

20. So there has been a falling-off all round?—I am speaking particularly of carpenters and joiners. I do not think there has been a falling-off otherwise.

21. In the case of a building, say, of ten years ago, what would be the difference in the cost of the timber?—I should say about 2s. per hundred all round would be pretty near the mark.

22. As regards the work of construction—carpentering, painting, plumbing, &c.—what is the increase?—Of course, there has been a decided increase. You may take one trade—plastering. Mr. Bain mentioned that architects specified little plastering, because they were afraid of shrinkage in the timber. Personally, I would not use plaster for a ceiling, and there is a dreadful scarcity of plasterers. We are having to pay 15s. per day, and sometimes as much as £1 per day, and even then we cannot get the labour. Of course, architects have protected their clients by using a minimum amount of plaster.

23. Coming back to the cost of getting a six-roomed house, you mentioned timber: what about carpentering, painting, &c.?—I doubt if there is any increase on painting and framing. I believe the men get rather a better wage, but it has made no difference. Of course, now we have got better drainage and better sanitary arrangements, and the by-laws insist upon these things being put in. If you go back ten years ago, the regulations were quite different. In farmhouses the drainage-pipes have been put in with ordinary agricultural tiles. I even had a case the other day where a farmer thought they were good enough to take his kitchen-slops and the drainage from his sinks away. That used to be very common in the towns. Now, of course, they are getting much better. The Health Department is insisting upon keeping people up to the mark. Of course, that means better sanitation, but, on the other hand, increased work.

24. As to iron?—Iron is about the same, I think.

25. What is the difference in the cost of a six-roomed house compared to now and ten years ago?—I know of one case of a house built about fourteen years ago which cost about £400, and the same house now would cost £700. The increase has taken place gradually ever since. Then you have to remember that timber which was bought for something like 5s. or 6s. per hundred will cost more than that now, while the men during the depression were working for something like 5s. per day. If you go back even ten years you are in the middle of the time of the depression. At that time carpenters would club together and work for a mere pittance. It was pitiable to see them working for so little, and in many cases I am sure they did not get enough to eat.

26. What would it cost to build a five-roomed good house to-day?—If it were a good class of house—with a bathroom, pantry, scullery, and laundry attached, concrete foundation, proper drains, and proper sanitary arrangements—it would cost you from £550 upwards, according to the class of finish in the building.

27. In brick?—About another £100 in brick.

28. Take a six-roomed wooden house, what would that cost?—Probably about another £50.

29. In brick?—You see, it is not a fair way to talk about the cost of a house being so much per room. The cost of a four-roomed house must work out heavier than a five or six roomed. Even for an eight- or nine-roomed house, you must have the same conveniences in each case.

30. Given a seven-roomed house?—I cannot say in that way.

31. Generally speaking, what would a seven-roomed house cost?—About £650 or upwards, according to the class of finish.

32. As to the architect's fees, what are they?—The same as in any other part of the colony—6½ per cent.

33. *Mr. Jennings.*] According to your answer you are the only profession that has not got any increase?—It means an increase to us. The more work we put through and the larger buildings we put up, the more we benefit.

34. You are apprehensive about the scarcity of timber in the future?—Yes.

35. You are aware that steel and concrete are very largely used in large buildings?—Yes.

36. Will that not be a factor in determining whether our supplies will last?—Of course, to build in steel or concrete—steel is out of the question in this Dominion, except in earthquake towns. It is only a fad to talk of putting up steel buildings.

37. What about Wellington?—Wellington is an earthquake town. I am speaking of the South Island.

38. Do you know anything about the processes that tend to increase the life of cut timber?—No, I know nothing about different processes. All I know is that natural seasoning is generally reputed to be about the best method of prolonging the life of cut timber. All rapid seasoning is detrimental to the durability of the timber.

39. Not according to the investigation of the Society of Architects in Western Australia quite recently?—The Royal Institute of Architects bears out my statement.

40. In regard to afforestation, do you know what is being done?—I know that the Government is doing something at Rotorua with prison labour, but how much I do not know.

41. Up to the present time there have been 22,000,000 trees planted?—Yes.

42. That will meet your views?—Yes. Do you not think that the cutting of the forests at present will amount to more than a million a year? Remember, too, the number of years we have been slaughtering timber. Look at the North Island where they have destroyed it wholesale by burning.

43. There is no necessity for that?—No.

44. Have you any very great knowledge of the bush in the North Island?—Only by passing through as a visitor.

45. *Mr. Field.*] How long have you practised in the colony?—Eleven years. It is about twenty-two years since I started serving my apprenticeship.

46. You said it was wrong to say that the increase in timber during the last eight years was 1s., because you had to consider mouldings, &c.?—Yes.