

14. You think we have local timbers that can compare with the others?—Yes, certainly. Of course, we import hardwoods to a very small extent—there is very little used. That is, blue-gum, ironbark, and that is very rarely used in buildings now.

15. What timbers do you import?—Blue-gum, Oregon, Baltic, yellow-pine, clear-pine, and hickory and ash.

16. And practically all those come under the heading of “hardwoods”?—Yes.

17. What New Zealand timbers have you that can compare with them?—New Zealand timbers can compare with them in a certain amount of work in which they are used. With regard to hickory and ash there is nothing we have that can be used in place of them. Take the hardwoods now in the buildings, I do not suppose there is one-fiftieth part used as compared with red-pine. Blue-gum used to be very often used for the basement piles, but now they are practically cement piles, and it is very rare now that any blue-gum is used. Black-pine and totara used to be utilised, but that has all given way to concrete.

18. So that on that account there is not the same necessity to import hardwoods?—No.

19. Do you find a greater difficulty in getting New Zealand timbers such as red-pine and black-pine?—I have had no difficulty whatever in getting my requirements.

20. Is there a greater difficulty in getting the large sizes?—No, we have never found it so.

21. Take beams of 14 ft., 16 ft., and 18 ft. in length?—No, there is not the slightest difficulty.

22. You are connected with the Southland Sawmillers' Association?—We are supposed to be members of that, yes.

23. How often do you meet?—Once a month.

24. When was the last price-list arranged?—I think, from memory, it was a year last June.

25. Are you positive there has been no revised list brought out within the last three months?—There has been a revised price-list in regard to some of the timbers, but no so far as the local timbers go.

26. Has that come about since the agitation with regard to the importation of Oregon pine?—No, the red-pine, kauri, black-pine, blue-gum, and other timbers have never been altered. We made an alteration in the Baltic. We had large shipments brought here, and we found we could land it much cheaper than previously, and we gave the benefit of the extra cheapness to the consumers.

27. Was the setting-up of this Commission and the likelihood of evidence being brought forward with regard to the importation of timbers, and the high price of timber here, the cause of a revision of your price-list?—There has been no revision at all further than what I have mentioned—the Baltic and the Oregon.

28. You say that that is absolutely not so?—Yes.

29. *Mr. Hanan.*] You say you are supposed to be members of the association: do I understand by that that you adhere to their prices?—Yes, we adhere to their prices.

30. What did you mean by saying that you were supposed to be members?—We never attend the meetings down there—we have our own meeting here. We have what we call an Associated Timber-merchants' Association, which is really similar to the association down south.

31. Who fixes the prices for Dunedin?—They were fixed at the meeting down in Invercargill.

32. As to the railway freights from south, are they reasonable, and encouraging to the trade in Dunedin?—Yes.

33. Have your mills been losing money within the last three years?—I do not think that is a fair question to expect me to answer—we are not before the public.

34. Have you any objection to answering the question in committee?—No.

35. If Oregon is allowed to come in here free, will it mean the shutting-down of your mills?—Certainly not.

36. You heard of the complaints coming from the West Coast as to what injurious effects will take place if Oregon is not subjected to an increased duty. What is your opinion about that?—It would not make the slightest difference to me whether it is put on or taken off. As far as Oregon goes, I bring a lot of it here now not to compete with red-pine, but against other timbers. As you are aware, kauri is so expensive now that we can use Oregon now in many instances where we have been using kauri in the past, and that is chiefly why we bring Oregon pine here.

37. In your opinion, is it a desirable thing to conserve our forests?—I should think so, to some extent.

38. Have you any suggestion to make in that direction as a citizen?—As a citizen I should say import as much as you can, and conserve our own.

39. As an individual sawmiller would you think differently?—Yes.

40. Can you give us any information with regard to the cost of building in brick as compared with wood in Dunedin?—I could not give you any information in regard to building in brick; I can only tell you what I have heard from the different contractors, that building in brick costs very little more than timber.

41. Is the building in brick increasing in Dunedin?—Yes, it is.

42. Have you heard any complaints here about the white-pine borer affecting your houses?—Yes, there have been a lot of complaints. We cannot sell white-pine here now for shelving.

43. Do you find it in other timbers?—I have never had much complaint about it.

44. Only in regard to white-pine?—Yes, but I have seen it in other timbers.

45. What class?—In hardwood and in ironbark and jarrah, and in different classes of hardwood.

46. Would you say that many houses are affected here?—I could not say.

47. *Mr. Jennings.*] Is your Timber-merchants' Association here a local organization, or combined with similar associations throughout the Dominion?—It is a local association.