

106. I take it that the mills are simply cutting for requirements, and that you cannot get orders delivered at once—that you have to wait?—I mean to say that if I were booking an order with a timber-merchant in Dunedin, and that was sent to Southland, the probability is that it would be six or eight months before I got it.

107. It would have to be cut first in the bush?—Yes.

108. There are not too many employed in the bush?—Many closed down at the New Year on account of having overstocks in hands, but these are the smaller sizes.

109. I think you advocated a while ago that it would be better to turn some of these sawmillers into workers of another class, and so conserve our timbers, yet you have to wait a long time to get an order supplied?—That is no answer to the question at all. I want to get timbers of a certain size and length, and when an order goes into the bush mills, men have to be put on to cut it. You might have a 2 by 4 size and not a 12 by 2.

110. Is there a large stock of desirable sizes?—I do not know. I am not acquainted with the stock they carry, except by newspaper report.

111. You told us a while ago that the workmen to-day are not as good as from other countries?—I qualify that by saying that twenty years ago many of the men were members of the Carpenters and Joiners' Society at Home. In the colonies machinery has superseded hand-work to a very large extent in the putting-together of joinery. Certainly, the young colonial has never had the same opportunity, and we do not get as much out of the men as twenty years ago.

112. Do you think the colonial is as good as the English worker?—We do not get the same all-round training.

113. Have you had experience of the emigrants?—We have experience every day. They come to me as qualified tradesmen. If they do not suit, I put them off.

114. Have you not said that emigrant carpenters are no use?—I have not said that.

115. You have seen the price-list produced by Mr. Macpherson?—No. I have seen a price-list, but I was not present when Mr. Macpherson was giving evidence.

116. Do you think that there is sufficient competition amongst timber-merchants?—Yes.

117. *Mr. Mander.*] You do not have any difficulty in procuring ordinary building sizes?—No.

117A. It is only in the bigger sizes?—Yes.

118. Do you not think it would meet the case if the duty on the larger sizes were reduced, and the smaller sizes left as they are?—Yes, but would it pay any person to send away a lot of smaller sizes? I never anticipate that there will be a big importation of smaller sizes.

119. Are you aware that they are building houses in Auckland of Oregon timber to-day?—I am not at all surprised to hear it.

120. If there is a great difficulty in getting beams, if the duty on these sizes were reduced, and the duty on the smaller sizes were increased, would not that meet the case?—It is possible that the Government might consider the advisability of charging import duty on the smaller sizes, but I do not anticipate that the need will ever arise. I think that the resolution from the Builders' Association applies to junk timber, not to smaller timber.

121. It has been said that a house built with green timber will not stand as long as a house built with seasoned timber—that the house will decay very rapidly. Is that your opinion?—It will never be as good a job. Of course, if you can dry timber in three months, if there be plenty of ventilation, there should not be more than six months' difference in the life of a house, provided it is properly drained and a current of air passing through.

122. It would not affect its durability?—It all depends upon the conditions under which the house was built and its situation.

123. Do the builders here prefer a framework of green timber to red-pine?—If you had a house two or three stories high, you would prefer dry timber every time.

124. What about driving the nails?—They drive just as freely.

125. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to the rising price of dressed timber, I have here the price-list of 1904 in Christchurch and one of 1894. I want to give you a few prices and see how they compare: "Flooring, T. and G., 6½ in. by 1 in., 1894, 11s. 9d.; 1904, 18s. 6d.—You see, your timber in Christchurch is slightly higher than here.

126. There is an increase of 50 per cent.?—Yes.

127. There is another: "Lining, dressed, 6½ in. by ½ in., 8s. 3d. to 13s. 3d.; weatherboards, 18s. and 13s."?—Your Christchurch prices are dearer than ours.

128. And advances about the same proportion?—No, your price-list is nearer. If you are buying 100 ft. of scantling you get 100 superficial feet. If you get 100 ft. of 4 in. by 8 in. tongued and grooved, you only get 100 superficial feet of 5 in. It is a bigger increase in 100 lineal feet than 100 superficial feet. Mr. Scott mentioned to-day that in venetian-blinds they would get 600 lineal feet to 100 superficial feet.

129. Do you think the advance in the price of material is justified by the increase in the price of timber?—It is more than justified in Dunedin by the price in Christchurch. Our prices in Dunedin compare very favourably with those in Christchurch.

130. I want to know whether the increase in the price of timber has justified the bigger advance in dressed material?—I am not in a position to say what the merchant has to pay the sawmiller. I can only say what the sawmiller charged me fifteen years ago and what he charges me to-day. Whether he is making more money I do not know.

131. You say the advance in the price of building-material has not been very much?—Yes. I am not quoting from Christchurch prices, but from Dunedin.

132. Has there not been too great an advance?—That has not been my experience in Dunedin.

133. *Mr. Field.*] I understand you are opposed to placing a duty on imported timber?—Yes.