

168. Is this because stocks are not kept in the yards?—Yes. When we have a building here we never get the material out of the yards. We get it direct from Southland.

169. How many timber-merchants are there in Dunedin?—About seven or eight, I should think.

170. Are these timber-merchants also sawmillers?—Some of them. Not all.

171. How many are not timber-merchants?—One, anyway, is not.

172. Seeing that you get your timber direct from the bush in Southland for the construction of a building, and we are informed that 9s. 6d. is the average selling-price of the timber at River-ton, do you not think that the merchant is asking rather too high a price when he gets 13s. 6d. at the lowest?—We do not pay 13s. 6d. for that timber in Southland.

173. What do you pay for the timber that you get from Southland?—It costs us about 12s. landed here. The rail-age is 3s.

174. *Mr. Mander.*] I understood you to say that you would take all duties off imported timber?—Yes.

175. Do you not think it would be a better business principle to lessen the duty on timber that we cannot produce in this country, and increase it on timbers that we can produce here?—We cannot produce Oregon here.

176. Do you not think it would be better to reduce the price on the long lengths and the widths that we are unable to produce here, and increase it on those timbers that are coming into competition with us?—No, I think if you take it off the whole lot you would get it much cheaper than if you restricted the sizes.

177. Seeing it costs about 13s. to deliver Oregon here and you can purchase rimu for about 14s., the introduction of Oregon would reduce the cost of building?—It might, but not to a great extent. It will help to conserve the red-pine we have got here.

178. The red-pine is 1s. less than Oregon?—It would save the red-pine in this way: that the Oregon would be used for scantlings, and the red-pine would be used more for dressed lines.

179. Are you aware that the scantlings accumulate most in the mill, and are most difficult to get rid of?—Well, perhaps they might be able to sell it cheaper then.

180. How much timber does it take to build an ordinary four-roomed cottage in Dunedin?—That is not a fair question. You may build a four-roomed cottage for £200, or you may build one for £400.

181. I want to know much much timber it takes?—There is a difference in the timber.

182. What is the average?—Anything from 15,000 ft.

183. You say the increase in timber is equal to 3s. during the last six years?—Yes.

184. That would amount to about £21 extra in a cottage of that size?—Yes.

185. Do you think that would retard building operations in Dunedin?—It would affect any one with small capital, because, in addition to that, there is an increase in other lines, such as mantelpieces, doors, frames, &c.

186. How do you account for a four-roomed cottage costing £47 more than it did to build a few years ago?—Of course, it may be a different cottage. There is drainage, &c., now which costs money; moreover, painting and plumbing have gone up. I may say, however, that carpenters' wages have not increased during the last few years.

187. You tell us you could not understand why the price of timber has gone up lately?—During the last three years I said.

188. Are you not aware that timber each year has become more difficult to get?—I made that stipulation.

189. You are aware that the longer you hold timber the interest on the money becomes an increasing factor, and fire, in the matter of kauri, is a very big factor, and puts the price up very much?—Yes.

190. Now, you said that if Oregon was delivered on the wharf here that builders could buy it in suitable sizes in lengths, &c., to suit their purposes?—Yes. You can order it that way and get what sizes you like, suitable to put into yard or store.

191. Do you find any difficulty in getting red-pine?—The large sizes you cannot get.

192. Do you not think the price of land in places like Wellington is a very large factor in the cost?—There is no doubt about it.

193. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You stated, Mr. Crawford, that you got all your stuff from the Southland mills?—That is when we have a contract, but for jobbing purposes we get it from the merchants.

194. For contracting you apply to the mills in Southland, to whichever mill you think will supply you best and cheapest?—Yes.

195. Do you know that there are a certain number of millers in the association in Southland?—Yes.

196. It is in evidence that rather more than half of them are associated, and that there are a number who are not. Altogether there are somewhere about twenty-five to thirty mills associated, and the balance are not. Do you find any difficulty in applying for orders to one or the other? Do you get it cheaper from the association mills than from the other mills?—I do not think there is any difference. We are guided more by the mill that can supply us quickly with good timber.

197. You think there is no difference in the prices quoted by the timber-people?—I have never found any difference.

198. With regard to the timber being seasoned, what do you think would be the value of seasoned timber in a cottage in preference to the ordinary timber from the mill?—Of course, we have to season timber ourselves.

199. When ordering a cottage from you one would have to give you a certain time to cut this timber and season it?—Yes.