

*Witness* Yes, in which at present we are endeavouring to compete with the imported article. We have gone to some considerable expense in importing lasts, and in all our imports that is our first consideration. We select the most up-to-date goods, and copy them if possible. By branding them as having been made in New Zealand the sale would be affected, I can safely say, to the extent which I have mentioned. When I say so, I do not mean that we are deceiving the public. We do not sell them as imported goods, in keeping the general stock which we keep on our hands, and a good many purchase them under the impression that they are imported goods. I might say that this opinion is universally indorsed by the trade in New Zealand. The next part I have to deal with is touching section 38, regarding the holidays. I hope that the Legislature will not impose any further restrictions on manufacturers in the shape of increasing the holidays on which payment is to be received, and from which they receive no remuneration. At the present time I can honestly say that I do not think there is a boot-manufacturer in New Zealand making money, or holding his own for the past eighteen months, owing principally to the increased price of material and the restrictions imposed by Parliament in regard to labour. According to the reading of this section I take it that all youths and women under twenty-one will have to be paid for Christmas holidays, and so forth, outside the statutory holidays. If that be the case, of course it would inflict a very considerable hardship on boot-manufacturers. I do not know that I have much further to say on the matter, nor do I know that that is the intention of this paragraph here. If that be the case I think you will find that the trade will object to it very strongly, and rightly so too.

1 *Mr Fraser* ] What about the slackness of trade?—I cannot say that that affects me to the extent to which it affects the trade in general. So far as we are concerned, our people work from January to January. At the same time, it would affect 75 per cent. of the trade.

2 *Mr Luke*.] It would affect you if you had not so many branch establishments?—That is so.

3 You say that the upper grades of the trade would be affected. I suppose that is the class that people are very critical about, and in regard to which they have a prejudice against colonial goods?—That is so.

4. And you think that the statutory holidays should be paid for?—We have no objection to that, but to increasing them.

5. Assuming that any of your apprentices were away—say, in the case of a short illness—and you had not paid them, would you expect them to make up that time?—According to our apprenticeship indentures, but I do not think that we have two apprentices in the place.

6. *Mr McLaren*.] Have you many customers who ask for colonial goods?—Not outside the heavy makes. Of course, it is known that that class of stuff is not imported. I can indorse Mr Pryor's statement with regard to clothing departments. I know a man here holding a very good position who went to a tailor and expected an English worsted suit. The man showed him colonial worsted, and it was very good. He made up the suit, and the customer found out afterwards that it was colonial, and he never went back to the tailor again. He thought that English worsted was better for keeping its shape and made up better.

7 *Mr Hardy* ] How do you account for the people demanding imported instead of colonial-made goods?—Because they have got an idea that the imported is better-fitting and better workmanship.

8. Have we not got as good workmen here?—Yes.

9 As good plant and machinery?—As good plant as in any part of the world to-day.

10. Is your trade increasing?—When I push it.

11 It is not going far behind?—No.

12. Is it because you have not been making as good articles that the people ask to have imported?—No; it is because the general public have a tendency to appreciate the imported article.

13. Is it the want of loyalty to one's country?—I can only speak for myself.

14. Is it your opinion that the manufacturers in New Zealand have been making as good boots as the imported?—They have, and to-day there is stuff here equally as good as there is to be found in any part of the world.

15. Do you think there is better?—No; you might pick out a few equal, but not better. If you wish, I can give you the names, but I do not think it would be right, it would be only advertising them.

16. Then, you are of opinion that you make as good boots here as you import?—Yes.

17 But you have not got the public to believe so?—That is so.

18. Is it because you have been making shoddy and putting it on the markets?—It is just the reverse.

19. Is it that there has been a demand for good stuff, and you have been giving them shoddy?—No. I know that at one time we could not import stuff of a low-enough grade; now we cannot give that stuff away.

20. There is an advertisement in to-day's paper where there is a firm advertising boots made in America, and some in England under certain brands?—No doubt.

21 If you could supply good stuff, would it not pay you better to do so?—Yes.

22. Would it not be better to hand it down as "Hannah's best"?—We have been endeavouring to do that for a long time. For your information I might tell you that at one time we had a very loyal Premier and a very loyal Attorney-General. These two gentlemen came in, and I served them myself. They wanted colonial goods, and I certainly showed them good stuff as well as imported stuff. The Premier took three pairs of the imported, and the Attorney-General two; so there is your loyalty. I might say that another point I think it would be very interesting to know is what a holiday means to me. I would give you the accurate figures.