

149. What extension of time has been granted—that is, how many years in the way of extra time?—I could not really tell you.

150. Have many been granted?—I think some have been granted, but not many. I think they did not cut them out in the time.

151. You have had no complaints of these areas not being cut out in the time?—I have made complaints myself. I have never had a complaint from any miller about another miller not having his area cut out. I have heard complaints respecting Mr. Massey's areas. The complaint was that he held them too long.

152. That is what we want. When were these regulations made?—In 1900.

153. Previous to that there was no time mentioned?—I could not say exactly. In the Act of 1885 I do not think there was any specified time mentioned in the regulations then existing.

154. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Does the Land Board grant areas for sawmilling property to all applicants, or have they some system of limiting the output of timber?—There is a system of grading applications. That, however, remains with the Conservator of Forests and the Land Board.

155. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Have you known of any being refused?—Yes.

156. Under what conditions were they refused?—If the man holds rather more bush than they consider he should hold, they would refuse any further areas to him.

157. That would only be until he cut out what he was in occupation of?—Very probably.

158. If the output is more than the market requires, can we blame the Land Board for glutting the market?—I do not think so. The land is there available for the sawmiller. Although one man would be able to make a business pay, another man might not succeed. It is optional for any man to apply for an area if he thinks he can make the business pay.

159. *Mr. EU.*] You spoke about the kamahi wood just now: is there very much of it?—Yes, there is a good deal of it in Southland.

160. I understand that no use is being made of it at present?—I think that is correct. Very little use is being made of it.

161. Do you know whether it has been used for sleepers?—Yes, it was used at one time.

162. Has it any length of life?—I fear not. I think they found it faulty.

THOMAS O'BYRNE sworn and examined. (No. 15.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you tell the Commission what you know about those sawmillers belonging to the workers' union?—I am secretary of the Sawmillers' Workers' Union—organizing secretary. My duty is to travel through the whole of the mills working under the award, interview the men, gain a general knowledge of all kinds of practical work in connection with their duties, and ascertain the wages paid. We see that the award is enforced. I now hand the Commission a copy of the awards in operation in Southland, Otago, and Catlin's River. [Copies handed in.] It might also interest the Commission to hand in particulars of two disputes before the Court, together with a great deal of information in connection with our Court case which is affecting the Oregon-pine question and the sawmilling industry generally. [Particulars handed in.] During the last seven years the increase, so far as the men's wages are concerned, has added very little to the cost of production. For instance—I am speaking of seven years back—the engine-drivers got 1s. a day rise, the unskilled workers got 6d., and boys over sixteen years of age got 1s. There were several others, such as the yard-workers, who got 6d. a day rise. I should think it would not add much more than 1d. per hundred feet during the last seven years in the cost of production. I might state that the men lost on the average about one day per week throughout the whole of the year, so that a man who was getting 9s. would only average 7s. 6d. per day. That estimate of the loss in wages per week includes wet weather, holidays, breakdowns, &c. I might state that the work is very dangerous and arduous. I think five of our members have been killed during the last eight years. Of course, there are minor accidents happening every day. Within the last week four men came into me maimed in various ways. They had fingers off, knocks in the back, broken legs, &c. I have also to say with regard to duffers, and in reply to the remark made by one of the employers when he said there were a great number of duffers amongst the men, that I have had a great deal of experience with men in various parts of Australia as well as here, and I can say that the sawmill workers of Southland are the finest body of timber-workers in New Zealand. They must be physically strong, and a great deal of skill is required in the industry. As to the remark in reference to duffers, I can only say that the gentleman who made it would not keep duffers very long. I can assure the Commission of that. I was working for that gentleman, and I was doing about the work of a man and a half—close upon sixteen trolly-loads a day. Notwithstanding this he told me he had a man who could do one-third more than I was doing. Of course, I would be classed as a duffer myself. I may say here that he had to give the next man a boy as his assistant. Some employers are never satisfied, no matter how much work is done for them. On the whole, the employers whom I am connected with in the industry are a very fine lot of employers, and treat their men very well indeed. But we have some duffers of employers. The accommodation might perhaps interest the Commission. We have always advocated better accommodation for the timber-workers, more especially in the bush. Men are compelled to stop in the bush. Their huts are waterlogged, and we should be pleased if the Government would do something to put on the statute-book an enactment compelling sawmillers to give proper and sufficient accommodation to timber-workers in the bush. You have a very good law in connection with the Shearers' Accommodation Act. The Commission will note that shearing is done at a fine time of the year and in the open country. Our men, however, have to go into the bush in the winter, and live in waterlogged huts. I think the same legislation should be placed on the statute-book in this respect. Some remarks have been made