

292. Do you import Oregon timber ?—Yes.

293. And sell it in Dunedin ?—Yes.

294. What is the price landed in Dunedin ?—I think a number of merchants in Dunedin divide up the cargo. It was 7s. 8d. a hundred feet, and the duty is 2s. That is the one quality, like ordinary timber I am speaking of at 6s. 6d. Then, the harbour dues are 6d. ; putting it into the yard will cost another 6d. ; and stacking it, something more. Most of the Oregon we had in Dunedin we used in the factory, substituting it for kauri largely.

295. What did it cost landed, or, say, put into the yard ?—11s. 9d. perhaps, roughly. That is for the ordinary quality, not the selected quality.

296. What does it range up to for higher qualities ?—I should think two or three shillings more.

297. And is 17s. the highest price you get for long lengths ?—No, we get more than that. The greater the length the more it costs.

298. What is the selling-price of Oregon in Dunedin—from what to what ?—I think about 17s. upwards.

299. Is 17s. the lowest price ?—No, it is not the lowest.

300. What is the lowest ?—Perhaps 15s.

301. Up to what ?—I should think up to £1 3s., or £1 2s. perhaps.

302. You pictured a somewhat depressing consequence to the West Coast if Oregon importation increases. Have you any remedy to suggest ?—No.

303. Do you know of anything to prevent such a disaster ?—I do not.

304. Is there anything that you know of in America that would prevent the importation : is there anything to prevent the export of bulk Oregon ?—I do not think so. I distinguish between balk and log—I mean squared.

305. Is there anything in the freight or otherwise to deter a New Zealand merchant importing Oregon in the large size rather than the small ?—I do not think so. We used to bring kauri down from the North in balk.

306. Is there any advantage in importing it sawn ?—Not in freight.

307. In any way at all ?—No, because we can saw it up to the desired sizes.

308. The present position is that New Zealand is importing Oregon in sawn ?—Yes.

309. What is it prevents the New Zealand merchant getting it in the balk ?—He would have to pay for the sawing, and there would be the waste in the sawdust and conversion.

310. You think the wages in this country would be dearer than the wages in America ?—I am sure they would be.

311. There was an importation into Australia of beech, which has ceased on account of the tariff ?—Very largely indeed.

312. What is taking the place of the beech in Australia ?—I cannot say.

213. Are they doing without it altogether ?—I do not think they are doing without it altogether. I think the depression over there has affected matters over here, too ; but I have no doubt that the increased duty on beech has affected it, and probably they are using home-grown timbers.

314. I notice that the branch lines in this district are rather numerous ?—They are.

315. Do you not think that the extraordinary development of the railways has tended to bring the bush to the market perhaps faster than is really a good thing to do ?—Well, I do not know ; but it has certainly tended to bring it into the market sooner than otherwise.

316. A reduction in price, you said, would tend to lower wages ?—It would do, undoubtedly.

317. Would it also cause you to give your horses less feed ?—No ; that would not pay. It does not pay to starve the horses.

318. A man could have less feed, but not a horse ?—I would not say that for a moment.

319. Where have the new millers come from that have increased the number so much in Southland recently ?—I think, round the district, like every other business.

320. Men who have been workers have become millers ?—A few of them, not many ; but many others want something to do.

321. Have these come from the capitalist class for a speculation more than anything else, or are they those who have desire to find better employment ?—I think there are all classes.

322. *Mr. Mander.*] You consider it good business on our part, considering that the Dominion is suffering from a rather severe depression at the present time, to allow our difficulties to be increased in that direction by allowing Oregon timber to come here free ?—There is a 2s. duty.

323. Considering that there is a severe depression at the present time, and that the millers are suffering severely in consequence, do you not think it is wise to protect ourselves, and not allow America to make a dumping-ground of our country ?—I think it would benefit the people.

324. Do you not think it would be better for the general public to give a little more for material and have enough to pay for it than have cheap timber and no money to pay for it ?—It is the same old question of free-trade and protection.

325. We put our railways through the country to get out our timber. One of our principal arguments was to get the timber out ?—I remember it well.

326. Do you think it is wise, considering that we have opened up that vast area of country, to allow the industry to suffer and the timber to be destroyed ?—I think it would be very hard upon the sawmillers after you have given them to believe that there would be no reduction in the duty on Oregon—I think it would be a very serious thing to remove the duty from Oregon. I think it would be very wrong indeed.

327. Then, there is the question of fire. Of necessity the timber has to be cleared off the land, and it would not be right to allow it to be cleared in consequence of other timbers coming in ?—If the timber-supply was inexhaustible, I think it would be justified ; if limited, I think it would not.