

these recommendations to the Government that the consumer will get the profit thereof. I have been answered that competition will bring that about, but I do not believe that, because I have now found out that instead of competition, a combination exists, and consequently what the Government will lose in import duties, and what the railway will lose by giving a reduction in rates will go into the pockets of the combination, and not to the benefit of the consumer.—I think it is only fair to the trade that I should be given a chance of replying to the statement. In the first instance in the Chamber of Commerce there are over one hundred wholesale firms represented, and the competition amongst them is of the keenest nature, and I will say positively, as an active member and vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce, that there is no combination whatever for any one article or any combination of articles. The total number of merchants' licences issued during the previous year was 1,400, and it must be evident that it is impossible to make a combination, and, further, if the Chairman would be good enough to enquire from some of the members of the Commission he would find that not only are we in competition with ourselves here, but the keenest competition also exists between ourselves and the merchants of Port Elizabeth, East London, Durban, and Delagoa Bay. It is absolutely impossible to have a combination, and the Chairman has been misinformed, and, therefore, as a merchant myself engaged in business, I will assure him, and furnish him with a list of prices which can easily be checked, showing that the main items now supplied to the mines are being sold for actual cost price or below it.

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Mr. Albu.

I admit that competition is very keen, not only here, but among Home merchants trading for this market.—Competition for every article is very keen.

Then what do you think you could get dynamite for if you had free trade?—I think I must be like the other dynamite witness, and say I don't know.

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Chairman.

I thank Mr. Hosken for attending.

The Commission then concluded its public sitting, the Chairman making a closing speech, as follows:—

Gentlemen, I have heard from the secretary, with pleasure, that there are no more witnesses. I think everybody will be pleased, with me, that our labours, so far as the hearing of witnesses goes, are finished, and I think we have obtained sufficient evidence to enable us to work out satisfactorily the duty we have before us. Perhaps it has been thought that our work has been difficult and troublesome; and, perhaps, it is true, at times, monotonous, but, as for myself, I can say I have carried on this work with pleasure and ambition, because I feel, and I think the other members of the Commission feel with me, that it is a work for the good of the Republic in general. It is my duty to thank the members for their co-operation so far in public, and for the support given me as Chairman of this Commission, and I hope when we further have the several testimonies before us to draft our report and recommendations, that we shall co-operate together harmoniously, and keep in view the interests of the mining industry, and especially those of the Republic in general. I think everybody feels with me that we have a difficult task resting upon our shoulders, if we are to realise what is expected of us. I know our work will probably be submitted to criticism, but that will not prevent us acting in accordance with our honest convictions in making our report and recommendations on the work for which the Government has placed us here. It is also my duty to thank Mr. Bosch, the interpreter, with whose work I may say I am satisfied. I think it is also my duty to take

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Chairman's Closing Remarks.

this opportunity to mention the reporters of the different newspapers, who, from the first day to the last, have attended our meetings, for the quiet way in which they have done their work, and for the faithful application they have shown. I think the public in general, both inside and outside this country, owes a great debt of gratitude for the reports given by them, and I may say their chiefs ought to give them a holiday and a bonus.

Mr. Joubert.

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ed. I only want to thank our Chairman for the able manner in which he has conducted our meetings, and I hope the result of this Commission will be a weight in the scale in which many questions will be solved. For myself, as Minister of Mines, I have obtained very useful information during the session. I myself have perused the newspapers, and, as far as I have seen, the reporters have done their work ious re-
lestrable. impartially and well. I hope that as the result of the Commission our report will be unanimous, and that it will do good for the mining industry.
