

73. You said that the sawmill-workers lose on the average about one day per week right through the year down here?—Yes.

74. Is not that due to the fact that you have not sufficient orders to keep them going for the six days?—It had some effect this year, but it is mostly due to the mills—something going wrong.

75. Mr. Leyland asked you whether you did not think it would be advisable that Oregon should be landed in this country, but then there are five hundred men who are not working more than three days a week, and they could supply New Zealand with the whole of the timber they wanted?—I say, look after our own workers.

76. Mr. Barber.] Do you know anything about the Sawmillers' Association in existence here?—I know there is an association in existence in Southland.

77. And do you know to what extent they buy up the product of the unassociated mills?—The timber-merchants, of course, take their timber from the smaller mills.

78. Are those timber-merchants members of the association?—Yes, I understand they are.

79. Do you know to what extent the association members purchase from the small mills?—Considerably.

80. They control to a large extent the timber trade altogether?—Yes, control the timber trade.

81. Are they paying the ordinary Arbitration Court award wage?—Yes, and 50 per cent. more. They will come down as they get a surplus of labour—the wages will come down to the union's award.

82. Take that award you have put in—it is rather misleading from the Commission's point of view if 50 per cent. of the millers are paying above that?—Yes, they are paying more. That was gone into when the case was before the Arbitration Court in October last.

83. What is the maximum paid by the association to a sawmill hand?—It would run about 1s. a day beyond the award rates.

84. What are the award rates?—Take a sawyer at 10s., he will be getting 11s.; a bushman at 9s. will get 10s.

85. Do you know of any getting 14s. a day?—I do not know of any here.

86. Are there many in the union out of work?—There are a few; they mostly get other employment. For instance, if a mill closes down they get other work.

87. There are not a great many out of work?—There are a few.

88. With regard to the number of hands employed, you say there are about a thousand?—Yes; I should think that in Otago and Southland we have close on nine hundred in the union.

89. There was a statement made by a previous witness that there are between five and six thousand connected with the trade in Otago and Southland?—In connection with the whole trade there no doubt would be, including those connected with the building industry.

90. With regard to the duty on Oregon pine, do you not think that it helps to make building expensive, and therefore keeps up a high rent?—We have sufficient here to meet all the requirements in New Zealand.

91. But if the price by the exclusion of Oregon is kept up to a figure beyond its value by the association, is it not likely to add to the cost of building and penalise the whole body of the workers in a district by high prices?—I suggested before that the State should start sawmills, and regulate the price of timber.

92. You are here as a representative of the workers, and do you realise that the fact of high building-material is responsible for a large number of artisans being out of work—carpenters, joiners, painters, paperhangers, and everybody else engaged in the erection of a building? If that business is slack, depression prevails throughout a district?—I suppose the high prices would have some effect, but by regulating the price in State sawmills we should get over that.

93. With regard to the losses through wet weather and the losses on workmen, you said it was fair to charge the increased cost: do these occur any more now than when the timber was at a lower rate?—Just the same.

94. Mr. Stallworthy.] Are your men paid by the day?—Yes.

95. Do they lose an hour if it is short?—Yes.

96. What price does the Government pay for creosoted sleepers?—To the miller about 1s. 6d. or 1s. 8d. a sleeper.

97. Mr. Leyland.] Is that creosoted?—Oh, no!

98. Mr. Stallworthy.] You said you favoured a duty on white-pine because you thought farmers wanting timber were well able to pay for it. Would not the same reason make you advocate a duty on rimu?—Of course, the dairy industry is enlarging, and we shall want more white-pine in the future than at the present time.

99. You think the crop we have is limited?—Yes, there is more red-pine than white.

100. Do your mills work double shifts sometimes?—No, never.

101. Mr. Mander.] You said there were some complaints amongst the workers in regard to the increased cost of rents of workers' cottages?—I never said that: I spoke of the cost of erecting homes.

102. Do you not think that the increased cost of labour all along the line is a factor in the increased cost of building?—It has had some effect.

103. Not a very large effect?—I do not think so. For instance, the increase that the sawmill-worker has got has not been the means of raising it more than 5d. per hundred feet, while it has gone up 100 per cent.

104. But all those other factors in connection with that would put up the price of the building?—So far as I know of the charges down here during the last ten years, there has not been much of an increase. A painter gets 9s. 2d., for instance.

105. Do you not think that employers are compelled almost to employ incompetent hands very often?—I do not think so. So far as I am aware, if they are not competent they are very quickly put off.