

86. Would you say that the sawmilling industry of Southland is in a satisfactory and prosperous condition?—Certainly not now.

87. Are the majority of millers paying their way or losing money?—At present?

88. For the last twelve months?—They did twelve months ago—many of them; but even some of them would find a great difficulty to live.

89. Some of them lost money?—I think twelve months ago several of them would make no money at all. The idea was that you only had to get into the timber business to make money, and many of them have gone out of it in sorrow.

90. Would you say the majority of them are losing money?—I am sure some of them are losing money now.

91. But the majority?—I cannot say. I do not know the working-conditions of all the mills, and I know that so many of them never allow sufficient. The end of the year comes and they do not know how it is they have not done better, and not one out of a dozen of them allows sufficient for depreciation and accidents and all sorts of things of that character.

92. Have the mills increased in Southland in the last four years?—Tremendously.

93. To what do you attribute that increase?—The general prosperity. Things were very good some years ago, and there was more demand for timber, and timber was at a better price.

94. Do you look forward to more mills being shut down during the next three or four years?—I certainly do.

95. For the want of orders?—Nothing else, or for the want of a better price.

96. *Mr. Jennings.*] You have been engaged in sawmilling in this part of the Dominion for a number of years?—Yes.

97. And you know the country thoroughly?—I think so.

98. And you are quite satisfied with your answer given to Mr. Hanan about the non-cutting-out of the bush for a long number of years?—Yes, quite satisfied.

99. Have you any idea of the available bush lands in the district, roughly speaking?—It is all timber district.

100. In regard to the destruction of bush by fire, have you had any experience of that?—Yes, I have, to my sorrow.

101. Are you familiar with the Waimarino district?—Yes; I have been through it.

102. There is one mill there that turns out about 34,000 ft. per day—that is a million feet per month; and their cost of production is very much less than that of a mill turning out 4,000 ft. a day?—Yes; look at their production and their life!

103. Are you acquainted with the Powell process of preserving the timber?—I was reading about it with great interest.

104. Would it not be a valuable process for your birch and other soft-wood timbers here?—I think it would. Using it afterwards for furniture purposes.

105. No, for building purposes?—But would not the cost be too great for building? That is what occurred to me. The majority of people, if they can save 1s. a hundred will do so.

106. What is the average per acre paid to the Crown down here?—From 10s. to £1 per acre, or something like that.

107. That is considered in the royalty?—Yes.

108. That is cheap as compared with Maori land at £10 an acre?—Yes, but look at the land. We have not 1 per cent. of totara. Look at the hardwood they have, and we have none here.

109. If you follow out your opinion of free-trade importation of timbers, what would be the result of the Manchurian timbers coming here?—I am frightened of the Manchurian timbers coming in here.

110. I assume you are a Britisher?—I am.

111. If a tax be imposed against us in regard to sending our products to America and other countries, is it fair to let them dump their timber here?—I see no reason why we should injure ourselves. They are injuring themselves if they attempt to injure us. If we can get an article cheaper from abroad I think we should do so, and the labour that would be absorbed in producing that article here could be directed in some other channel which would benefit us all the more.

112. *Mr. Field.*] I judge from what you say that you are a Free-trader by conviction?—Yes, I think so.

113. In everything?—Yes.

114. On all classes of goods?—Yes.

115. But assuming you are running a country with a protective policy and we are protecting some of our industries in this country, do you not think it logical that we should protect our other industries?—You mean, if we do wrong in one thing, why not do wrong in other things. It is a very big question.

116. At any rate, if it is logical to protect one industry it would be logical to protect another?—It would appear to be logical.

117. In reference to the questions put by Mr. Jennings as to the treatment of our goods by the Americans: They, of course, put a heavy tax on our wool, a very severe tax on our best quality, and naturally one which completely shuts out our inferior wools. Then, notwithstanding that, you would not adopt a policy of retaliation?—I think not.

118. You have travelled pretty extensively in Canada and the United States?—Yes, I have lived there.

119. You have seen the timber produced there?—Yes.

120. And seen the timber forests themselves?—Yes.

121. Are you quite satisfied that their timber is practically inexhaustible?—Yes. The Douglas fir, which we call "Oregon" here, I should certainly think to be inexhaustible.