

139. Do you think it would compete with it in Wellington?—It should not. It would compete more with it in Christchurch than in Wellington.

140. And for what reason?—Because they cannot rail the timber into Christchurch, but you can from the mills to Wellington.

141. But that applies to red-pine also, because the railage applies equally to red-pine in Christchurch as with Oregon pine?—I am speaking of railage from the mills.

142. How much timber is supplied from the mills in Southland to Christchurch?—Practically none.

143. It has to be railed in from the port?—Yes. They can rail it into Wellington from the mills, but there is the shipping as well at Christchurch. They have to ship it first from the West Coast, and then rail it. What I mean is this: the mills in Wellington district can rail the timber into Wellington direct, but there are no mills that can rail the timber direct into Christchurch.

144. Considering that timber, according to the prices that have been given, can be put into the Christchurch port at the same price that it is put into Lyttelton and also delivered at the Wellington Railway-station, ought there to be any difference between the Oregon pine and red-pine?—I could not say that.

145. *Mr. EU.*] You say that the local timber does not pay to stock?—I did not say that. I said it was not profitable enough for one to stock it.

146. If the timber-merchants in Christchurch fourteen years ago only charged 1s. between the ordinary green timber and seasoned timber, why can they not do it now?—I could not say.

147. Have the wages gone up very materially so far as labour is concerned in the yards?—It has gone up to a certain extent.

148. But not to any great extent?—No.

149. What do you pay your workers now?—I have no yard now.

150. Do you know what is paid?—No, I do not.

151. Now, in regard to beech, you say that practically the trade is knocked out through the duty of 2s. 6d. being imposed in Australia?—Yes.

152. Are you aware that, if beech is cut in the winter, the sap is down, and it is not so liable to crack and warp?—It is not quite so liable.

153. And the millers say it is a much better timber if cut in the winter?—Yes, I believe that.

154. Then, do you think that, if you had your cutting in the winter and the sawing in the summer, it would enable you to get your beech on to the market with a greater chance of selling it?—No, because we should have to charge more for it then.

155. You are selling it now at 1s. less than rimu?—Yes.

156. If you charged the same price as rimu could you do it?—I do not think it would cover the cost of cutting it all in the winter.

157. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Can you give us the extent of your importation of Oregon?—We have only had one small lot.

158. You have recently sent away some orders?—Yes.

159. You said you have been a sawmiller, and you are again proposing to be a sawmiller?—In a small way.

160. Do you expect to produce the timber at a cheaper rate than the sawmillers are charging you?—No.

161. Then what is your object in going into sawmilling?—Well, we had got the market for this birch, and we wanted to make sure of a supply.

162. But there are other persons who supply birch?—Yes, but we may not be able to buy from them.

163. What are the charges on timber between Riverton and here?—The railage is 2s. 9d. per hundred from Riverton to Dunedin. Those are the only charges.

164. What is the average price charged you by the millers?—For rough timber up to certain sizes 7s., but the prices vary.

165. But the lowest price is 7s.?—Yes.

166. And the highest price for timber is, what?—The highest price is 10s. for flooring.

167. We have heard a good deal about bad debts adding to the cost of timber; can you give us any idea what the percentage would be?—About 2½ per cent., roughly, but I have not gone into it exactly.

168. You are a timber-merchant in this respect: that you secure an order in Dunedin or elsewhere and purchase the timber at the mill and deliver it. What else do you do?—That is all.

169. But you stand the racket of bad debts?—Yes, and all expenses.

170. What do you estimate is the cost of a small mill plant turning out about 5,000 ft.?—From £1,500 to £2,000.

171. And the life of that mill in one area is, what?—You never get two areas alike—it may last ten or fifteen years.

172. You have two areas of 800 acres each?—Yes.

173. How long do you think the mill will take to cut that out?—From ten to twelve years—it depends on the rate of cutting.

174. It has been, I think, the almost unanimous testimony of millers that they are clearing on the average 1s. per hundred feet on the output of their mills: taking a 5,000-ft.-a-day mill, the owner would be clearing £2 10s. a day. Is there anything to put against those charges other than the whole cost of production?—I could not say—I have not gone into it.

175. The depreciation is all allowed for?—I do not see how they can allow for that—the profit of a large mill must be different.

176. At any rate, according to your evidence the smallest mill turns out 5,000 ft. a day, and other millers have told us it costs 8s. a hundred to produce, and it is sold for 9s. 0½d., making a