

271. In framing that uniform list of prices, were there not some members of the association who thought the prices fixed were rather high?—I do not think so. I dare say some lines when under discussion would be remarked on, but the prices were agreed to by the associated millers as satisfactory.

272. Have you adopted any improved methods of bush-working which would reduce the cost of production in recent years?—No. Had improved methods been used it would have led to a lessening in the cost of production; but it has not done so.

273. You say that your mill, which cost £3,000, at the end of six years is reduced in value to £750?—Roughly, £750.

274. In allowing for depreciation do you wipe off entirely the cost of that mill?—Oh, no! We wipe off in that mill from £300 to £350 a year; it is very necessary to do that.

275. How are the trade discounts regulated?—By the association.

276. In what way—by what system?—The system is that the various towns are considered, and the question of position is considered with those towns, and we make the trade discount, which is satisfactory to the builders in those parts of the district. In ports like Oamaru, Timaru, and Christchurch, where other timbers come in, we leave it open.

277. Do the Southland millers outside your association cut your prices at all?—Yes, very considerably so.

278. They keep you in check as it were?—Yes, keep us in a state of irritation.

279. What was the extent of your beech-export before the Federal tariff?—Per year?

280. Yes?—Of course it was not much. I should say we sent away three trucks a week. It is a very small quantity, but you cannot get a bottom for it—you must put it into the Union Company's boats.

281. What is the value of the year's export?—It is worth about £40 a week—about £2,000 a year.

282. Can you supply us with a list of the wages paid to the different sawyers and workers in your mills?—Yes, I have a list here.

283. How much timber do you get off an acre?—About 7,000 ft. to 8,000 ft.

284. And you allow 6d. per hundred feet for depreciation?—Yes, it averages that.

285. And on the 800 acres there would be £40?—Yes. It comes to an average of £300 for the six years.

286. Do you think there are too many sawmillers in Southland?—I do, at the present time.

287. Have there been any failures amongst them?—No. One or two small men have failed.

288. Have you any idea as to how many mills are now idle in this district?—There are about eight or nine associated mills idle, and a considerable number of unassociated mills.

289. *Mr. Mander.*] How much timber does it take to build an ordinary workman's cottage—a five- or six-roomed cottage?—From 15,000 ft. to 16,000 ft.

290. And at 1s. a hundred that amounts to what?—£7 10s.

291. Do you think an extra shilling a hundred would prevent people from building cottages?—Certainly not.

292. Then you do not attribute the stagnation in the building trade to that?—No.

293. The principal cost you think is in the other details?—It is in the contractor's price and the ironmongery.

294. You spoke of 800 acres altogether not being sufficient to build a mill for?—Yes, it is not sufficient.

295. Would it not be sufficient in some cases where the timber stood very thickly?—It would be sufficient in clean bush.

296. But in some instances it requires a great deal more?—In country such as we were looking at yesterday in the Riverton district it would be too little.

297. Do you not think the Government should extend the area?—It was proposed to be extended. We approached the Government, and made a representation to them to give us larger areas, and it is under consideration now.

298. You spoke of your mill being worth £700 when your bush is cut out. Do you mean to say that the mill is worth that on the ground?—Yes, on the ground.

299. Without any cost of labour at all?—Yes.

300. Do you think it would be so at the present time?—Yes, the main thing is the engines. They practically cover the greater part of the cost, and if they are good engines they are generally saleable. As to the other part of the gear there is not much in it.

301. *Mr. Ell.*] You say you think the timber areas ought to be allotted according to the value of the mill and plant?—Yes, the horse-power and the value of the mill plant.

302. If a man put up a very large and costly mill plant he could claim a considerable area?—Yes.

303. That would give a monopoly to the man with the large amount of capital?—It would not be in the nature of a monopoly, because a man would not be foolish enough to put up a large plant in hilly country such as we were looking at in the Riverton district. That would be a matter for the Government. I do not think the regulations provide for an excessive amount to begin with.

304. You say you have supplied a considerable amount of timber from time to time for mining purposes. What for?—For flooring, stoping, and shafting work.

305. What kind of timber?—Beech.

306. What mines have you working in this district?—The Nightcaps—that is the principal mine.