

28. I take it that you think it is in the interests of the Dominion that Oregon should come into New Zealand free?—I am inclined in that direction. It would injure me enormously. I am speaking from the standpoint of the Dominion and the future needs.

29. You would not favour it coming in the bulk free and a duty being put on the sawn timber?—I think that would be very much better, as it would employ labour in cutting it up.

30. Can you give us any information of the number of hours worked by men engaged in milling Oregon timber?—Nine or ten hours—some run two shifts a day.

31. Can you say what are the wages paid to the men?—I have printed evidence. The Hindoos, Japanese, and Chinese get about 3s. 4d. per day.

32. In New Zealand what are the wages paid to the men?—From 8s. to 12s. a day.

33. And what are the average hours worked?—Eight hours.

34. As to getting the timber to market at sea-ports, how do we compare as regards the cost with Oregon pine?—I am satisfied they can put it on board ship at half the price we can put it on the truck—in fact, at less than half the price.

35. Do you export timber?—We send perhaps a truck a month away.

36. What is the class of that timber?—For making broom-handles—white-pine.

37. You did do a big trade in exporting timber at one time?—We did once, but not very much—we are handicapped here by our railage to the Bluff. The North Island people can put it straight on to the boat, but we cannot.

38. What has been the effect of the duty imposed by the Federal Government on New Zealand timber?—It has very much injured our birch trade.

39. And as to the red-pine?—Well, we have never exported red-pine, but they have done so from the West Coast.

40. And totara?—We have never exported any—we have none to export. Not 1 per cent. of our timber is totara.

41. What timber do you obtain from other places that is imported into New Zealand?—Jarrah, ironbark, blue-gum, Baltic, Oregon, yellow-pine, sugar-pine, and several others.

42. In respect to what class of timber is imported timber displacing New Zealand timber?—I dare say you saw yesterday a great many jarrah sleepers stacked up alongside the railway, and for every jarrah sleeper that is used it means a creosoted sleeper less. The Government have up to last year bought considerable quantities of white-pine, red-pine, and miro for creosoting. Of course, if they use jarrah in its place it means so much less native timber, but I do not say that they should not import jarrah sleepers, because jarrah sleepers hold the dog much better than our red-pine, or white-pine, or miro. I do not think it costs much more than a creosoted sleeper.

43. *Mr. Jennings.*] Is that after creosoting?—Yes.

44. They do not hold so well then?—Yes. I think on the straight it is not so bad, but on the curves you can see the momentum of the locomotives and trucks, and it is apt to displace the dog.

45. *Mr. Hanan.*] You do not urge any export duty on jarrah sleepers?—No.

46. Or on any other imported timber?—I cannot do that.

47. Or on anything else so far as timber is concerned?—No.

48. Are your mills paying?—Yes, but there is one that is losing money every day.

49. Where is that situated?—I prefer not to mention it.

50. What is the cause of it?—Bad trade, extraordinary depression, and difficult country to work.

51. You find the conditions vary considerably in your mills in regard to the cost of production?—Enormously.

52. You have seen the mills in the North Island?—I have.

53. How does the cost of production compare there with that in the South Island?—You are speaking apart from kauri, I presume.

54. Yes?—With new mills starting, if they are alongside the railway they can produce for much less than we can. Many of us are a great distance from the railway and we are handicapped in consequence.

55. Can you produce timber here cheaper than they can?—I do not think we can, because their bush is infinitely better than ours.

56. As to the machinery and plant, how does that in the North Island compare with that in the South?—In the North Island so many of them have larger areas than we have that they can afford to put in a better plant, which enables them to produce cheaper. Our areas are in many instances so limited that it will not pay us to do so. Then, again, our bush is so sparse that mills have to be put down that are capable of being removed after one place is cut out. The mills have to be moved a mile or a mile and a half further on. For instance, the mills you saw yesterday at Riverton are larger than some of them, but in rough country a portable engine would be more suitable, where they can move it two miles or so. Of course, that all means expense, but still you have to adapt the machinery to your areas and the topography of your country.

57. Now, in regard to the West Coast?—I know the West Coast fairly well.

58. How does the cost of production compare there with that here?—They have many disadvantages on the West Coast. They have in some places very rough country, but perhaps not as rough as ours. Against that they have better bush than we have and very much cleaner timber. By "cleaner timber" I mean there is more timber that you can dress; and they produce nothing like the amount of second-class timber that we do. Their timber is grown in a milder climate—a warmer climate with more moisture, and it is grown more rapidly than ours. Therefore it is cleaner and softer. I mean by "cleaner" that it is freer from knots, and it is taller than ours, and more regular in size and more even. Of course, they are very much handicapped there on account of not having the regular trade that we have. When I say "regular trade" I am speaking of Dunedin as being in our locality, and all along the line. They have to ship five-sixths of their timber, if not more, to Wellington, or Christchurch, or Timaru; so if they have some advantages they also have their disadvantages.