

198. It struck me that your estimate of 1s. 6d. to 2s. did not cover all the items ?—The tram is separate.

199. You mentioned that the reduction in the tariff has not benefited you ?—No.

200. Have you not received any increased orders ?—No ; we received one or two small orders, but nothing to speak about.

201. Have you any timber in this district suitable for railway-sleepers, as I notice that there is a tremendous quantity of imported sleepers here ?—The Government, of course, take white-pine creosoted.

202. I think we ought to keep the money in our own country and spend it here for the benefit of our own industry ?—Yes ; I agree with you. I should like to say that the Government charge us 2s. for matai ; but it is difficult to sell. We did cut a few sleepers, but the Government refused to take matai as sleepers, and yet they charge us 2s. a hundred for it.

203. Do you think the area allowed the miller is sufficient for a first-class plant ?—No, I do not. I think the area should be increased according to the horse-power of the mill, on the Tasmanian principle. A mill with 20-horse-power plant should receive so many acres of bush, and correspondingly increased as the horse-power of the plant is greater. Eight hundred acres is inadequate for a mill.

204. *Mr. Barber.*] With regard to the timber areas, you said you considered the area allowed was too small. You say you are allowed 200 acres, and then a reserve of 600 acres ?—Yes.

205. And that it lasts six years ?—The whole thing lasts six years.

206. That is by utilising the reserve as well ?—Yes.

207. Now, with regard to the price, you say the timber costs you 8s. 6d., and that includes everything ?—Yes.

208. And you mentioned a certain price at which you sell the timber ?—Yes.

209. You charge a different price to the builder as compared with the timber-merchant ?—Yes.

210. You say the average net selling-price is 9s. to 9s. 6d. : is that to the merchant or builder ?—That is the average price to builders and merchants.

211. And do you classify the timber before you sell it ?—Yes ; we have graders.

212. That is the total average for the lot ?—Yes.

213. In getting 9s. 6d. for the timber you say there is a very small profit ?—Yes.

214. And then you told us that in fixing your prices you have provided for a dividend in the 8s. 6d. ?—I do not think so.

215. You said it included the interest and capital ?—Yes, that is right.

216. So that the 1s. is over and above the net cost ?—Yes.

217. Can you tell us the price you are charging for ordinary red-pine to the merchant, for instance ?—We sell it to the merchant at about 7s. to 7s. 6d.

218. And have you any idea what he is charging ?—No ; he has to charge in respect to the towns. Dunedin rates are something similar to Invercargill rates.

219. Is that on the train ?—On the truck at Riverton.

220. You mentioned 7s. 9d.—Yes.

221. That is to the timber-merchant ?—No, not to the timber-merchant. The timber-merchant averages from 7s. to 7s. 6d. We can give the timber-merchant any discount ; he gets very often 25 per cent. off the list.

222. Can you tell me at what price this timber that you are selling to the merchant at 7s. is being disposed of to the consumer in Invercargill ?—The merchant in Invercargill sells timber for 10s. 6d. less 5 per cent.

223. So that he is making a very much larger profit than the miller according to your figures ?—We get 7s. 9d. on the trucks—that is, to the Invercargill builder, not the merchant. From the Invercargill merchant we get considerably less, because we have to give him a considerably larger trade discount. We supply to the merchant at 10½ to 12½ per cent. off the price-list. That is the basis, and we pay railage and cartage on that.

224. Do you consider the timber-merchant is justified in charging from 14s. 6d. for ordinary building red-pine, and for selected red-pine up to £1 6s. ?—Of course, if a builder sells timber at 14s. he does not get any bigger profit, because he has to pay the miller an increased price. The price I gave was for rough timber—for scantlings.

225. That does not apply here ?—No.

226. You charge 10s. 6d. delivered in Invercargill ?—Yes.

227. Have you had an order for timber to be delivered at Wellington : have you ever sent any to Wellington ?—I have sent beech to Wellington.

228. And you are not confined only to timber-yards ?—We will supply anybody who gives us an order.

229. Really, your association is not altogether a close corporation—not a tied house ?—Oh, no !

230. You supply any one ?—Yes.

231. *Mr. Ell.*] What is the railway freight per hundred to Christchurch ?—5s. 8d. That is the new rate.

232. And you are prepared to supply timber to anybody in Christchurch whether a builder or a timber-merchant at the same rate at which you supply anybody here ?—Yes.

233. And they pay railage ?—Yes.

234. You have no restrictions in regard to your customers ?—Oh, no !

235. Have you any restrictions with regard to supplying people in Invercargill ?—No.

236. Anybody can get the timber ?—Yes.

237. At those rates ?—A builder can get the timber at 5 per cent., and a merchant will get it at from 12 to 15 per cent., discount, but the private person does not get the benefit of the 5 per cent.

238. But supposing a builder in Christchurch is not in any builders' association, will you supply him with timber ?—Yes.