

55. They sell to anybody they please?—Yes, mostly to timber-merchants; but they do sell otherwise.

56. They sell mostly to timber-merchants?—A number of them do. I think one or two may be getting orders where they can.

57. You said you made practically no profit in sawing at the mills?—During the last two years we had a fire.

58. Would it enable you to do better if you had a larger area of bush?—We had a fair start; we have been working three mills. We have 1,200 acres at Waihoaka, but whether we shall be able to work the whole of it or not time alone will solve. It is a very broken country. We have the roughest in Southland; in fact, if the price of timber is reduced we should shut the mill down.

59. *Mr. Barber.*] Have you got a printed price-list?—Yes.

60. The same as the Southland Timber Company?—Yes.

61. What do you say it costs to mill timber?—Five and twopence at Waihuka for wages; we put down 7d. for royalty, and as we have spent £4,000 there the interest on that is 6d. per hundred feet.

62. And you sell the timber to any one in small quantities?—Yes.

63. *Mr. Ell.*] You are a manufacturer?—A furniture-manufacturer.

64. What kind of timber do you use?—Mostly red-pine, but also a quantity of birch, which we buy. We have none on our area.

65. Do you know of any imported timber that is as useful and as easily worked as rimu or kauri for manufacturing purposes?—I do not know of any. We use kauri, birch, and red-pine.

66. Do you know of any imported timber as useful as New Zealand timber for furniture purposes at the same price?—Not at the same price.

67. Or anything like it?—I do not know of any.

68. Then, if we depend upon the imported timbers for the timber for our factories we shall greatly increase the cost of the furniture to the public?—That is so.

69. That being so, do you think it is necessary to have reserves made to preserve the timber?—The supply we have cannot be permanent.

70. Why not?—There is not sufficient of it. At the rate the population is increasing there will be more consumed every year, and it will be gone in forty years.

71. What about coming generations?—I say that the Government should go in for a system of afforestation.

72. You do not think it is desirable to attempt to preserve, particularly rimu for furniture?—You could not reserve it unless you allow the foreign timbers to come in now.

73. If foreign timbers are more adaptable than rimu, is it not in the interests of the public that rough timber should come in?—If you take it that way it is—if you want the native article for furniture-making.

74. Which you admit is more suitable?—It is cheaper than the imported timber.

75. *Mr. Mander.*] One witness stated here to-day that the increase in the cost of labour in the last seven or eight years had only put the cost of production up about 5d. per hundred feet. Is that your experience?—One shilling per day all round means about 5d. per hundred feet. That is about correct. Every extra man you employ adds about 3d. per hundred feet on to the cost of the timber.

76. Then, you do not agree with him that the cost of production has only been put up 5d. per hundred feet?—At 1s. a day he is right, but he is taking from one award to another. He overlooks the fact that a great many men get over and above the award. In fact, not many men care to tackle our bush.

77. Do you think, in fair good country, it will pay the Government to conserve the timber for fifty years when that land could be turned to profitable use in other ways—for cropping, and so on?—No. I think the sawmiller should precede the settler. The felling of the forest improves the land. The land is more valuable after the bush is cleared.

78. That is, provided fire does not get into it?—Yes.

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INVERCARGILL, WEDNESDAY, 31ST MARCH, 1909.

ALFRED JAMES MCCREDIE sworn and examined. (No. 19.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are you?—District Engineer for Railways in Southland.

2. The Commission desires information with regard to the creosoting-works here, and also the process through which the timber goes, and your opinion in regard to whether the process should be further utilised?—The creosote-works at Kew have, since the Government purchased in July, 1901, put through a total of 298,854 sleepers. The sleepers are not cut by the Railway Department, but contracts are let for the supply of the sleepers. The contracts are let and called for as they are required. I find that since the works started we have called and accepted tenders for the supply of 439,700 sleepers. The number which I previously mentioned to the Commission as being put through the works represents the supply out of those contracts.

3. Do you expect to get the full number?—I do not. My contracts are closed now.

4. Can you tell the Commission what the result is with regard to using these sleepers as against other sleepers?—The sleepers are impregnated with from 2 to 2½ gallons of creosote to each sleeper, and the result of that undoubtedly is to increase the life of the sleeper with respect to probable decay, but the sleeper is not strengthened by the process in any way. The fault which is found by