

34. Do you say that they have been losing money?—No, holding their own.
35. You heard something about Stewart Island?—Yes.
36. Can they produce timber there cheaper than in Southland?—No, but the freights are much cheaper.
37. Is not the cost of production greater there?—No, because the timber is not so far back as on the main line.
38. The cost of production is less?—Slightly.
39. Are you a member of the association?—Yes.
40. Can you account for the reason why millers have increased during the last five years?—Well, the rise in price brought them in, and now there are a lot of them idle.
41. Since when?—Christmas, at all events.
42. This slump that has taken place since Christmas has not been due to the importation of timber?—No.
43. As a citizen of New Zealand, do you advocate placing a duty on imported timber?—Yes. Once they bring wages down to the levels of the Americans and the Baltic, then we are upon equal terms. I am a free-trader on equal terms, but you cannot compete against them now.
44. You do not think that duty on Oregon would conserve our own forests?—Of course, you can import it cheap enough.
45. Seeing that timber has gone up in the last ten or fifteen years owing to the increased cost of production, and that every day our forests are going back, is it not desirable that the price of timber, in the interest of the building trade, should be kept down?—Yes, but there is a bed-rock price you cannot get over. You must look at the awful cost to produce it.
46. You are aware of complaints now by the workers of the increased cost of making homes?—Yes.
47. That being so, is it desirable that the cost should be increased, and timber having to be got at greater distances?—It might be brought in cheaper by sea by large vessels at less than we are paying now.
48. You can bring it by sea cheaper from Sydney than by rail from Colac Bay and these places?—Yes.
49. Do you advocate a cheaper rate on timber?—The miller says he cannot do it.
50. Do you not think that the rates are low enough now?—I could not tell.
51. How does it compare with fifteen years ago?—I could not say.
52. There has been a reduction recently made?—It does not affect Dunedin.
53. And I take it that no profit has been made by millers in the last two years?—Very slight.
54. It is not as payable a business as ten years ago?—No.
55. *Mr. Leyland.*] In quoting the price of 4 in. by 1 in. T. and G. as 18s. the impression is conveyed that it is a very high price. Have you not to match 300 ft. for 100 ft.?—Yes.
56. Have you not found a difficulty in getting kauri supplied?—One difficulty is that you want more vessels down here.
57. Could you sell Oregon?—Yes.
58. That is taking the place largely of kauri?—That is only lately.
59. In the consumption of timber here it has taken the place of kauri, but has not injured the rimu very much yet?—It is only in its infancy yet.
60. But if the price goes up it may fall off?—Yes, and I expect it will.
61. Is it not a fact that very few orders are going forth?—I do not know.
62. You spoke about lower wages; would you be surprised to know that the wages paid to the workers who produce Oregon are higher—that they average \$3 per day?—I should be surprised to hear that.
63. *Mr. Morris.*] We have been told by some gentlemen here that there is a difficulty in obtaining supplies in order to carry out work expeditiously? Can you give us the reason?—They give orders here, take them to the mill, go to the bush to cut it, and you can get it in about fourteen days.
64. You belong to the Associated Merchants and Sawmillers here?—Yes.
65. Is it a fact that your association is raising the price to a prohibitive degree?—We have got to follow the lead of the sawmillers in Southland.
66. These men are not controlled by your association?—No.
67. There is no combination between you and the sawmillers in the district?—We cannot dictate to them what they must do.
68. You do not buy the whole of their output?—No. There are a lot of mills in which the whole of the output is bought.
69. There seems to be an idea abroad that the big millers buy the output from the small millers, and so prevent them competing in the market?—Some of those here have taken the output of some of the mills.
70. What is your opinion in regard to the duty on Oregon pine?—I think there ought to be a duty on it—on all sizes.
71. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] Are you increasing your imports of Oregon pine?—We have some coming direct, which is the second we have had. Previously to that we always bought from Sydney or Melbourne.
72. Are you increasing the quantity you were buying?—It has only been in existence about six months, so far as our direct imports are concerned.
73. What does Oregon have to go to before you cannot compete with the local timber?—I could not tell you.
74. Will you undertake to supply the information as to the quantity of output of each of your mills, and the cost of putting it on the truck?—I could not tell.