

so frequently. They never like to be brought back to the mines from which they desert, and if they know that they will almost certainly be recaptured should they desert, they will not run away.

But it is difficult to recognise a kaffir.—I don't know if you are acquainted with the togt law in force in Natal. There they have headmen, who are appointed over the kaffirs. He knows his boys, and it is his duty to bring back runaways. But that, again, is simply an administrative matter.

You say that it does not matter whether a mine is over-capitalised or not, it would not affect the working costs. It will affect the dividends, though?—Yes; I repeat it might affect the shareholders, but it has nothing to do with the working costs.

It speaks for itself that it affects the payability of the mine. If a mine with a capital of one million sterling paid 5 per cent., the same mine with two millions capital would pay only 2½ per cent.?—Yes, but you cannot find out whether a mine is over-capitalised or not until the capital is exhausted.

*Mr. Hugo.*

When you referred to dynamite, what did you mean by agents' charges?—It is admitted that Messrs. Lippert, and Lewis and Marks, both get a royalty on dynamite.

But you refer to agents' charges?—Yes; but dynamite is sold only by Lippert or his agents.

Do you know the amount of royalty?—No; but I know that the price charged—that is, 85s. per case—leaves about 40s. per case for dividends.

*Chairman.*

You are the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce?—Yes.

Mr. A. A. NOBLE was next examined, and stated that he was a merchant residing in Johannesburg, and Chairman of the Mercantile Association.

He said he confirmed the evidence of Mr. Pistorius, and he had made a few notes in addition which he would give. Proceeding, he said:—Under the heading of railways, I would give one instance in addition to what has already been given to show the very high rate charged by the Netherlands Company on South African produce. The rate from Winburg Road to Mid-Vaal, a distance of 150 miles, is 6s. 8d. per ton for the whole distance. The rate from Mid-Vaal to Johannesburg—52 miles—is 13s. 4d., or double the amount for one-third the distance. Bearing on the lack of encouragement given by the railway in favour of the Transvaal farmer, I have at present a consignment of hay from Standerton, which left that village on the 27th April. The hay was delivered this morning after three applications to the railway station to see what had become of it. No explanation of the delay is given, and as this was a trial consignment, it is quite possible that had it come within reasonable time two or three further consignments would have been here now. There is another point we desire to bring out, namely, the manner in which the Netherlands Railway make use of the clause referring to goods carried at owner's risk. There is an instance of a consignment—a truck load of grain bags—being despatched from Delagoa Bay in June last year. It has not yet been delivered, and the railway department repudiates its liability under the clause that the goods were carried at owner's risk, and as they were lost the company was not responsible. The matter of expropriation of railways having been dealt with very fully by preceding witnesses, I desire merely to convey to you that the feeling of the commercial community is entirely in accord with expro-

priation. The commercial community would hail with much satisfaction the nationalisation of the railway, and is strongly of opinion if the railway were under competent Government officers many of the complaints which have been justly made against the Netherlands Company would be done away with, and the railway could be in many ways of much more service to the community. To reduce the cost of living so as to enable a reduction of wages to be made, I would suggest that the whole of the special duties on foodstuffs now in force, and those held in abeyance by the Government, be abolished entirely. As an illustration, take a case of jam which costs in Europe 18s. 6d. It pays to the Government of this State 12s. special duty, and 1s. 7d. *ad valorem* duty. In 1896 jams and confectionery, weighing 1,278,130 lbs., valued at £26,393, were imported, and upon these items alone the special duty was £15,976 12s. 6d., and ordinary duties, £2,375. Thus there was £18,350 taxation in one year upon articles which form a regular portion of diet among the poorer portions of the community. Milk, which costs the same in Europe, bears no special duty, and is sold in Johannesburg at 28s. per case, whereas the price of jam is 42s. It is needless to give any further details on this point. The removal of special duties will invariably cause larger consumption. As an instance, during 1895, when special duties were on, pork was imported weighing 432,980 lbs., and valued at £17,015. In 1896, while the special duty was suspended, the import amounted to 1,529,310 lbs., valued at £51,943. As a further relief to the commercial community, I would suggest that the transfer duty on landed property be reduced. This, of course, will bear also on mining properties, and we think should be reduced. Regarding the Pass Law, much has been said before this Commission for and against this Law, and I may venture also to say that, in my opinion, the law is a good one in the main. But it requires amendment in some clauses. The clause which stipulates that a pass should be renewed on the first of every month is unworkable, and frequently causes innocent natives to be arrested and fined before their employers have had time to get a renewal of the pass. An instance came to my notice in which a van-driver was arrested on his master's van on the 1st April, at 11 o'clock in the morning. This arrest took place in spite of the fact that the man was in possession of his pass and badge for the month of March. It is acts such as these which make natives from other States afraid to come here in search of work, and when they come they demand higher wages to cover such risks. It would be a good thing if the passes could be taken for a longer period than one month. In Kimberley, where I formerly lived, it was possible to take out a native pass for twelve months, all payments for that time being paid when the pass was taken out. A point which I have been asked to bring forward specially is that relating to sweepstakes and lotteries. We feel that the evil is growing so rapidly that something should be done to put a stop to it. It is reported to me on good authority that during the last race meeting over £100,000 was spent over these lotteries and sweepstakes. It is in the experience of many traders that they cannot obtain payment during the currency of these sweepstakes. We also feel it is a cause of dishonesty. An instance was brought to my notice this morning. I cannot say it is a positive fact, but I believe it is true that recently a youth took three tickets and paid for them in postage stamps. I think your recommendations might do something in that respect.

Mr. de Beer

Why was not the matter of sweepstakes referred to in the statement of the Chamber of Mines? Should it not have been referred to by the joint associations? I can only explain its omission as being an oversight.

I have seen the crowd so large on race days that you could not get through