

use these timbers very largely for bridges, sleepers, &c., and these timbers are already protected by an additional railway tariff over local products. Totara, black-pine, heart of red-pine, or rimu are all difficult to obtain in South Otago. Kauri is the most valuable timber in New Zealand, if not in the world, and is invaluable for stairs, shelving, fittings, &c. In our opinion kauri should be conserved as much as possible, as it is almost impossible to obtain wide planks and boards in any other timber to take its place. For beams and roof-work it is now not used, as Oregon timber is quite as suitable, if not more so, and is very much cheaper and lighter to handle."

2. You see the questions we have been inquiring into. Some of them will be connected with your business. Can you give us your opinion on these?—I think our principal reason for wishing the duty removed from foreign timber is not so much the price of local timber—but if the building trade is brisk it is very difficult to obtain local timber—and we are very much hampered that way by loss of time. Two or three years back it was a common thing to be stuck for several weeks—in fact, months—sometimes to obtain red-pine, more especially when we are getting into long lengths. The price of ordinary red-pine in cottage size does not make very much difference, but when you go into larger sizes over 12 in. wide there is an extra price on it; and, of course, up to 20 ft. long, I think for every foot over that there is an extra charge of 6d. per hundred, and so on. In regard to Oregon, you can get that in any length, and at shorter notice than red-pine. As far as hardwoods are concerned, we have no hardwoods here, and it is very hard to get totara or any timber that would take its place. Two or three years ago I had a contract for the Government for which I required about 30,000 ft. of totara, and none of the mills in Southland cared about taking it on. At last I got it from one miller, but it was all condemned. I had then to substitute jarrah. The Government recognise now that it is hard to get totara, and they are calling for tenders for a similar contract, and specifying that jarrah may be used.

3. *Mr. Arnold.*] How long have you been in business?—Nine years.

4. In Dunedin?—Yes.

5. Building during the whole time?—Yes.

6. How long have you been president of the association?—Nine months, since July last.

7. And a member of it for how long previously?—Eight years.

8. Do all the builders in Dunedin belong to the association?—Not all; we have a membership of between eighty-five and ninety.

9. What is the basis of your association?—To protect the building trade, to regulate the rates of wages as far as we can in the Arbitration Court.

10. To protect yourselves against the worker? But in addition to that have you got no understanding as to the price of tendering?—None at all.

11. You are given a free hand as far as tendering is concerned?—Quite a free hand; there is too much competition for that sort of thing.

12. Do you try to get outside builders to join your association?—No; they have got to be proposed, and if they do join they have got to abide by the rules.

13. Do you try to get them to join?—No.

14. It is quite free with them whether they come in or not?—Yes, quite free.

15. Are the builders who are not members of your association treated in the same way as those who are members by the architects of the city?—Just the same.

16. No discrimination whatever?—None at all.

17. There is an association here amongst the sawmillers, is there not?—I believe so, but I have no evidence of it.

18. Is there no relationship between that association and your own?—None at all.

19. They do not give a larger discount to members of the association than to outside builders?—No.

20. Now, with regard to building, you heard Mr. Scott's evidence a few moments ago?—Yes.

21. Is it correct that building-material has been raised in price to the extent that he mentioned?—It has certainly gone up during the last six years. I suppose the price for scantling has increased 3s., and some particular lines perhaps a little more than that.

22. That is rimu?—Yes.

23. And the present price is 11s.?—No, the present price of scantling in the yards is 13s. 6d. in Dunedin.

24. That is for first-class?—Yes.

25. Is the price of the timber the chief cause of the falling-off in building operations?—I do not think that has altogether to do with it. The shortage of money is to a certain extent the cause of it.

26. Do you not think the tightness of the money-market has more to do with it than anything else?—Yes, I dare say it has.

27. The building trade is not the only trade that is at the present time suffering from slackness?—I could not speak with regard to that.

28. Do you as a builder find any difficulty in getting seasoned timbers from local sawmillers?—It is almost impossible to get it—they do not stock it.

29. If you had a contract for a large building and the specification specified that the timber should be thoroughly seasoned, how long in advance would you have to give your order to the mill?—You cannot season timber properly under six months, and even then it is not properly done.

30. So that it would almost be necessary to have the contract six months before the timber was required?—Yes.

31. And that would be impossible, of course?—Yes.

32. You say you find a difficulty in getting rimu and other timbers?—When the building trade is busy.

33. And so it is necessary to use imported timbers?—Yes.