

43. *Mr. Leyland.*] Have you any opinion as to puriri?—I think it is as fine timber for sleepers as any I have ever seen—as good as an Australian hardwood.

44. If you could get puriri you would take that in preference?—I should be very glad to do so.

45. With reference to the cost, seeing that you have to rely entirely upon sawmillers who have gone to other sources of production, the cost has risen materially. Perhaps that may be charged against the sawmillers—the increasing of that cost?—I should not like to put it in the way of laying a charge; but the fact remains that it has increased from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 8d.

46. But those who are not sawmillers have also raised the price?—That is so.

47. Would you not take that as a proof that the rise cannot be helped?—I would; I know the price of timber has risen.

48. The point I want to make is that independent of the sawmiller the price has risen?—That is so.

49. I heard something of a new system of creosoting whereby the bulk of the creosote is withdrawn. If you could reduce the amount it would materially reduce the cost?—It would indeed.

50. But you have not tested it?—No; and to the best of my knowledge it has not been tested in New Zealand.

51. They have a plant in Australia now?—I understand so.

52. That would materially reduce the cost?—It would, certainly.

53. *Mr. Clarke.*] From a professional point of view, in the construction of railways and the point of view of public safety, do you consider it advisable that a supply of hardwood sleepers should be always available, even though they come from abroad?—We must have hardwood for sharp curves and bridges. The weight of the trains we are running now in itself demands that.

54. *Mr. Morris.*] Can you tell us anything about the difference in cost between puriri and jarrah?—I cannot; I have been away from Auckland for ten years, and could not tell you the cost at the present time. In my time in Auckland the cost was about equal to the Australian hardwood; but now I would expect the cost of puriri has risen.

55. *Mr. Barber.*] Are you extending the railway here with a view of opening up further timber areas?—It is being extended in the timber areas; the Orepuki branch particularly.

56. Will that bring much timber into the market?—It should do so. There are very large areas of bush in part of the country that the line is going into.

57. Is it a good timber country?—To the best of my knowledge it is.

58. With regard to the creosote, you import that?—Yes; it is all imported from London.

59. Is it of English make?—I have no doubt it must be.

60. Is there no chance of getting it locally?—I do not think so.

61. Would it not pay to put in a plant for making it?—I see no reason why it should not be done; but, of course, it would be a matter for private enterprise.

62. Up to the present no gas company has gone in for it?—No.

63. *Mr. Ell.*] About how many sleepers have you in your district lying under the track?—One million, approximately.

64. In this one district?—Yes.

65. Do you know if your Department are making any provision for supplying the needs of the Department?—At the present time I have a sufficient stock to keep me going.

66. I mean about the future?—Of course, the creosote-works are still standing there.

67. I want to know whether the Railway Department is making any provision for supplying the railway system of New Zealand?—I do not know, personally.

68. At present you are entirely depending upon hardwood from Australia?—Yes, all our hardwood sleepers come from there; but, although I have no contracts for local sleepers at the present time, I might to-day get an order to contract for anything up to 50,000 or 80,000.

69. Why I am asking you is because in America the great railway systems there have immense areas of country planted with timber suitable for sleepers?—I know. Of course, tree-planting is being done in New Zealand, but to what extent I cannot say.

70. Do you know of any timbers in New Zealand which are suitable for this purpose?—I have always understood that some are. I have not examined them very closely. There is a small quantity of hardwood in New Zealand that has been planted probably forty or fifty years now, but it is a very small quantity.

71. Have you any knowledge at all as to the growth of puriri?—No; but I should imagine it was a very slow-growing tree.

72. *Mr. Arnold.*] You say there are one million sleepers now in this district laid down in the track?—Yes.

73. Do you know how many feet of timber there are in each sleeper?—Twenty-three and a third feet.

74. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Have you any idea of the proportion of creosoted sleepers in that million?—Roughly, one-fifth.

75. What timbers have you creosoted?—Rimu, miro, kahikatea, matai, and a small proportion of totara.

76. Are they all equally serviceable when creosoted, as far as lasting is concerned?—No, I do not consider matai is serviceable. When I was speaking before of matai I was referring to ordinary-grown matai; but appearances have shown that creosoted matai is not going to last as well as other creosoted timbers.

77. *Mr. Mander.*] You said that creosoting increases the life of the timber, roughly, about fifteen years?—Fourteen or fifteen years.

78. It will not actually increase the life of the sleeper as far as the railway is concerned—it will not harden it in any way?—No. As I have already explained, we are using the sleepers