

147. Rimu of equal quality with Oregon has stood under hydraulic test 33 per cent. more pressure?—I am still surprised.

148. I have seen it done?—I am surprised. They use lighter Oregon here.

149. You made some reference to the cheapness of timber in 1889. Can you tell us anything about the conditions at that time—that is, were the people in a prosperous condition, or were they merely existing?—I found them better than they are now, as far as I am personally concerned.

150. You also stated that you knew that some men put timber on the trucks for 2s. 2d. per 100 ft. at Woodend twenty-two years ago?—I stated that the contract was let, and from memory I believe that it included all labour. It was either at Woodend or a mill down there, and I believe the price was 2s. 2d. from memory.

151. You are doubtful?—I am not doubtful about the 2s. 2d. I said it included all labour. I said that you would have some sawmill union representative here who would probably be able to tell you more.

152. It is impossible to do it?—Well, it may be information, but I am giving you the information I had at the time.

153. If it refers to cutting timber after the logs are put into the mill you may be right?—No, including bushfelling and everything else.

154. You tell us that on some houses you have you only make 7 per cent. Did you build these houses when timber was at 2s. 2d. or 3s. 9d. per hundred?—No, I did not. I did build some of them at a cheaper rate than I can now.

155. You have left an impression on the minds of the Commission, I think, that this Saw-millers' Association is responsible for the increased price that you are now paying for timber?—To a large extent I believe they are.

156. With regard to the other forty-seven mills outside the association, why do you not deal with them?—I think you are misled in that. From what I heard to-day there are so many mills in the district and so many millers?—Three mills out of fifty-two millers. A number of these small mills very often sell their output to the association miller.

157. Can you not buy cheaper from the big merchant?—Every one knows that a small mill costs more proportionately to run than a large one. If these small mills can get the same price as the association, they will not refuse it.

158. I understand trade is slack?—It is slack all over the Dominion.

159. Are the millers fully employed?—No, I understand they are not.

160. The men who are not perhaps working half-time would be glad to supply you with timber?—I question that. If they supplied me with it at half-price, though I am not doing very much now, I would stock some.

161. You are not very certain yet whether 2s. 2d. was the net price of cutting timber in the mill?—I believe it is the whole of the labour in connection with the production of timber in Woodend. I will not vary that. I was a member of the Southland Trades and Labour Council at that particular period, and it was there that I had my information.

162. You tell us also that the cost per hundred feet of timber for labour runs about the same as it was fifteen years ago?—Very little difference.

163. That means that you are trying to leave an impression on our minds that the increased cost of building is owing to the increased cost of timber?—No, other material also, to a certain—not timber only.

164. *Mr. Barber.*] You are, of course, aware of the large number of trades that are concerned in the erection of a building?—Yes.

165. Such as bricklayers, plumbers, painters, and paperhangers?—Yes.

166. Do you think that the slackness which has been experienced not only in this district, but throughout the Dominion, is due to the high price prevailing for building-material?—I do not think so; I think it is owing to the money-market.

167. You said just now that if you got timber cheaper you would soon start building?—No, I said "stock" it.

168. You said that under the present conditions with regard to erecting dwellings, you were only getting 7 per cent.?—Yes.

169. Well, do you think that that small percentage under ordinary building-conditions deters the capitalist from investing money in the building trade?—There is no doubt it does, because it will not pay him owing to the large increase in the cost, and you cannot possibly get rents out of it.

170. If it influences the capitalist, do you not think that the slackness in the timber trade is increased to a large extent by the high price of the materials themselves?—It would have a tendency that way.

171. *Mr. Field*, in asking you a question, mentioned that the price charged by the millers did not include interest on capital. The managing director of the Southland Timber Company said the cost of production was 8s. 6d., and included in that was interest on capital. Then I asked him the question—"You said it included the interest on capital?" "Yes, that is right." "So that the 1s. is over and above the net cost?" "Yes." *Mr. Field* rather contradicted him, and said that amount did not provide for interest on capital, and the witness was quite clear that the amount of 8s. 6d. did cover interest on capital?—Yes. *Mr. Brent* only dealt with his own firm.

172. Are you aware that a concrete building can be erected for about the same price as the present price of timber in Wellington?—It all depends on the cost of the gravel and cement—you can scarcely do it here.

173. Cement may be cheaper in Wellington, but gravel is dear; but in regard to a workman's cottage, a concrete house was erected for the same price as a wooden house there, and you