

154. *Mr. Field.*] Did you have experience in Australia as to the life of Oregon there?—No.

155. I was informed that they found there, from the point of view of durability, that Oregon was not equal to our white-pine?—I wish they had. I do not believe it.

156. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I do not think the borer would affect it as soon?—I do not think so.

157. Have you given thought to the question of afforestation?—Yes, I have.

158. Do you think anything would be gained by planting with timber-trees any of our land?—I told some gentleman yesterday that I had seen in Germany a forest planted eighty years ago, and I am sure they could not have produced a larger piece than an eleven-by-three out of the largest tree. I am sure it will pay us if we get 1s. per acre rent for land. Take that at compound interest for, say, eighty years. Then the question arises, if Oregon reproduces itself, and there are such tremendous forests in Siberia and other countries, as to whether it would pay us. Then, the rabbits would destroy the young timber. Then, the great risk of fire. I am under the impression that it would not pay us. I think it would pay us to import timber. It depends upon the land. If you can get land that will produce timber and nothing else, such as the pumice country in the North Island, or that cold kauri land, then it might pay.

159. Do you think it would pay to plant those areas infected with noxious weeds?—Are you speaking of bush or of open country? Open country can get rid of weeds.

160. *Hon. the Chairman.*] It is doubtful whether you can get rid of Californian thistle?—If they do not let it above ground for a couple of years they weaken it.

161. *Mr. Field.*] What do you say is the increase in price to the sawmiller of ordinary milling-timber?—Perhaps it might be 1s. 6d.; but I could not say.

162. Is that more than would be justified by the increased difficulties of getting timber and increased cost of labour?—I do not think so.

163. You think, in view of these facts, that it is a pretty moderate increase?—Yes, I think competition has reduced it to that.

164. What do you think would be a fair thing for the miller, in view of all the risks he runs—a fair profit for him to make on his timber over and above the cost of production?—I should think 3s. per hundred feet.

165. You think that would not be out of the way?—Yes, because it is only one crop, and he runs such risks, and there is such extraordinary depreciation in plants. If it runs to 8s. in cost, I think 11s. for him would not be out of the way.

166. I suppose you would not think it would be fair to subsidise steamers that run timber from Oregon to here? That is what we are doing now?—Are we?

167. We are giving them £10,000 a year?—But that is not to bring over Oregon timber. We are establishing a trade that will pay us more than £10,000. If that is so, it will pay us to do so.

168. If it does not—if the stuff that comes back is Oregon timber, and very little goes from us?—That is another matter.

169. About losses by fires: I want to ask about insurance?—We have got an average clause. They compel us to insure to the full extent, for they suffer so much through fires; and unless we pay right up they only pay proportionately. If a mill costs £1,200 and we only insure £800 on it, they only give us two-thirds of our loss.

170. What about their premiums?—Seven per cent. per annum.

171. When you were asked as to whether the mills were paying, and you said that some were losing money, it is quite certain, I should think, that those gentlemen who closed those two beech-mills must have been losing money?—Of course they were.

172. What did those cost?—Does that include any tramway?

173. Yes, a fair proportion of tramway?—I should think that first mill—of course, this is only a rough statement—cost £3,000, and the other mill, I should say roughly, about the same. That has nothing to do with that long tramway to the railway. That is only for bush tramway.

174. And all that money is lying idle and their machinery is depreciating?—Yes.

175. About the relative cost of producing here and in the North: you said the cost was about the same, speaking generally, because of the better class of bush there?—Yes.

176. Did you see the millers working there and the difficulties they had to overcome?—When I came through, there were very few working. I saw a mill at Taihape, and one at Taumarunui. Then at Kakahi there was a Government mill, where they were cutting sleepers, &c.

177. *Mr. Leyland.*] In your evidence you said that timber-merchants were allowed discounts of from 12 to 12½ per cent. That would mean a difference of 7½ per cent. in favour of the timber-merchant?—Yes.

178. The timber-merchant has to cart the timber to his yard?—Yes.

179. And measure it out again?—Yes.

180. And apart from the cost of labour, rent, taxes, &c., our experience is that it takes 5 per cent. to measure a cargo out?—I quite believe it.

181. That is 5 per cent. gone?—Yes.

182. The cartage would be 5 per cent.: then there would be nothing left?—Yes. Invercargill cannot do it for 25 per cent., but the merchant here cannot help himself, as he has to compete with the sawmillers in the district. I want to correct some of your impressions with reference to the cost in America. As you are aware, I have been to many of the places before your visit and since your visit, and I may say that, apart from wages, the cost of production in the mills, from evidence given before the United States Commission, owing to the rate war makes it considerably less. This letter I hold is a letter from the New Zealand Government Agents at Vancouver. There was another saw-miller who came, and who had very different impressions from my own, and I sent to the New Zealand Agents. They say that at the recent freight-rate fight in the United States, before the Inter-state