

240. Do you not find that also comes in in putting the timber through the mill?—Yes.

241. Have you any experience at all in regard to Oregon?—I have not dealt at all in Oregon.

242. Do you know if it takes the dry-rot at all?—I have heard so, but I have heard the builders in Dunedin say it stands better than red-pine.

243. You have had a great deal of experience in regard to red-pine?—Yes.

244. How long have you known it to be in a building?—Forty years.

245. And would it be rotten in that time?—No, not if in a good position.

246. I mean inside the building in a dry position?—Yes.

247. *Mr. Field.*] I want to put a price-list into your hands. Mr. Barber referred to the price of 17s. for rimu. Look through that price-list and tell me if you think it is an unreasonable price-list?—How is this timber delivered?

248. Delivered out of the yard.—And subject to trade discounts?

249. *Mr. Barber.*] Yes, there is a very small discount. There is no discount to any one unless they are in the association—the general public have no discount?—Yes. The prices contained in this price-list do not seem to be unreasonable out of the yard, when you consider the expense of the yard. When you consider that it has been railed probably a considerable distance and stacked in the yard, and the loss there, I do not think it is at all unreasonable.

250. Look at the price for Oregon pine in that price-list: do you think the price charged there is a fair price?—Apparently so.

251. According to that you must take the price of 17s. 6d. charged for Oregon pine as a good price?—Yes.

ANDREW BAIN sworn and examined. (No. 6.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are you?—Chairman of the Builders' Association.

2. Will you make a statement?—Well, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have been asked to come here as a builder, or, at least, as President of the Builders' Association, and I will be as brief as I possibly can in my remarks. Our principal object, of course, is to oppose any increase in the duty on Oregon pine. That matter has been before two conferences of builders in the Dominion, and in the interests of the general public they consider that if there is to be any change at all it should be in the way of reduction, so far as Southland is concerned. Really, it does not affect Southland very much, because we cannot get Oregon in here at anything like as cheap as they can in the North Island. I do not think there has been any Oregon, or very little, brought in here under, say, about £1 1s., and I think the sawmillers here have very little to fear so far as that price is concerned. There have been various advantages in regard to the Oregon that has been used here as compared with the local timber: it has been principally used for flooring-joists and beams, especially in two- or three-story buildings, where it is much superior and much preferable to the local timber. One reason, of course, is that you get it dry, which you cannot possibly do with the local timber, and I, personally, and others can really get it in large sizes from Melbourne and Sydney quicker than you can from the local mills. One great fault with the local timber for joists is that you get it green from the mills. It is put into the building, and by the time that the contractor gets clear of his job, if the work is defective up above, he is very often called on to do some extra work in regard to some shrinkage. In some cases it will go pretty well an inch—the floor being away from the skirting.

3. End way?—No, sideways. For lath-and-plastering work I believe Oregon is superior. Of course, in long lengths and wide joists it becomes cheaper than what we can get the local timber at, because the present price-list of the local combination is really like a Chinese puzzle. It increases as you get up. As soon as you reach or go over 8 in. it starts to increase on the width, and as soon as you get over 20 ft. in length it starts the other way. If you have a price-list here you will see that for yourselves. I think you have been told that the increase in the price of timber here is only 1s. Well, I have had timber delivered to me, after being carted six miles, at 3s. 9d. per hundred in Invercargill, and better timber than I am paying 10s. 6d. for now.

4. What date?—About twenty years ago, and dressed timber 5s. 9d. and 6s. That used to be the regular price here at one time, and you were not limited to any width or length—from 6s. to 6s. 6d., so that you will see by the difference in the calculations that it means a very large increase during that twenty years. I worked out two lines on a job I have just finished—just for comparison. On the two lines I have used—that is, T. and G. flooring and T. and G. lining—the difference in the cost now and what it was then is £194 more. The total cost at the present time is £338, and I could have got it then for £144, so that on those two lines alone, if you compare the whole building, it must mean a fairly large increase. In regard to the increases in workmen's cottages that you have been told about, they are altogether out of proportion, because I think in the twenty years it has increased pretty well three times the amount you have been told. I think that that has affected the rents a good deal here—the increase in the building-material. They also charge now for the feathers in the T. and G., which they did not do twenty years ago: it is only recently that has been done. I do not know if they could invent any other way of increasing it at all, but there is a price-list here which used to be a general one. [Price-list produced and put in, marked "Exhibit B."]

5. What was that?—In 1889. Rough timber carted, 4s. 3d.; dressed, in all classes, 6d. 3d.; and weatherboards, 5s. 9d.; 8 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. was 3s. 3d., for which they now charge 8s., and I have here various old lists showing that this was not one special quotation. I have had totara carted six miles for 9s. 6d., red-pine scantling 3s. 9d.; T. and G. 4 in. by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in., 6s.; 4 in. by $\frac{5}{8}$ in. T. and G., 5s. 9d.; dressed 8 in. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in., 5s. 9d.; 13 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., 10s.; 6 in. architraves, 6s.; margins, 5s. 6d. And I heard it stated here to-day that on account of the class of buildings that were put up now—improved buildings—they cost a good deal more than they did some time ago. Well, my experience is entirely different to that, because the finish inside the majority of the buildings now