

200. What would be the average time?—Weatherboards, flooring, and lining get about three months' drying; it depends upon the size of the job. Sometimes we get six months, but we just have to season it as we can.

201. And if you have not time it goes in without being seasoned?—It has got to.

202. I suppose, in the bulk of cottages there is no architect?—Yes, but they only specify timber to be on the ground within two weeks of the contract being signed.

203. *Mr. Field.*] As to the possibility of rendering timber from the North Island saleable down South, you seem to think it impossible to buy it at a reasonable price? Are you aware that they are bringing timber from the Baltic, 15,000 miles, and from Oregon, 7,000 miles, and selling it reasonably?—Yes, I am aware of that.

204. What does it cost to take timber from the railway-station in Wellington and put it on board ship at the wharf-side?—About 4d. per hundred feet.

205. And stacking aboard ship and wharfage?—That would be included in the freight—putting it on board ship.

206. Assuming this to be so—that I am prepared to take your order for 1,000,000 ft. or 10,000,000 ft. at 10s. per hundred, that the freight down here is 2s., and the cartage is 1s., is it possible for our timber there not to be available for use down here?—You could not do that on a small order.

207. Yes, I could?—Take 20,000 ft.

208. In truck-loads. I am prepared to do it to-day. You say it is impossible?—No, not a bit.

209. Assuming the cost of production for sawmillers down Southland was from 8s. to 8s. 6d., you would not doubt their word?—I do not think so.

210. I do not include in that dressed timber—only rough sawn timber. I do not mean to include timber for which I understand you are paying here 12s.?—Rough timber.

211. And you can buy it in the yards at 13s. 6d. and 10 per cent. and 2½ per cent. off?—Yes.

212. *Mr. Morris.*] I should like to ask what is the percentage of the cost of timber used in an ordinary five-roomed worker's cottage—the total cost of the building and of the bare rough timber?—That is rather a strange question to answer.

213. Do you think it is 25 per cent.?—I should think more than that.

214. Thirty per cent.?—Perhaps 33 per cent.; I would not be sure of it.

ALEXANDER MACPHERSON, Timber-merchant, sworn and examined. (No. 23.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Can you give us evidence as a timber-merchant on the points referred to here in the order of reference?—I will give you any information as far as I can.

2. We want to hear in your own way the information you can give. Have you any connection with sawmilling?—Yes.

3. You are both a timber-merchant and a sawmiller?—I have no connection practically with sawmilling. My firm has taken up a piece of bush, but we have not started on it yet. It is chiefly beech.

4. What supply do you intend to provide?—We have had considerable inquiry from Australia and shipped a fair quantity over there, until they imposed a duty of 2s. 6d., which practically shut us out.

5. What do you propose to do now?—I wish to bring before the Commission the fact that kauri and white-pine are allowed into the Commonwealth for a duty of 6d., whereas the timber which we can supply is charged 2s. 6d. Perhaps something might be done to put them on the same footing.

6. As a timber-merchant, have you been satisfactorily supplied by the millers in Southland?—I have been satisfied. I may say that our firm is placed rather differently to the majority of firms in Dunedin, in that we do not stock but simply distribute.

7. Then, one going with an order to you would be supplied from where you could get it cheapest?—Yes.

8. Do you intend to stock when you start sawmilling?—We did at first, but we would not think of stocking now.

9. You think stocking does not pay?—Not for local wants.

10. What is your opinion about the addition to the price of timber—this last increase of 3s. per hundred in the past six years?—All I know is that the sawmillers as a body are not making much out of it—just working from hand and mouth. There may be exceptions.

11. Still, you think it is a payable business to enter on?—We took it up with the prospect of selling the beech, but that has been practically knocked off.

12. What is your intention now?—To do the best we can.

13. *Mr. Arnold.*] Where are you opening your mill?—In the Wairio district, Southland.

14. Have you any knowledge of bush country?—A fair knowledge.

15. Did you personally inspect the various bush areas before you selected your site?—My partner has done so.

16. There is a difficulty, is there ont, in getting rid of birch timber—in building up a trade in it?—For building purposes there is; but there is a certain quantity required for other manufactures.

17. As a merchant you are going into all classes of trade?—Yes.

18. Were there special reasons for going into the birch trade?—We had opened a good market and had orders coming in every week, but the duty was put on, and the trade has practically stopped since.

19. You think that the duty should be taken off in some way?—Yes. I think it should be placed in the same position as kauri and white-pine. It appears that kauri is brought in on the