

about the industry now having reached rough country. That makes it a great deal harder on our men, because we find that the men have to work harder and have to be more skilled. For example, they have to control the hauling-engines, together with a great amount of gear in connection with their work, and the men have to be expert to hold such positions. I wish to emphasize the fact that the work in the bush now is a great deal more arduous and harder on the men than previously was the case when bushfelling was confined to comparatively level country. Some reference has been made to the time the mills last. I may say that some mills in Southland here have been in existence about thirty-five years. I know, as a matter of fact, that the Woodend mill was running thirty-five years.

2. Who was the owner?—Mr. Massey now. The Spar Bush mill ran thirty-five years. The Mabel Bush mill ran there for thirty years. In fact, one employer told me that there were two mills working in the Mabel Bush twenty-five years ago. One of them was burnt down, and they did not think then it was good enough to erect this mill again, but since that there has been one mill running twenty-five years, and there is still a considerable amount of bush there. Then there is the Gorge Road mill—one of Mr. Massey's—that has been running from seven to eight years, and there is bush there for over twenty years. The increase of 1s. a day on the men's wages cannot possibly advance the cost of production more than 5d. per hundred feet—that is, in Southland. In the evidence given before the Arbitration Court it was shown that one man averaged £7 15s. per month, and it was also shown that he had eleven to keep.

3. What was the special work he was engaged at?—Hardest work about the mill, slab-man, at 8s. a day; but his average was only £7 15s. per month, not 6s. 6d. per day. With regard to the tally-men—men who are highly skilled—I notice the rate throughout the colony is £3 per week. Those men have to do manual labour all day, and then they have to do their clerical work after they have done their day's work. The average wages paid for the whole of Southland runs out at about £103 3s. per annum. Coming to the importation of timber, one thing which I find affects the workers here is the importation of a considerable amount of sleepers from Australia—I refer to the jarrah. Just recently I understand 80,000 sleepers were imported from Western Australia. Fifty thousand were sawn and 30,000 hewn. These were examined by New Zealand experts, who condemned 17 per cent. of them. We can supply these sleepers in any quantity. It was formerly a splendid avenue for getting employment for our men. We used to go through the bush and pick up the waste timber that was left behind, but now those men cannot sell a single sleeper. The sleepers were creosoted. White-pine sap and totara, when put through the creosote-works, are supposed to be equal to any timber that comes from Australia. It seems a shame that our men have to walk about idle whilst the Railway Department is importing sleepers from Australia. The timber will only go to waste, and yet if used it would give employment to our men, and I understand it is suitable to the Railway Department. For instance, we have a mill working just close to the works down here—the Tisbury mill. They have had about a hundred sleepers over there, and these sleepers are lying upon their hands because the Government have sufficient sleepers consequent on recent importations. That mill is now idle through want of orders. In going around the mills I find that five have been closed down that were working last year, owing, I understand, to want of orders. They are in rough places, and some are in beech country. I might explain that owing to the import duty placed upon beech by the Federal Government one of these mills is affected by it. The other mills are in rough country, and it does not pay to work them when orders are not brisk. There are about seventy-five mills working under our award. There is close upon a thousand men employed in our industry, and working under our award in Southland and Catlin's. As to the prices, I understand you have had those placed fully before the Commission.

4. Mr. Paape says that twenty years ago wages were higher and timber was half the price?—That is so. The hauling-engine has been the means of tapping timber that otherwise could not have been reached by the bullock.

5. You have had experience in working for Mr. Massey, I see here?—Yes; I have worked for Mr. Massey for about ten years in the bush.

6. What wages were you getting then?—From 7s. to 12s. a day. When I was bringing evidence before the Court he said I was doing two men's work, and he was giving me 12s. a day. That is the first time he admitted it. He did not admit it when I was working for him.

7. *Mr. Hanan.*] You are secretary of the Sawmillers' Union, and also a member of the Southland Trades Council?—Yes.

8. Are you secretary of the Council?—No, just a delegate from the sawmill-workers.

9. Will you give us your opinion as to whether the duty should be increased, or should there be a duty on Oregon pine?—I should think the duty should be increased on the large sizes of Oregon pine.

10. Speaking on behalf of your union, have you passed any resolution to that effect?—Yes, we have passed a resolution in the Trades Council to that effect, and also the union.

11. Can you tell us if the workers, speaking from what you know, consider the price of timber too high?—Yes, that is the general feeling amongst the workers.

12. Do you not consider that in imposing a duty on Oregon timber it would increase the price of timber?—I should say, increase the duty on Oregon timber, and start State sawmills to regulate the price of timber.

13. You believe in nationalising the timber industry?—Yes.

14. Do you believe in forest-conservation?—Yes, as far as possible.

15. Do you think, by allowing Oregon pine to come in it would generally preserve our native bush?—It would tend to preserve it somewhat, but we have at least a thousand men employed in Southland affected, and I think it is the duty of the Government to see that those people are cared for.