

178. There is no additional cost of railage?—In that one market only.

179. *Mr. Ell.*] We want to get at the cost of felling and cutting at the mill. Say that you put through your mill last year a few hundred logs: you know how many men were employed in getting those logs to the mill?—We all know that.

180. The logs having arrived at the mill, they have to pass through the mill. You know what they will cut into and the charges in connection therewith paid out. Will you show the charges paid last year for logs, getting logs to the mill, the quantity of timber you turn out at your mill, and the wages paid at the sawmill?—I have no objection at all. Do you want to get the whole of the wages paid at the mill, the amount of time in cutting, and all such charges?

181. That will give us something definite?—I would suggest that you get it from some other of the millers. I have broken time: that somewhat upsets me a little bit.

182. There is one more question in regard to Oregon: You say that the duty should be put on the largest sizes?—Yes.

183. We have evidence here from sawmillers themselves and from merchants that it is most difficult to obtain great lengths and large sizes in New Zealand timbers. Then reference was made to the difference in price between Oregon and New Zealand timbers. Do you think, therefore, we should be justified in recommending the Government to put an extra duty upon large sizes?—When I was here I heard a witness talking about the difficulty of getting 50 ft. lengths. Well, I have been about forty years now in the trade, and I have never heard a 50 ft. length asked for yet. So it seems to me that setting up the 50 ft. difficulty is like setting up an absurdity. I have supplied 48 ft. without difficulty. One is scarcely ever asked for such a length. In my experience 30 ft. is a long length, and there is no trouble in supplying that.

184. *Mr. Arnold.*] You say you have two mills?—Yes, that is so.

185. What is your output for the month?—About 180,000.

186. Now, speaking of the cost of labour, in answer to Mr. Hanan you alluded to the contract system of some years ago to show that the cost was very much less than at the present time?—Yes, I did.

187. And you said that those men made a do of it?—Yes.

188. Would you like to see that system renewed?—I certainly should. I think it is the fairest of all systems.

189. Would you like to see men working now for the wages they earned at that time?—I do not say that. I am speaking of the system. I think the wages would have to be higher.

190. There is evidence to show that the millers are paying above the arbitration award. Is that so?—Yes, in many cases.

191. So that the millers really do not complain regarding the cost of labour in connection with milling?—That does not follow. They do not complain about paying good wages to good men, but they do complain about paying a minimum wage to a duffer.

192. Have you got many duffers?—Too many.

193. What percentage?—I could not say the percentage. The men are always changing. You have a duffer, and when you discover this you pay him off and take on Dick, Tom, or Harry, and you find he is no better. People tell you you should not employ them, but my reply is that you must keep the thing going.

194. You spoke of the importation of Oregon: what quantity did you say you used within the last few months?—Nine thousand feet on one job, and over 2,000 ft. on another. Apart from that there is a building in front of my office with 20,000 ft. or 30,000 ft. in it.

195. Did the whole of this timber come *via* the Bluff?—Both of my lots came *via* the Bluff.

196. Have you any knowledge of Oregon coming through from Dunedin?—I know of some that came from Dunedin.

197. If there was a large amount of Oregon imported you say that hands would be put out of work?—I say that would be the natural result of it.

198. When you speak of the consumer, who do you mean?—I mean the man who is building a house.

199. If there is extra cost in erecting a house, is not that cost passed on to somebody else? Does not the tenant pay the extra rent?—Probably he does. A man must get interest on his money.

200. If the tenant pays the higher cost he is either a workman, or else he is able to pass it on through his business to the working-man?—I suppose it will be that way.

201. Well, then, on the whole would it not be better for a few hundred men to find other walks in life than for the whole of the people to pay an increased taxation?—It is hard to say whether a hundred or a thousand were going to suffer. For instance, suppose it meant destruction for ten, but only meant inconvenience for a thousand, I suppose you would hesitate before you destroyed the ten.

202. It would not follow that the ten would not find equally good employment?—That might be so. I cannot say.

203. Speaking of the combine, in reply to Mr. Field, your association, you say, as far as Southland is concerned, does not control the prices?—You see yourself they cannot. If there are seventy mills in Southland, and only twenty-three belonging to the association, they cannot control the price. In that I include Catlin's River.

204. If it were possible for the whole of these millers to be brought into one combine they could fix the price of the timber: could they not get any price they wished?—Not any price they wished. Oregon would fix that.

205. You say Oregon shows they cannot do it. Then Oregon would be the means of guarantee to the public that they would get timber at a fair price?—If they required a guarantee. As far as our experience has gone here they do not require it. The combine is sixteen years here, and the price has never gone beyond reason. There is no place in the Dominion so cheap.