

same area as a miller whose mill cost £2,000 or £3,000. That is the point I put to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. The small miller can hold the same as the man working on a business-like system. It seems very unfair that the small mill should hold the same area as the large one. But I would limit the area that any miller could hold to a certain number of acres. For instance, I would not allow a man to hold 10,000 acres. I would limit it to, say, 1,500 acres.

131. *Mr. Jennings.*] It is only the Maoris who can give unlimited areas?—That is so. As it is now, the life of a mill is too short. It is only five or six years. I had a mill working on 1,600 acres, and it cut it out in that time. Owing to the configuration of the country it is impossible to know what the life of a mill is. There is no land surveyed, and you often find places that you cannot work by reason of their inaccessibility. It would cost 9s. or 10s. to produce the timber at all.

132. *Mr. Morris.*] Do you think 1,500 acres would be enough for a mill that would cost £5,000?—I am sure it would not be.

133. You are satisfied that the miller would never recoup himself?—I am certain he would not be able to.

134. Are there mills that cost that much?—Yes, but they were erected when there were larger areas—private bush and larger Crown areas, and they were able to secure both.

135. Do you not think it would be better to grant an area according to the money expended?—That is practically what I suggested; but there ought to be a limit: I think there should be a maximum area.

136. You mentioned in your evidence that Oregon was more durable than red-pine?—Yes.

137. Have you had experience of that?—I have seen it in buildings, and it seems to be a very sound timber, and to stand better than the red-pine.

138. Have you had any experience of red-pine in buildings exposed to the weather?—It all depends upon when it was cut. If it is cut in the winter it will last, but, unfortunately, a great deal of it is cut in the summer, and gets dry-rot. The advantage of Oregon is that it all comes here seasoned.

139. *Mr. Mander.*] Is it all cut in the winter, too?—I do not think so.

140. *Mr. Morris.*] I do not think your experience is the same as that of the country it comes from. They only give it a life of four years?—I have seen it here for over four years: that is our own experience.

141. You can obtain that information from the Canadian Handbook?—We know that that is not correct. If it were correct, I would be very glad to have that fact advertised.

142. Do you not think that the increased cost of building is largely due to the improved style of the buildings erected recently compared with the buildings of twenty years ago?—Of course there is no doubt about that.

143. Has not our style of architecture improved in the last few years?—Take two buildings of similar construction, and at a rise of 1s. per 100 ft., it would be an increase of £7 10s. in that house.

144. As a matter of fact, your reply is altogether on the question of rough timber used in the building?—Yes.

145. I suppose to-day there is five times as much fine work put into buildings?—There is very much more. Mouldings were conspicuous by their absence in the old days.

146. *Mr. Barber.*] How long has the depression been experienced?—It has been experienced now for, I suppose, nine months at least. It has been coming all the time, but seems to be more acute now than before. We do not feel the depression in the timber trade immediately, but it is when we accumulate stocks and they become unsaleable that the depression is felt.

147. You think it has come on simultaneously with the financial depression?—I think there is no doubt about that.

148. Would you be surprised to hear that people with capital say they refrain from spending on account of the very high price of timber?—I should be very much surprised to hear it. I have made inquiry from business people and solicitors lending money—that is the best criterion—and I would take that a long way before a newspaper report.

149. With regard to arriving at the retail price, you have not told us that?—The average price is, I think, about 10s., taken all the way round.

150. If you were selling it, is that after being stacked in the yard or straight from the mill?—Straight from the mill.

151. Your secretary said 8s. 6d. for providing the cost of production and interest on the capital?—Yes, about that.

152. So that if you are getting 10s. at the mill you are getting 1s. 6d. over and above the outlay?—That is an estimate. Of course, every mill varies. You have got two or three mills, and every one is different. As far as we are concerned, we are getting about 1s. 9d. without interest. We do not charge them any interest at all. There are really no solely-timber merchants in Invercargill. All the timber-yards here are owned by people who have mills of their own, and they combine both the occupations of timber millers and merchants. We ran a yard here for some years, and I closed it up because we were losing money on it.

153. Does any one want red-pine run up to £1 6s. a hundred feet?—I am sorry to say No.

154. Do you think that is an exorbitant price for red-pine?—I could not tell you, because I have no idea what it costs in Wellington. They may have to grade it there.

155. Could you deliver red-pine in Wellington?—What size?

156. 4 by 10 by 1, all heart?—I could not supply it at all. It takes the best of our log.

157. You do not think £1 6s. per hundred feet is too dear?—Very likely not. It is a very special timber, and takes very special getting.

158. What about 8 by 1 ordinary building-timber?—I could supply that a great deal under £1 6s., and would be very glad to get an order for it.