

239. At the discount rate?—Christchurch is a free port for us. We can give him, I dare say, 10 per cent.

240. Supposing a builder in Christchurch is not in the builders' association, will you give him the same discount as a builder in the builders' association?—In Christchurch?

241. Yes?—Our association does not extend to Christchurch, and neither does our trade discount. We do not make any distinction between the builders in Christchurch and the builders in Dunedin—we have no trade discount. We can make our own bargain with the men in Christchurch.

242. Then, in regard to the timber-merchants in Christchurch?—It is the same way. We can give the timber-merchants in Christchurch 40 per cent. discount if we wish.

243. Now, you have a builders' association here?—Yes.

244. If there is a builder outside the association, and he is a good mark and prepared to pay you cash, would you give him the same discount you would give to a builder in the association?—We are supposed to acknowledge the builders' association and just give them the discount, but I do not know whether that association is in existence now.

245. What I wish to understand is this: Are you prepared to supply timber to a builder outside the builders' association, giving him the same discount as you would to a man in the association?—Yes, we are.

246. What objections do you find to the sale of beech or the use of beech?—The objection they have, of course, is that it twists, and it is not so suitable for framing and for general housework as red-pine. They certainly think very highly of it for manufacturing work—chair-work and cabinetwork.

247. Are you aware it is very largely used in New Zealand for manufacturing into furniture?—The use of it is growing.

248. Have you known it used in building houses?—Yes, to a small extent.

249. Have you any evidence to show it is durable?—We have the evidence of Kirk's "Fauna and Flora of New Zealand." It all depends on the class of the timber. There are different classes, and one is diametrically opposite to the other.

250. I understand, if beech is cut in the summer-time it is more likely to warp than if cut in the winter?—Yes.

251. Is your beech cut in winter?—No, we cut every month.

252. Is not that creating a certain amount of loss in cutting it at a time not suitable?—We cannot stop the mill. If we did that we should have to close the mill up.

253. Then you are not restricted by the Forestry Department as to the time of the year you should cut the timber?—No.

254. And they allow you to cut it at a time when it does damage to the timber?—Yes.

255. It certainly does damage it to cut it in the summer-time?—Yes.

256. And there would be less loss if cut at the proper time?—Yes.

257. And you would get a better price?—Yes; and it would not warp so much.

258. And it would get a good character in the market?—Yes. It has only a good character in the market according to the grade, and there are men who know how to cut it and stack it. The market has been shut out in Australia.

259. Have you found that if it has been seasoned and properly cared for it is liable to warp?—No, not if seasoned properly.

260. If it is properly cared for and properly seasoned then it is a useful timber?—Yes, it is a splendid timber—as good as any timbers we sell.

261. Do you not think it means a national loss if it is not properly cared for and seasoned?—Yes, certainly.

262. You say the sale of timber in Invercargill has fallen off considerably?—Yes.

263. Is that due to the falling-off in building operations?—Yes, not only in Invercargill, but in Canterbury and Otago. It has fallen off considerably—there is absolutely nothing doing.

264. And the shutting-down of your mills is owing to your not being able to get a market for your timber?—Yes. There is a further falling-off, and if it gets as bad as it was weeks ago we shall have to close again.

265. *Mr. Arnold.*] With regard to the last statement you have made, that the cessation of building operations has caused a falling-off in the sale of timber, may it not be the other way about—that the increased price now for sawn timber has been the cause of the falling-off in building operations?—I do not think for one moment that that is so. The price-list has been in force for nearly two years, and it is rather late nowadays to talk about the price of timber. And then, supposing the price were increased by 1s., the difference in the price of building a cottage is not an appreciable one: it would not stop a man from building a cottage. The difference would be only about £12 or £14 in a small cottage, and if a man was anxious to build a home for himself that would not stop him from building. The other requirements in a house are much dearer than sawn timber. People talk about a house containing 250 pounds' worth of timber, whereas the timber only costs perhaps £100, and the ironmongery, &c., considerably more.

266. So that, while the price of other requisites may have increased, and have something to do with the present cessation of building operations, the increase in the price of timber has not?—It certainly has not.

267. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Your firm is one of the largest timber-merchants in Southland?—No, not by any means.

268. You had a hand in fixing the price of timber in connection with the association?—Yes.

269. Are the prices satisfactory to you?—Yes.

270. Have the prices been complained of by other millers as being too low?—Yes, there is a general complaint now and again when a depression comes on, and when prices are not satisfactory; but there is no possibility of getting a rise in prices—we are not anticipating that.