

wanted timber from Southland 40 ft. in length, or 18 by 10, I should have considerable trouble in getting it, and when I did get it its greenness would show that the kaka had been nestling in its branches a few weeks earlier.

22. Suppose, then, that the hardwoods are to come in free, do you think that in five-and-twenty years the conditions of our local timber will be any different?—Of course. If you are going to restrict the importation of foreign timbers—it does not matter whether it is Oregon pine or Australian hardwood—you must always be cutting from a limited quantity of your native timbers, and consequently every year will reduce the total. I understand that the steps the Government are taking will not replace the native timbers. The rimu or red-pine is one of the finest timbers in the world; so also is the kauri, but the price of kauri is prohibitive.

23. So you think that, even though those other timbers were imported free of duty, there would still be a demand for rimu and kauri?—Yes, certainly.

24. What about pine and birch?—I have never used any of the birch. Any that I have seen, if you lay it down it runs, twists, and warps in every direction. I do not think it will ever be used much.

25. What about black and red pine?—Very good, but can you get it?

26. Do you find any difficulty in getting orders supplied?—We find a difficulty in getting any native timber of any size in lengths.

27. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will that not apply more to large constructions than to ordinary cottages or buildings?—Well, I am speaking more particularly in respect to buildings in the centre of Dunedin than to small buildings. The demand we hope will increase.

28. Is there much cutting in the building trade here?—I got a specification for a small job this week and we had seventeen tenders, and some of them were below the actual cost of material. They really gave the labour for nothing. You cannot have more competition than that.

29. How do the wages paid to men to-day compare with the wages paid some years ago?—If you are referring to carpenters, I was paying in 1879 13s. a day, and then their wages came down to 10s.; now we are paying 10s. 8d. We do not, however, get the same amount of work in respect to either quantity or quality.

30. What do you think is the cause of that?—There are too many politicians here to answer that question.

31. You do not care to answer that question?—We are hedged in with too many restrictions, too much nonsense.

32. Do you mean to say that the men are inferior as mechanics?—Speaking of twenty-five years ago, we had a good many men in the colony who were members of the Amalgamated Society at Home. Young men who have grown up in the Dominion have not the same facilities to acquire a thoroughly practical knowledge of the different classes of work. Machinery, to a certain extent, too, has superseded hand-work.

33. Are builders using as good a class of timber in ordinary dwellings now as they did, say, ten years ago?—We are putting in, perhaps, a better class of material, but under different conditions.

34. As to timber?—No. A few years ago the majority of the timber-merchants in Dunedin would supply us from the yard. If you booked an order with them you would get your timber cut from the junk into the sizes you required. To-day, if a man secures a contract, the first thing you do is to go to the timber-merchant, and he sends the order down south to the bush mill.

35. As a matter of fact, you are not, then, using seasoned timber—that is, you are not putting it in?—You cannot get seasoned timbers.

36. Speaking of the cost of a building, am I right in saying that it has increased by 40 per cent. compared with a few years ago?—Does that mean the total cost of the building, or only so far as the rough timber is concerned?

37. Rough timber?—No. I think, myself, if you put it down at 20 per cent. you would be on the outside of it. You must remember this: that if you come to cottage buildings, the quantity of proper timber in them is very small. The actual cost of rough timber has not increased in the same proportion as dressed timber. In Dunedin the extra cost is put on sundry things, such as mouldings, cornices, &c.; it is not on the rough timber above a given size and a given length.

38. Can you give us any reason why there should be such disparity?—Possibly it is due to altered conditions. They have to pay more in wages, rents may have gone up, and special machinery is required to get the timber from difficult places in the bush to the mill. This all adds to the cost.

39. Do you think it better to obtain your timber from the timber-merchant than from the miller?—I find it pays me better to deal with responsible persons, and that is the timber-merchant. I am told there are people outside who would quote perhaps a cheap price for certain lines, but they are not in a position to execute the order entirely, and consequently you get very little sympathy from the sawmiller if you go and ask him to supply you with an article that does not pay him so well as the rough stuff.

40. You find it better to deal with the merchant than with the sawmiller?—I do not know that you can call him that, because they are all directly or indirectly connected.

41. Do you find any combine to force up prices?—They tell me there is a price-list, and I believe it is a fact.

42. Do you think it desirable that we should import Oregon here free?—It would provide for a felt want that our native timber does not supply.

43. From your knowledge of the trade you would say that that want is likely to continue?—Yes.

44. *Mr. Jennings.*] Has your association made any inquiries regarding timbers that grow in the North Island—that is, outside of kauri?—Not that I am aware of.