

Examination of Mr. Fisher, of Montreal, Woollen Manufacturer.

How long have you been in business or in your present factory?—Have been seven years in business, and two in the factory. Previous to commencing the factory in Canada, was part owner of a factory in Yorkshire, England, and took part in the management.

What is the extent of your business; the capital involved in it. Tell us in round numbers if you please?—\$100,000 in machinery and property.

That does not affect the wool that you buy?—No.

How many hands do you employ?—About 125.

What class of wools do you make?—Tweeds, heavy over-coatings, blanket coatings, heavy naps and beavers, and some tweeds of a cheaper kind than usually made in Canada. We make a different class of goods from what we manufactured before.

Under what disadvantage does your special business suffer under the present tariff and competition with the United States?—We suffer largely from the want of skilled labour, and the fact that we are so near to the manufacturing districts of the United States, who are protected doubly from what we are, which makes it difficult to keep our skilled labour when we get it.

What effect has their protection in affecting you. Do you pay more wages or do they?—We require to pay as high wages as the manufacturers in the United States for skilled labour, and it is more difficult to keep our skilled labour when we get it, because we cannot replace a man. If he does not suit us well it is difficult to replace him. We have to send for one. I brought all our leading men from England. I brought twenty families from England to this country.

How many souls did that make altogether?—Altogether there were about fifty souls.

How many of that number were skilled hands?—Over thirty.

When you get them here you have to pay them as high wages as they can get at the manufactories in the States?—Yes. When they become thoroughly acquainted with the manufactures in the States they require as much, and it is more difficult to replace a man when we lose him than it is in the States.

Do you mean dollar for dollar when you speak of paying, or that our dollar is worth \$1.16 of theirs?—We pay our really skilled men, of whom we require a large number, more than they do in the United States, gold for gold. We pay our heads of departments more than they do in the United States. I don't say that applies to every woollen manufacture, but to my own particular business.

There are so many sets in a factory are there not?—Mine is somewhat different from a good many.

But merely to approximate it relatively to others?—Our sets are different. They are of a much larger stamp, and turn out a much greater weight of wool than in those in the country.

Do you have competition in the markets?—Our competition is with England entirely.

Has the English manufacturer any advantage over you?—He gets his skilled labour much cheaper, and there is no difficulty in replacing it.

Do you pay higher for skilled labour than the States. I refer more particularly to the heads of departments?—We have to divide it into about ten different departments in our trade, and we have to pay those ten men more. We have to give them a higher wage to induce them to settle in the isolated parts.

Taking the whole staff, do you pay as much for labour as the States, man for man?—I have no doubt we do for the amount of perfect work done. I mean by that, that we have to initiate a great number of people who could not be employed in a factory without causing great damage.

You have mentioned the labour difficulty. Is there any other?—Well my machinery is of course imported from Great Britain, and the cost of carriage is very heavy, and places us under some disadvantage. Our material is not all pure wool. We make some use of old wool which we renew. Our material is not so cheap as it is in England, I think.