perhaps slightly different to what they are in Auckland. In regard to the hours of labour, our hours of labour are forty-six per week, as twice settled by the Arbitration Court, and the overtime I object to entirely. I do not think that any men, or any Legislature, has got a right to say to a man that we shall compel you to pay money you have not worked for. You might as well take a man off the street and say, "Here my man, here is a week's wages for you." A man just working for you, if he gets a better job—what he reckons is a more constant job—he leaves you at once, and goes away. He is not bound to you in any way, and you are not bound to him in any way. With regard to the clerks and officers, who are reckoned as part of the ironmongery-men in our place, we always pay them for holidays, but the men have no right to have money given them that they have never worked for; and another thing, in regard to engine-drivers—what we call stokers—these men have to come an hour earlier in the morning, or to stop an hour behind at night to bank their fires up. Are these men to be paid for coming at their usual time in the morning, and working a little after at night. There should be liberty given for this. I do not know whether the carters come within the scope of this Bill. A carter has to go to his stable and feed his horses in the morning, and do a little to them at night. I think carters, if they are included in the Bill, should be allowed to do the usual work, the same as now, without any extra pay. In holidays we pay a man extra for looking after our horses, so that the whole of the men have not to come back, but only one. I think these things ought to be seen to in a Bill of this kind, so that things will work fairly. If these men are connected with the factories, I think the Bill should be amended in this direction. I indorse everything that has been said by the other gentlemen in our trade; but their work is slightly different to ours. Of course, there are many peculiar things in the Bill—strange things.

1. *Mr. Arnold.]* With regard to the hours of labour, Mr. White, your mills had the hours of labour regulated about three or four years ago by the Arbitration Court?—That was only in reference to the joiners.

2. What did you work previously to that?—We worked forty-eight hours, and Judge Edwards fixed it at forty-seven.

3. With regard to the country mills, they still work fifty-two hours?—In the country mills—this Conciliation Board business has been all through the country—the Kauri-cutting Company only work fifty-two hours, and pay for fifty-four. Some work fifty-four hours, and some are working fifty-six and fifty-eight. Those, of course, are mills outside the Kauri Company's. The Conciliation award, which has been brought in and not accepted yet, has reduced the hours all round for sawmills to forty-seven in the country.

4. So that, as far as the law is concerned, in the country mills the new Factories Bill will not affect that?—Decidedly so; because, even supposing we accepted the Conciliation award, which is very doubtful, I think we still need some consideration from the Arbitration Court. The Court might not fix the country mills hours at forty-seven. This Act fixes it at forty-four.

5. Do you know that the mills in other parts of the colony—down South, for instance—have accepted the forty-eight hours per week recently?—I understand such is the case. I do not think there will be any great objection for us to accept the same for our country mills in the North. If the workers had asked for forty-eight hours a week then they would have got it; but they ask for an increase of wages.

6. You say at the present time you have to pay time and a quarter for overtime?—Yes.

7. And in the country mills also?—I think so. Except in cases of repairs when the mills are not running. I have always paid it.

8. *Mr. Bollard.]* How long has your company been in existence, Mr. White?—As nearly as possible, twelve years. I have been connected with the Auckland company for twenty-two years.

9. What is the capital?—About a million and a quarter pounds.

10. What percentage has been paid?—When the company was formed there was a guarantee for 4 per cent. for four years. I think there was 10 per cent. paid for two years, then there was an alteration made and we relinquished the 10 per cent.—some did not. We took shares after that,