

45. *Mr. Morris.*] You consider it is in the interest of the country to keep your business going here as a source of employment for our people?—Yes, or any business that is using timber for manufacturing purposes.

46. You said building operations were retarded owing to the increased cost of timber?—Undoubtedly.

47. Is it not more due to the improvement in the style of building that is being erected in the country than to the increase in the cost of timber?—That may be to a certain extent. I know that tenders were called for a cottage just a few weeks ago with very little variation from a cottage that could have been built seven years ago for £250, and the lowest tender was £325.

48. *Mr. Jennings.*] What timber?—Principally red-pine.

49. *Mr. Morris.*] Will you tell us what is the cost of building-timber now as compared with seven years ago?—I could not tell you, because I am not in the habit of buying timber. My knowledge of the cost comes from being chairman of the Star Bowkett Society.

50. Of course you, being a practical man, are aware that the increased price of timber could not possibly make more than £15 of a difference in the building of a house between now and seven years ago?—Oh, it is more than that. Seven years ago you could buy red-pine in the yards for 8s.—it may be a little more than seven years ago.

51. What is the price now?—Somewhere about 12s. or 14s.

52. That may possibly make a difference of £30 in the cost of the house you have mentioned?—Yes.

53. That does not account for the whole of the increased cost?—But labour-conditions make a difference.

54. You think it is better to employ our own men, and cut the timber in our own forests in preference to going into the American market?—Of course, that is so; but you can overdo that sort of thing.

55. If the men were not employed in the bush they would not be wanted in the town?—There are more carpenters employed in the timber trade than sawmill hands.

56. The money of these men—being large consumers—assists very materially in the prosperity of any town?—If the building trade is good the general outcome is that other trades are good.

57. Have you felt a depression owing to the tightness of the money-market?—To a certain extent. I am doing as much as eighteen months ago.

58. You say this is American wood, yet imported from Sydney?—We cannot get it direct. Since the San Francisco fire we have been unable to import it direct from there. I understand that sailing-vessels are running from Newcastle to Frisco with coal, and they bring this as return cargo.

59. Could not New Zealand compete in the matter of dressing this timber?—Yes, so far as the actual labour is concerned; but we are paying duty on one-third of that timber. If that is left in Sydney you do not pay duty on it.

60. How much labour would be employed in working this material?—That would be a very hard matter to tell. Of course, I do not know what the output of the other places is. I dare say the ships' manifests would tell what comes in.

61. Is the consumption of this article sufficient to keep the machinery employed in the chief centres?—Pretty well. The effect it has is that it fills in the time. You can put them on to that when they are not busy with anything else; otherwise we should be importing from Sydney like the rest.

62. What was the original cost of this cottage?—£250.

63. And this account was for 75 per cent.?—Yes.

64. Considering the rise in the price of timber the amount that was given—£15 to £30—is an underestimate?—I think £30 is not an underestimate. Of course, there is another effect—the price of timber affects the joinery-work.

65. Seventy-five per cent. would amount to considerably more than £30?—I do not know that it would. There is joinery, rough work, plastering to be considered.

66. I quite understand that?—Of course, you can get the exact increase from one of the builders.

67. *Mr. EU.*] Is the timber you use kauri for the frame?—Yes; clear-pine or yellow-pine for the shutters.

68. How many years have you been in business?—About twenty-five, I think.

69. You have had ample opportunity of testing whether New Zealand timbers are suited to your trade or not?—Yes.

70. And after all that you say New Zealand timbers are not suited to it?—Yes.

71. Therefore you consider that the timber necessary for your trade should come into this country duty-free?—Yes.

72. With regard to the increase in the price of kauri, here you say you pay £1 12s.?—That was the price paid in the yard.

73. You heard Mr. Leyland say that it could be obtained in Auckland at 18s. 6d.?—Yes; but my last quotation was 19s. 6d.

74. There is a big percentage?—There is 10 per cent. and 2½ per cent. off that.

75. Having regard to the fact that kauri is such a high price in the country, and our kauri forests are very limited, and that we require kauri for many important woodworking industries, do you think the time is ripe for an export duty on kauri?—Undoubtedly.

76. In order to preserve it for our own industries?—Yes. For the purpose for which I use kauri Oregon would be absolutely useless; I do not know any timber so suitable as kauri.

77. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you tell how much Californian or red pine is imported?—I could not say.