

204. Have you got any price-list issued by the local timber-merchants covering dressed and ordinary rough building-timber?—There is a combination price-list.

205. What is the latest or earliest you have covering all classes of building-timber?—The last one was issued in July, 1907.

206. What is the earliest one?—At that time there was no printed list: you simply went to the various millers and got quotations.

207. *Mr. Arnold.*] Has there not been one out within the last eight weeks?—I am not aware of one.

208. Following up the last question put by Mr. Ell, how long do you think the timber should be kept by the miller before it becomes thoroughly seasoned?—That is a question I do not think even the millers themselves could answer.

209. What is a rough guess?—It entirely depends on the timber. I have seen timber stacked under cover for two years, and you could then cut more off with the plane on it than some timber you get straight from the mill.

210. So that you cannot depend upon it?—No.

211. Would you say twelve months on the average?—For ordinary work twelve months should be sufficient—there is no doubt about that. We do most of our work with a great deal less—we have got to. We have to stack it on the job, and use it before we are done.

212. Have you formed any idea as to what extent the various millers would have to increase their capital to if they were to stack all their timber for twelve months?—I have not.

213. They would have to do so, would they not?—They would have to work it out and see what it was going to cost them. I know it would be a big item.

214. As a matter of fact it would be almost impossible for the present millers to do so?—I do not think they could do it—it would be asking too much.

215. And if it was so the increase in price would be considerable?—Yes, I think it would increase the cost considerably.

216. Now, with regard to the question of timber rotting in the yard: have you any idea what percentage of the timber becomes useless?—No, I have not.

217. Would it be very slight?—There must be a good deal of it, because it discolours very quickly at times.

218. Do you think it would be 1 per cent. of the output?—I could not say.

219. Do you think it would pay the millers to erect coverings for the timber stacked at the sidings?—I do not think it would make much difference so far as the timber is concerned, because it is all stacked green, and the sap itself is sufficient.

220. If the percentage was so great that it would pay them to erect a covering and stack it differently, do you not think they would do a better business?—You would naturally think so, but still they are satisfied with the way they are doing. They get enough out of it, and probably more than if they did it the other way.

221. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] You said that your association opposed the increase in the duty on Oregon pine. Would you be as much opposed to an increase in the duty on small Oregon sizes in order to free the larger sizes?—I think, personally, the duty ought to come off the lot of it, but in any case I think it would be better if the duty was taken off the larger sizes if not off the lot: bring it in in junk. There is a very small percentage of small stuff. By doing that it would all be cut up here, and it would employ a portion of the labour that is talked about as being idle on account of the mills closing.

222. Is the merchant from whom you bought timber at these low prices twenty years ago still in business?—Yes, and worth a good deal of money.

223. We have been told that one reason for the formation of the Sawmillers' Association was that builders would go to one miller and inquire the price and perhaps be told it was 6s. a hundred, and then go to a second miller and be told the same price, but would reply that So-and-so was selling it cheaper; and therefore, because the millers were being blackmailed, if I may so term it, they formed the association. Is there anything in that?—I do not think the association was formed for that purpose at all.

224. Was it the practice of the builders to do that?—Not to my knowledge. I do not think there was very much of that done.

225. *Mr. Mander.*] Do you think it is fair to go back twenty years ago and compare the prices then with the prices of the timber produced to-day?—I think it is with a fair allowance.

226. Do you think it would be fair to go back forty-five years?—Then it would be dearer.

227. I suppose you are aware it was £2 5s. then?—Yes, and twenty-six and twenty-seven years ago it was 6s. and 6s. 6d., and came down for a long time.

228. Do you think the sawmillers made any money when the timber was 3s. and 3s. 9d. per hundred?—I have no doubt in my own mind that they did.

229. Was the timber standing right alongside the mills in those days?—Pretty close—not very far away.

230. Are you aware that the difficulties of getting timber now are very much greater?—Yes, but they have got better facilities in the way of improved plant.

231. Is the quality of the timber as good now?—No, it is not. Second-class timber in those days was better than first-class now.

232. Do you not think it was an advantage to the miller?—Yes, no doubt.

233. Do you think that if the Government took the whole business over they could produce it at a cheaper rate than the private individuals?—Well, it is questionable whether they could. They might see a very good thing in it and have a monopoly, and then they would be in this position, of course: that there would be no question as to the duty on Oregon, and they would increase that if necessary. They would have the whole business in their own hands.