

to-day, a benchman to-morrow, and the next day something else. Our men will not stick to the same job—we are troubled with flighty notions, and therefore do not get expert enough. Again, wages are high here. In England I used to see these doors before I came to New Zealand years ago. I would not care to use them now, because I should prefer the locally made doors any day.

86. There can be no gainsaying what I say with regard to these importations?—Not in this part of the country, but I hear there is a firm in Dunedin named B—, S—, and Co. who are importing.

87. That is the firm. Having some experience in that class of doors, do you think that they would really come into competition and that the builders would care to use them?—Some builders would not care to use them here. I do not think there is much fear of them taking the place of the local article. Moreover, they are too expensive. The locally made door really costs less than those imported ones.

88. You do not think that it is necessary to increase or put a duty on?—There is a duty of a few shillings a door, and that seems to me to be sufficient to keep them out, provided the wages do not increase and hamper us in that way. We do not know when an award may overtake us. I would not, however, suggest any increase at present.

89. You know something of the firm you mentioned?—No. They have only just lately opened a warehouse here.

90. They are fairly keen business people?—I know that.

91. You hardly think that they would bring out doors in large bulk unless there was a market for them?—There may be a market for them farther north, but very little locally at present. Prices are different in Wellington. They get there half as much again for their timber as we do down here, and it does not cost them any more.

CHARLES JOHN BROAD sworn and examined. (No. 18.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a hardware-merchant, sawmiller, and timber-merchant.

2. Have you a statement to make before the Commission?—Yes. As I have said, I am both a sawmiller and timber-merchant. We have been in the timber business for a great many years—in fact, we are the oldest timber-merchants here, and it is not so easy to run a timber-yard as has been said. We employ three yardmen, and pay them £357 altogether; we also employ two draymen at £2 5s. a week each; we have three horses to work those two drays, and it is fair to estimate the amount for feed and depreciation at £1 a week. That comes to £747 per year—£62 a month for five men and three horses. Our turnover averages about 1,000,000 ft. a year, or 80,000 ft. a month, and that at 1s. 6d. per hundred feet comes to £60. In addition we have to pay £60 for the rent of a siding, and we should have to pay, I suppose, £2 for the timber-yard if timber-merchants only, and that would be £104. We have an acre of ground altogether, and provide half of that for the timber business. The taxes would amount to £20, clerical assistance £100, and the discount on the timber would bring it up to 2s. 2d. per hundred as the cost for running that yard.

3. Is that the discount on your sales?—Yes, for cash. Now, the best we can do in buying timber is 25 per cent. off the list. We credit our mills with the amount, less 25 per cent. Any merchant buying from a producer cannot get more than about 25 per cent. off. The producer has either to sell at 20 or 25 per cent. off to middlemen, or start a timber-yard, or else employ a traveller, and that is very expensive. If you hold the timber and wait till an order comes along it would simply rot—you would not sell it. I can assure you there is very little profit in running a timber-yard in Invercargill.

4. Is it not much better to run a timber-yard when you run a timber-mill as well?—No; it would take 25 per cent. off—that decreases the selling-price to the mill.

5. Do you think it costs you the full amount to mill it that the timber-merchants sell theirs for?—No.

6. You must have a profit there?—The mill makes a profit.

7. How much?—From 1s. to 1s. 6d. a hundred. In fact, we do not make that at our Waihuka mill. We have 2s. 2d. railage to pay on that, and cartage is a very heavy item in delivering timber. If you have to cart a couple of miles it will cost you 9d. per hundred feet.

8. Do you cart all you sell?—Yes, practically all we sell.

9. You handle all classes of timber in the bush, I suppose?—Yes.

10. For milling purposes?—Yes. Of course, as far as we are concerned, in our mill at Longbush a good third of the timber is second-class, and there is a good demand for it here. I might say that in two-thirds of the cottages erected here second-class scantling is used.

11. *Mr. Hanan.*] What is the cutting-capacity of your mill?—About 80,000 ft. at Longbush, and 85,000 ft. at Waihuka. That is the average for last month.

12. Have your orders fallen off during the last six or seven months?—Very much. We are only working two mills out of three, and piling up more timber now than with the three mills working.

13. To what do you attribute the falling-off?—Tightness of the money-market.

14. Where is the best market?—We confine ourselves to Southland, but we sell pretty well two-thirds of our timber in Invercargill, and Invercargill is about the worst market in Southland for mills at a distance.

15. What is the reason of that?—We are only allowed 1s. on the mill price for railage and cartage; and, as I say, it costs us 2s. 2d. from Waihuka, and cartage 4d., and therefore we lose 1s. 6d.

16. Have you lost money?—We have made nothing at Waihuka. We bought it four years ago, and after working it for two years we found the grade too much. It was a grade of 1 in