

used to get. In ordering an amount of red-pine you get a proportion of miro in it, which is not as good as red-pine. Red-pine is being used for chairs, and a fair amount of beech is being used for furniture in Christchurch. We are getting birch now at 1s. less than red-pine. The Oregon does not affect us in our line—we do not use it at all.

5. It would not affect you in any way, whether the duty was increased or reduced?—It would not affect us, because I do not think it is a timber that we would use in the making of furniture unless it was cheap. You may use it for inside work, but not outside. We are debarred by the borer from using white-pine. There are imported woods that do affect the New Zealand wood, one being the American three-ply, and they are importing that largely just now for the inside of drawers and other inside work, such as the backs of mirrors.

6. *Mr. Clarke.*] What about the American clear-pine?—We very seldom use it. I believe they use nothing else but the three-ply in Dunedin and Christchurch.

7. *Mr. Hanan.*] How do the prices for locally manufactured furniture compare with the prices which obtained five years ago?—The locally manufactured furniture runs about the same. The difference has practically come off the profits. You do not get any more for the furniture, although you pay more for the timber. The labour used to be 8s. a day, but now it is 10s., and that makes the difference.

8. Do you think that that is the chief factor—the increasing wages—in accounting for the increase in the price of furniture?—Yes, and this has to be taken into consideration also: that the furniture made now is much higher in quality than what it used to be, so that you could scarcely compare the price of the furniture now with what it used to be. Nearly every house now has its duchess chest and washstand.

9. But the increase in the price of timber has not contributed to the increase in the price of the locally manufactured article?—Scarcely.

10. I do not know whether it is relative to the inquiry, but do you find that imported furniture is increasing in this country?—I think it is. There are travellers around now pushing the Home furniture, and you can get it fairly reasonable—such as oak or walnut—and you could scarcely compete against that. If you get the oak and walnut made here you could not compete against the Home article, because of the timber being so dear.

11. *Mr. Jennings.*] How do you find the class of workmen now as compared with fifteen or more years ago?—Taking them as a whole, they are better now, because the class of work they have been doing has been different. Of course, I could not speak for any place outside of Southland. For tradespeople it is fairly good here, equal practically to what they have in Melbourne.

12. And you find the timbers here suitable for the manufacture of furniture?—Red-pine is: I do not think you can beat it if it is seasoned. I have used a great deal, but the trouble is to dry it. A great waste is in the drying, as very often you have a very good board that splits right up and makes a lot of waste.

13. *Mr. Field.*] Would you call this an accurate statement made by a well-known North Island architect the other day: that for first-class building-timber he would only put one timber ahead of heart of rimu, and that that was English oak?—I would not like to say that, because I do not know the durability of Oregon. Of course, red-pine is very good as long as it is kept dry, but I do not think it would stand anything compared to oak.

15. You say that timber has gone up from 10s. 6d.: that is, of course, heart of red-pine?—They charge us more if we order it figured.

16. It is good stuff, of course, or it would not be fit for furniture-making?—Yes.

17. It has gone up from 10s. 6d. to 18s. 6d. during a few years?—Not in a few years—I am speaking of when it was cheap. Of course, as I say, you could buy timber from 5s. upwards, grading from 8 by 1 up.

18. In what period has it gone up from 10s. 6d. to 18s. 6d.?—Twenty years.

19. And you say you have been able to get it as low as 17½ per cent. off 18s.?—That is not the general thing: it is taking advantage of pushing it, because things have been low perhaps.

20. You pay 15s. for a particular grade. In this case it has gone up only 50 per cent. in twenty years, or if you put it down at 18s. it has gone up 75 per cent. in twenty years?—Yes, about that.

21. In view of the fact that timber all over the world has gone up 50 per cent. in ten years, do you regard that as a serious increase in cost?—I do not think so. Of course, we know that timber is getting further away, and getting scarcer, and the extra cost must be borne.

22. How wide were the boards you were getting for 18s.?—18 by 1, not dressed.

23. That is 18 in. wide?—Yes.

24. Have you been up to the timber-mills here and seen the class of timber they are moulding?—I have not been particularly to the mills.

25. You know they are not very big trees taken all through: the timber is only big here and there?—Yes, big trees are scarce there.

26. Do you not think it is a very reasonable price?—I dare say it is cheap, but when you are used to getting it much cheaper you do not think so.

27. But in view of the increased cost of labour and the fact of having to go further back?—I think it is a reasonable price, because I understand it is very hard to find a mill in this country that is making a profit. I understand they have lost money, but I only heard that in a conversational way.

28. You have not come here to suggest that these millers, as some other people would have us believe, are rascally people?—Well, some of them seem to be doing very well, and I would not mind changing with them. There is an explanation: that in some instances a man has secured a forest and bought a long way ahead, and he is not paying the same royalty as the others.

29. I am speaking of the average miller who is taking up Government property, and paying 6d. per hundred in advance?—I say the advance they are paying on that is reasonable, because