

189. I examined some of these trees in the bush, and I was told that it was useless for ordinary building purposes?—That is so. It is good enough cut in short lengths for sleepers. It is very good. There are great quantities of it, and it would provide for a good deal of labour. Although it is not illimitable, we are always coming across it.

190. With regard to the time allowed in the matter of timber areas, if you take up, say, 600 acres, are you allowed two years if the market should be glutted and you have no sale?—The Lands Department have discretionary power. They do not turn you out of the mill. They have power to do it, but they have not done so. They are very reasonable. We have no complaint.

191. With regard to land covered with timber and put into the hands of settlers beyond your mills, is that a policy carried out in your district?—Yes, it has been carried out for a long time past. It is still being carried out.

192. You say that land containing timber is placed in the hands of settlers, and they have no option but to destroy it?—Yes, up to quite recently. It may be so now, but I do not know. I consider it wasteful in the extreme.

193. When you have secured land from settlers for the mill, have you found the Lands Department reasonable?—The limit the Department gives us is ten years. That is time enough in some cases; but if you want to look ahead it is not sufficient, because the farmer may want to sell, requiring the money to buy cattle, and the mill might not actually want the timber for a considerable time.

194. If it means ten years before the timber can be cut off the land, would it not be better to retain that land rather than give it to the settlers for farming purposes?—Yes, certainly.

195. With regard to beech, we have considerable quantities of it, and it is used for furniture-making in Germany?—Yes.

196. Has it been used for any other purposes?—I cannot say.

197. Some time ago I asked an experienced builder in Christchurch to tell me the cost of building a four-roomed house, including scullery, 12 by 12 passage, and 12 ft. stud, based on the price-list of 1897 and 1907, and I was supplied with the following particulars, and I want to know if you consider it a fair valuation: 1897, match-lined, £79 16s.; 1907, £91 14s. If rough-lined in 1897 cost £72 18s., and in 1907 £84 3s., in your experience, as a supplier of timber, what do you think of the difference in the cost?—It seems a big proportion.

198. You told Mr. Leyland that the Oregon found a ready market because it was of wider boards and of greater length?—No, I did not exactly say that. The question I was asked was, if Oregon could be laid down at the same price as red-pine the competition would not be so great. I answered that Oregon had wide boards, although the prices were the same.

199. I have here a statement of Mr. W. H. Bennett, President of the Builders and Contractors' Association, Wellington, in which it is stated with regard to Oregon that 32 ft. lengths cost 19s. 6d., and that rimu of similar lengths cost £1 14s. 3d?—That may be quite correct, because the handling of that rimu is very expensive.

200. In the interests of the building industry of this country, do you think the Commission would be justified in imposing a heavy duty on Oregon?—Yes, on the small sizes.

201. Notwithstanding that it is necessary to our building operations?—I would advocate no increase of duty on the longer lengths.

202. *Mr. Arnold.* With regard to this importation of Oregon, if an order was required for some heavy timbers now to be seasoned, how long would it be before the millers here could supply red-pine?—Almost at once. The large beams do not require much seasoning. The shrinkage of a beam is in width, and red-pine does not shrink so much in length.

203. You think it is not a fact that in connection with one of the buildings that is now being erected in Invercargill it was found impossible to get this timber within six months, whereas Oregon could be procured at once?—I do not think so. It might possibly be so. It is not to my knowledge. I have been out of town for a fortnight.

204. You spoke of the Catlin's River bush—have you been through it?—I do not know the bush. I only mention it as an example. It has been mentioned that our timber-supply is nearly exhausted.

205. If the timber found in Catlin's was without much birch and chiefly pine, would it not be more valuable?—Yes. That would be the most valuable timber we have.

206. With regard to your association, I suppose you confirm what the secretary said on Saturday: you do not really fix the price of the timber, and you are not a close corporation?—We fix a basis and that is all, and we vary the discounts. We want to get uniformity in selling.

207. You have no penalty?—No, there is none whatever, beyond the moral obligation. There is nothing to hinder any member from retiring to-day.

208. We were told a few moments ago that there is no competition in Wellington. You have it here?—Yes, very strong and very big.

209. I understand you have a builders' association. Is there any relationship?—None whatever. Absolutely none.

210. It has not instructed you with regard to the supply of a certain builder?—There was some proposal which fell through. I do not discriminate in any way. I do not know if my customers are in the association.

211. You do not think any millers here discriminate?—I am sure they do not.

212. *Mr. Stallworthy.* As regards varying discounts, I am not quite clear about that. What are your discounts?—This list will explain it. [List handed in.]

213. What are the discounts in Invercargill?—Five per cent. and 2½ per cent. for cash.

214. I mean trade discounts?—There is a trade discount allowed to merchants of about 12½ per cent., and there are practically no merchants here. If they call themselves "merchants" they are entitled to 12½ per cent.