

9. *Mr. Field.* You meet them a little way to equalise the railage?—Yes. There is no doubt we sell timber at a loss sometimes, but the other places make up for it.

10. *Mr. Hanan.*] What would you say would be the difference in the cost of production per hundred feet between level and hilly country?—From about 1s. 6d. to 2s.: it depends on the hilly country.

11. The nearest mill in cut bush in Southland is how far situated from Invercargill?—It is a good distance from where the actual mill is cutting.

12. I should say the bush where they are cutting. I want to get at how far they have cut out in the radius from Invercargill?—I should say within twenty miles, at any rate.

13. What percentage of the Southland mills is sold here, and what percentage goes out of the district?—That is a difficult question. By far the greater output goes out of Southland—there is no doubt about that.

14. Would you say 75 per cent.?—I should say quite that.

15. Have you any information as to the railway returns?—Am I correct in saying that the output of the Southland mills, according to the railway returns, was for the year to 31st March, 1904, 29,443,500 ft.; 1905, 29,364,300 ft.; 1906, 28,244,250 ft.; 1907, 27,805,950 ft.; 1908, 27,520,100 ft., showing a falling off since 1904 of two million feet?—I am satisfied that is correct, because I looked that up the last time the Arbitration Court was sitting here.

16. And notwithstanding the production has been falling off there has been a substantial increase in the number of mills?—Mills have increased and the production has decreased.

17. Do you know anything about the conditions of the working on the West Coast?—Well, no. I have been through the West Coast mills, but I have not made a special study of them. I have seen them working.

18. You have seen a good deal of the machinery used in the sawmilling?—Yes, throughout New Zealand.

19. So far as being up to date in advanced principles, how do you compare in Southland?—I am quite satisfied we are equal to anything in the Dominion. I have learned nothing. They have some different methods, but the question is whether there is any advance.

20. Now, in regard to the size and quality of the bush here as compared with places in the North Island, what is the position?—The bush here is very inferior in quantity to what it is in the North Island, and also on the West Coast. The West Coast carries far more timber to the acre.

21. Well, am I right in saying that your machinery is as good as that which obtains elsewhere?—Yes.

22. But so far as the bush and quality is concerned, it is better elsewhere than in Southland?—It is better elsewhere.

23. Am I also right in saying that in so far as Southland is concerned the rate of wages paid is better than in other parts?—I cannot answer for that. I think they are as high, and probably higher, because, although we have an award, we pay a higher wage than the award provides for. We have never stuck to the award at all: we have always given good men the highest wage we can.

24. Have you formed any opinion as to what percentage of the number of mills in Southland there are compared to the bush areas not worked out?—When you say the number of areas not worked out you mean not touched at all.

25. Yes. In other words, how many mills have we now?—We have got seventy mills now.

26. Are they likely to increase?—You mean, are there seventy mills untouched?

27. Yes?—That would be impossible to say, because there is a lot of bush not opened up at all. Take Waiapu District: there is a lot of bush over there which may be opened some day. We are told about the illimitable bush in the Catlin's District. I cannot say from personal knowledge, but I have heard statements made that there is enough timber there to last seventy years.

28. But they want the railway?—Yes.

29. Now, comparing the price of Oregon with the price of red-pine in Southland, what is the position?—Oregon does not come into competition in Southland, but it does come into competition in Dunedin, which is one of Southland's best markets.

30. Do you know anything about the quality of Oregon timber?—Oregon is more durable than red-pine.

31. What is the Oregon used for mostly?—For large beams chiefly. It is lighter than red-pine to handle, and stronger. Contractors much prefer to use it for heavy beams.

32. Does it shrink?—No, it is very light and durable.

33. It is used very largely for door-sashes and window-sashes?—Yes, very largely for that, and I have also seen it used for scantlings in houses. I have been told by our representative that he has seen a number of houses in which it is used for scantlings, and it is supplanting red-pine.

34. For certain purposes you would say we cannot very well do without Oregon pine?—Certainly—we must have it for some purposes.

35. It is desirable to have it for certain purposes?—Yes.

36. Do you suggest an increased duty on Oregon pine?—It would certainly be an advantage to the sawmiller.

37. But take it from a national standpoint?—Yes, from a national standpoint I think it would be an advantage, and for this reason: that if by increasing the duty we can stimulate our own industry, then we are spending more money in producing more of our own article, in wages, and in having more artisans and workers, and there would be more settlement.

38. But are you not increasing the price of the building to the worker who wants timber?—To a very small extent. A workman's home as a rule is a five-roomed house which takes about 15,000 ft., and at 1s. a hundred feet that only amounts to £7 10s., and timber cannot come down more than that. It is a very small item.