

122. Is it not true that they mill only their larger trees ?—Yes.

123. And leave their smaller ones, which mature much faster than our trees ?—Yes, long before they go to any other forest they will be ready for milling.

124. From that you claim that their Oregon timber is inexhaustible ?—Yes.

125. So that it is useless waiting for their export to this country to cease ?—Oh, yes !

126. There would be no sense in that ?—No sense.

127. Supposing you were the owner, as you probably are, of a piece of land here or in the North Island which was carrying good milling-timber and which would be also fit for farming, and you had no hope of milling it profitably for thirty or forty years to come, what would you do ?—I think I should clear it and put it into grass. You would be losing fifty years' profit, and that with compound interest would be an enormous amount.

128. It would pay you to put it into grass at once ?—Yes.

129. With regard to these railway freights, you say you do not think the Government can very well afford to carry timber at a lower rate ?—No ; I think the rate is very reasonable. Of course, I am not speaking as a customer, but I do not think we have any reason to grumble.

130. You do not think they are charging more on timber than on any other goods ?—I do not think they are. As I say, two-thirds of the trucks that go away full of timber have to come back empty ; they cannot get return freight.

131. Is that so throughout the Dominion ?—The timber is so bulky they cannot get goods to fill the trucks in which it is sent away.

132. You have taken into consideration that the railway people have not to handle it at all ?—I have taken that into consideration, and they have recently reduced the rates to a small extent—to Ashburton, 1s. 8d.—perhaps from 6s. to 4s. 4d.

133. There is no reason, if it is true, as I understand it is, why we should pay more on timber than on any other class of goods ?—No reason whatever. Indeed, I trust we are not doing so.

134. Do you know anything of the class of Oregon pine that comes here ?—It is the ordinary merchantable timber.

135. Does the first-class come here ?—Some first, some second, and some third. The ordinary building-timber is what we call merchantable—floor-joists and suchlike. They have two classes below that again. From what I have seen in Wellington, Christchurch, Lyttelton, and Dunedin, it is the ordinary.

136. Have you seen any first-class landed in Wellington ?—I think I did. The bulk was ordinary merchantable timber. I think I saw some in Stewart's yard.

137. You did not see shipments on the wharf ?—Yes.

138. Did you examine them ?—Yes.

139. How did they strike you ?—As ordinary.

140. As compared with New Zealand timber, how did they strike you ?—Do you mean in houses or in the ground.

141. I mean above ground ?—I am quite sure that rimu will last at least as long as Oregon pine for flooring, and make a very much better floor—it is not so rough.

142. Do you know how much Oregon has come into the country recently ?—I think, within the last twelve months, from fifteen to seventeen millions of feet.

143. And what is our total output in the colony, roughly ?—I think it is getting on for 400,000,000 ft. of all classes.

144. You say that the Oregon is affecting Southland as far as the trade with Christchurch and Timaru, and to some extent Dunedin, is concerned ?—The Southland sawmillers are affected if it comes into Dunedin. A cargo of inferior Oregon was landed in Timaru, and was sold as low as our red-pine, and West Coast red-pine at the same price.

145. You anticipate that the importation of Oregon is going to affect our ordinary trade down in South Canterbury ?—I say, "down to here."

146. The immediate result would be that the West Coast timbers would have to come further south, and affect you. Will not the continued importation result in driving you out altogether ?—We are in hopes that Oregon will increase in price. I am in hopes that it will. But that was a very selfish expression, because the increase in price will affect the Dominion.

147. Then it will not come at all ?—That will be to the disadvantage of the people, will it not ?

148. You admit it is good to have it in large pieces ?—Yes, very long lengths and large sizes. We are importing Oregon into Dunedin now, because the kauri we bought formerly at 8s. 6d. is 18s. 6d. now. It has gone up 10s. in fourteen years.

149. If you were building an ordinary building, and you could get rimu and Oregon at the same price, which would you take ?—I produce rimu.

150. Putting yourself outside that fact—assume that you were an ordinary individual for once ?—I do not think that you should ask me a question of that sort. If I put it in the paper it might influence people.

151. I do not put it offensively ?—I know that you do not. I pulled down a portion of my house last year ; it has been up forty-five years, and the rimu in it was as sound as the day it was put up, but some white-pine I pulled down had got the borer in it. There were some rimu scantlings all sap-wood, and they were as sound as those of all heart.

152. How long have you been importing Oregon into the country ?—The Government imported Oregon sleepers twenty or twenty-five years ago, but they abandoned that because they did not stand in the ground.

153. How long have you been using Oregon timber in the ground ?

*Hon. the Chairman :* I used some of it over forty years ago.