

74. I am not opposed to the importation of Oregon in all sizes, but I want to conserve our local timber?—I am pleased to hear it; but you are sacrificing a national asset. Why not put the men into more profitable employment and conserve your natural asset?—The importation of Oregon would help that.

75. You recognise that our crop of timber is fully matured?—My opinion is that it would not give us a renewal of our native timber.

76. *Mr. Barber.*] You are a member of the Building Association?—Yes.

77. And approve of the resolution?—Yes.

78. Do you think it fairly reflects the opinion of all the builders outside the association?—Of course, there are builders and builders. The majority are what would be considered builders, but there are plenty of journeymen to-day who will be builders to-morrow.

79. Do you think it reflects their sentiments?—I think so.

80. Do you think the quality of the timber supplied by millers and timber-merchants to-day is equal to the quality of ten years ago?—I think it is fully equal to it; but it does not get the same chance to-day. It is not held in junks in the yard to-day, as it was ten or fifteen years ago. It is felled, brought into the sawmill, and handed to the builder before it gets seasoned.

81. What I mean is, have you found in your experience that a larger percentage of the log is cut into timber now than years ago? Are they sending in bark and sap-wood?—I say the builders would not take it. We pay for timber coming to Dunedin, and approved of by the architect.

82. If timber-merchants in other parts of the Dominion were offering this class of timber, do you think it is fair trading and such as would insure the erection of a substantial building?—It would not be permitted in Dunedin.

83. *Mr. EU.*] You say that timber is not held in junk in quantities in the yard, as it was ten or fifteen years ago?—Yes.

84. Can you give us any reason for that?—It may be that better facilities enable them to draw in supplies.

85. The result is that you cannot get sufficient seasoned timber for the requirements of the trade?—No.

86. As an experienced builder and citizen, is that in the interests of the country?—No.

87. Do you think it would be a wise thing if the architects made it a rule to insist upon seasoned timber being put into buildings?—Of course, you would be adding on to the cost again.

88. Say a building contained 15,000 ft. of timber—an ordinary cottage?—Well, half or two-thirds at the outside is rough timber, and the balance is dressed timber, and you do not expect to see that. There is provision in many specifications in Dunedin where if you were building you would put up a frame, and let it season for six or eight weeks before you went on with your inside work.

89. The builder stands the racket of holding timber for seasoning purposes?—That adds to the cost of the building.

90. In Christchurch they charge 2s. per hundred over for seasoned timber, and that would mean £15 increase on a £1,000 building. Would it pay them?—It might. The people in Dunedin grumble at paying what they have to pay to-day. It would be better for all concerned.

91. I want to get from you, as a practical builder, what is the best for the community?—That is one of the strongest reasons for the importation of Oregon pine—that it comes here in a seasoned state.

92. With regard to rimu and kauri, you say that they are adapted for the finer description of work?—Yes. In my opinion Oregon is suited for internal finishing.

93. Seeing that we have chair-factories and joinery-works, would it not be desirable to make reserves of these native timbers which are suitable? I am referring to kauri and rimu?—I did not say that kauri was suitable for inner work.

94. Seeing that sideboards and duchesse dressing-tables are made from it?—I could not get the backs of chairs from kauri.

95. In regard to timbers that are adapted for this finer work, is it not in the interests of the general public that there should be considerable reserves?—Oh, yes!

96. Further, in regard to water-services and climatic purposes, is it not desirable to have them?—Yes.

97. I am only asking for reasonable reserves?—The climate of Dunedin has changed very materially in the last thirty years. In my opinion that is due to the cutting-down of the bush.

98. Seeing that the forestry operations in this country resulted in covering 9,465 acres, is not that all the more reason for making reserves?—Certainly.

99. In regard to beech, have you had any experience?—No.

100. You know nothing about it?—Except that in my opinion it is no good for house-building purposes.

101. If I were to show you a letter in my possession in regard to a house built in Canterbury thirty years ago, and the building is as sound to-day—the builder was Mr. Thomas Keogh, who has had as good experience as Mr. Hodges had—would you be surprised?—That goes without saying, that he had the experience.

102. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] We have been told that Oregon is more seasoned?—Yes.

103. Would it be an advantage to use West Coast or North Island timber for the same purpose?—Can we get it?

104. Have you tried?—The price would be prohibitive. The trouble is that we cannot get native timbers of the length and size that we require.

105. Are you building chiefly for the owners of buildings, or those who rent to others?—I do not do very much cottage-building, but my impression is that there are a great many houses built for workers who are not proprietors.