

78. Can you say the quantity you yourself use?—We have imported 14,000 ft. in one year. I think that is the largest quantity.

79. How much kauri do you use in a year?—About 2,000 ft. in blinds. I use a good deal in other ways. At the present moment I am using close on 1,000 ft. in machine-work for casing electric light—about 500 ft. a month.

80. How many men do you employ in the factory?—Seven.

81. Do you think that to put an export duty on kauri would reduce the price in this country?—I do not know that it would, but it would stop it from going any higher.

82. I understand you to advocate a lower duty on Californian redwood?—On any imported timbers.

83. Yet you advocate an export duty on kauri, which would throw out of employment hundreds of men?—If you increase the cost any more it would be prohibitive.

84. Would it not throw some hundreds out of employment?—I do not know about the number: I do not know what the export figures are.

85. Do you know of any reason why you should import into Dunedin kauri, and that the merchants should charge you 5s. more than you can sell for?—No reason.

86. You think there is a ring amongst the timber-merchants?—I do not know about the ring, but they have the price fixed amongst themselves.

87. You think the price too high?—Undoubtedly.

88. *Mr. Mander.*] You said you had to pay £1 12s. for kauri purchased in Dunedin?—Less the discount.

89. What would that be?—Three shillings and ninepence.

90. And you can buy it from Auckland for 19s., and have discount off that?—No discount off that.

91. That would be practically 10s. difference in the retail price in Dunedin and the wholesale price in Auckland?—You have to pay wharfage dues.

92. What are they?—Freight, 3s. per hundred feet; and wharfage, 9d.

93. Cartage?—Even if you buy it here you have to pay cartage.

94. That would leave the retailer 5s.?—It would leave him more.

95. You consider he gets too great a profit?—Undoubtedly.

96. Seeing that Oregon does not come into competition with first-class kauri, do you think the introduction of Oregon in large quantities would reduce the price of kauri?—It does come into competition in joinery-work.

97. Are you aware that Melbourne to-day is the best market for kauri?—I could not say.

98. Are you aware the Oregon has come into competition in Australia for a great many years?—I believe it has.

99. And it has not reduced the price of kauri?—There are certain things it cannot compete with kauri for, such as the making of doors, and things like that.

100. You are aware that it has been competing with kauri for a great many years, and yet Australia is the best market for kauri?—I am aware that it has been competing with kauri.

101. Have you ever used timber called kawau?—Yes.

102. Do you find that unsuitable?—Totally unsuitable. The trees being small you cannot get it so clean.

103. *Mr. Leyland.*] Would you tell us the price of redwood imported—what it costs per hundred feet?—The last quotation gave the cost as £1 6s. 6d.

104. Do you run the laths from the rough timber?—Everything, unless the fitches.

105. *Mr. Field.*] Did I understand you to say that you were in favour of taking the duties off all imported timbers?—Yes, off imported timbers in balk.

106. Do I understand you to favour putting a duty on small sizes coming from foreign places?—Yes, not on any log or balk, as they call it.

107. *Mr. Mander.*] Are you aware that logs are free now?—I know that I pay 2s. a hundred on them.

108. *Mr. Leyland.*] You mean in balk?—Yes.

109. *Mr. Ell.*] You say kauri has gone up very high in price?—Yes.

110. What were you paying ten years ago?—I can give you the difference in the Auckland price. Some years ago we were getting it for 13s. 6d., and it has now risen to 19s. 6d.

111. In ten years?—In less than ten years.

112. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You made a statement that if the timber was cheaper you thought the building would go on just now as actively as it did before?—Hardly that; it would go on to a greater extent than it really is going on. I believe the price of timber has to a certain extent kept back building.

113. I thought perhaps that if it was the same price as some years ago the building would increase?—It certainly has some effect on the trade; you cannot ignore that fact.

JAMES CRAWFORD, President of the Builders and Contractors' Association, sworn and examined.
(No. 22.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Kindly tell the Commission what you know about these questions we are to inquire into here?—I will first read a resolution passed by the Builders' Association: "That importation of foreign timber would facilitate building operations, and we wish to emphasize strongly the necessity for the import duty being removed. Oregon can be obtained at a uniform rate on sizes up to 14 ft. long and 14 in. wide. For beams, principals of roofs, joisting, framing, and scaffolding, owing to its rigidity, lightness, and its being procurable in long lengths it is preferable to local timber. Hardwoods, such as jarrah, ironbark, blue-gum, stringybark, have no substitute in the Dominion. City Councils, County Councils, and Harbour Boards