

and it pays them to spend from £50,000 to £100,000 on machinery. Our bush is very limited. It pays them to put up machinery to save even a penny per hundred feet. They can produce timber, I am quite satisfied, at less than half what it costs us to produce it here.

18. *Mr. Hanan.*] As to Oregon pine?—I am inclined to think that Oregon pine has come to New Zealand to stay. It will always be here, and I am inclined to think also that it always should be here. Of course, I know that if you increased the duty to-morrow it would benefit me enormously. If you remove the duty it will injure us. We are buying Oregon in Dunedin now, and we are buying it largely in place of kauri, and for long lengths. It is difficult to get long lengths, 50 ft. and upwards, in red-pine; still we have got lengths of 50 ft. in rimu, and we could get them to-morrow, but it costs very much more to get those lengths. Oregon is lighter to handle, but I do not think it is more durable. Where we have seven or eight thousand feet of timber per acre, I have seen 250,000 ft. of Oregon timber per acre. With regard to the wages paid on the Pacific Coast, I have here an American journal, which, they say, is the biggest journal on earth. It describes the wages paid in British Columbia, and states, "From one-half to nine-tenths of the entire pay-roll is made up of Orientals. Graphic demonstrations of this fact may be found in another column, where pictures are shown of Hindoos and Japanese at work in Canadian mills. But it is not necessary to depend upon pictures. The evidence of those who are familiar with British Columbia and who visit the province frequently is in the same direction. There are some mills that use no Orientals; but there are many others who employ a majority of Orientals, and comparatively few that do not employ some of them. These men are Chinese, Japanese, and Hindoos chiefly. They all work for less wages than the native labourer of either the United States or Canada." The same journal points out that on the 26th December last a cargo of 3,000,000 ft. was being loaded for New Zealand. This is from Portland, Oregon. I may say that the average-sized mill over there will cut 200,000 ft. a day. Here is a picture of a train-load of logs coming in, which perhaps the Commission would like to see. I dare say it is not generally known that they work longer hours over there.

19. *Mr. Jennings.*] What is the difference?—They work from nine to ten hours—ten is the general thing. The freight is 3s. per hundred feet from Puget Sound to New Zealand, and similarly from British Columbia. It varies, however, very rapidly. We had a cargo of Baltic landed in Dunedin the other day from Sweden. It came fifteen thousand miles, and the freight was 3s. 6d. in a sailing-vessel with a million feet on board. The total freight was about £1,750, and I understand it paid them very well. Now, our railage from Orepuki to Dunedin is 3s., a distance of about 170-odd miles, so that the freight on timber from Puget Sound is about the same as railage from Orepuki to Dunedin. Several millions of Oregon have been coming into Lyttelton, and it is also coming into Timaru. Not much as yet has come into Dunedin—probably only half a million or so: but if the Oregon displaces red-pine in Lyttelton it follows that the West Coast will suffer. Then the West Coast will look for markets in Timaru and Oamaru, and also in Dunedin, so that our competition will be increased very largely, and we shall inevitably suffer because of the pressure from up there. Again, if this should eventuate, the wages on the West Coast will fall for a certainty. I think that is all I have to say with regard to Oregon. I should like to say that red-pine—rimu—is cheaper here than in any other town in New Zealand. The railage from here to Mosgiel is more than to Dunedin, although Mosgiel is nearer, the reason being that the railways have to compete with shipping at Dunedin. There are about seventy sawmills from the Catlin's southward. I think there are about twenty-three mills in our association—or so-termed association. Catlin's is in Otago. We have no difficulty in good times when there are plenty of orders in adhering to our price-list, but immediately there is a depreciation in trade you will see that it is extremely difficult to get even our members to adhere to a stated price. I may say that the last advance that took place was about eighteen months ago, and it applied only to certain places. From the Dunedin merchants we got the same price four or five years ago. We are selling now to Canterbury at about the same price as three or four years ago. We send timber to Christchurch from here, and also to Oamaru and Timaru by boats, which is cheaper than by rail. The rate to Christchurch has recently been reduced I think. It is about 5s. 8d. now. We could send it much cheaper by water than that, but the difficulty is to put it on board, which costs about 2s. At Colac we had a mill, and we had a large jetty. The jetty cost £1,800 to £2,000, and we have abandoned it. That money is gone. With regard to timber per acre down here, the average bush will run about seven or eight thousand, but I have some that will not go more than four thousand. I have seen in the North Island fully a hundred thousand per acre. Our best bush down here has been cut out. Here is a sawmiller's list in competition with us delivered in Dunedin. His price is 7s. 6d. He lives at Orepuki. Our mills are in different localities.

20. *Hon. the Chairman.*] How many mills are you interested in?—Six.

21. Where do they range from?—Woodend, Gorge Road, Mabel Bush, Waianiwa, Colac, Grove Bush. One was burned down twelve months ago at Ruahine.

22. What about the output on the average at present when working full time?—We have never worked any of our mills full time.

23. You are always ahead of your orders?—Yes, always. Our biggest production is about 8,000 a day at one mill, another about 6,000, another 4,500, another 4,000, and another 3,000.

24. Then, what is your production just now—is it much less than that?—Yes. I only gave you there an average production. It has been much greater than that at times. Now, it is about, in one mill, 7,000, and in the others respectively 4,500, 4,000, 3,000, and in one 1,500.

25. Have you received orders sufficient to consume your present output?—Yes.

26. *Mr. Hanan.*] Do I understand you to say that it would be in the interests of the individual sawmillers of New Zealand, but not in the true interests of the Dominion that Oregon timber should have a duty on it?—That is a very big question, Mr. Hanan. If I were a Free-trader I should oppose the duty, but if a Protectionist I should say, Put the duty upon it.

27. What is your opinion?—I am inclined to free-trade.