

98. Are you still getting as much timber from your mills and from the Southland millers as you did twelve months ago?—Yes, I think so.

99. *Mr. Jennings.*] What is the extra cost of building a house of six rooms to-day as compared with ten years ago?—I am not a builder.

100. I mean in the charge for timber?—The difference is 2s. per hundred feet. You can easily reckon that up.

101. That is on the local timber?—Yes.

102. There have been assertions that the men do not work as well now as formerly?—I think that is correct. My experience is that there is not so much work done as there was twenty years ago.

103. For what reason?—They do not do it.

104. Are they inferior in physique?—They do not look like it, but they do not do their work.

105. Has there been any increase in the wages paid to them?—Yes, as far as factory men are concerned.

106. *Mr. Field.*] You are a timber-merchant: did you work some time ago for Mr. Tapper?—Yes. That was in 1885.

107. Did you know anything about the condition of things in this part of the country?—No, I cannot say that I did.

108. Did you know what the miller was receiving twenty-five years ago?—No, I cannot say.

109. As to the price of timber here charged by the timber-merchants and also the price charged to the timber-merchants and consumers, do you say those prices are fair and reasonable?—I think they are.

110. In view of the cost of production at the mills, do you think the millers are getting an undue profit?—I cannot say. I know nothing about sawmilling.

111. Are there any complaints down here from the users of timber?—No.

112. There appears to be general satisfaction?—Yes.

113. You talked about Oregon just now: you said you thought it was not on the increase?—No, I did not say it was not on the increase. I said that during the last six months we got about a million feet.

114. Do you know anything about the “Elsa”?—It is said there is 6,000,000 feet on board her, of which 600,000 ft. is for Dunedin.

115. That does not look as though it was falling off?—No.

116. Have you any idea what price it can be brought alongside the wharf at in the ship before you begin to handle it?—I think it is somewhere about 8s. 6d. per hundred, and then there is duty and dues.

117. You would not be surprised to learn that it was even less than that?—I do not think it is less than that.

118. What would that Oregon cost put into your yard after paying duty, wharfage, and cartage?—About 13s.

119. And what can you afford to sell it at?—£1 1s., less 10 per cent.—that is, 19s.

120. What purposes is it used here for, other than in large sizes, big beams, and so forth?—It has been used for sashes and work of that kind.

121. Is it used here for the framing of buildings?—I have never heard of any.

122. Do you not think that is a very undue profit to make on Oregon?—You must recollect that it is big stuff and requires a terrific lot of handling, and that the bulk of it has got to be resawn. It takes five or six men to handle these big sticks. Moreover, you have got to keep it in the yards for twelve months.

123. Supposing it comes ashore in small pieces?—Then you could sell it very much cheaper.

124. You are in favour of a duty on Oregon?—That is so.

125. You are aware, of course, of the disastrous results that would accrue if the timber industry failed in this country?—Yes.

126. They would build in brick in this part of New Zealand: is it much more costly than building in timber?—I could not say.

127. Do you think that building in brick, stone, and cement will always form a limit to the price of timber?—Brick buildings in the future will be on the increase, and such buildings will be a check on the price of timber.

128. Have you considered that a great number of men would be thrown out of employment if Oregon pine came in free?—That is so.

129. The closing of our mills would be a great loss of capital?—Yes.

130. Are you in favour of protecting our industries and keeping our money in our own country?—Yes.

131. What do you consider a fair profit for a timber-merchant to receive over and above the price he pays to the sawmiller for his timber: he has, as you are aware, to pay rent for his yard; then there is the upkeep of horses, carts, interest, rates and taxes, and labour?—About 25 per cent.

132. If you pay 10s. for timber you think 2s. 6d. a fair profit?—That would give us something.

133. *Mr. Leyland.*] With reference to the importation of Baltic, is it comparatively of recent date, or have we been importing it for some years?—A shipment about a month ago was the first for years.

134. It has never assumed any important proportions until quite recently?—That is so.

135. Is it partly owing to the difficulty in getting kauri supplies?—The people down here do not care about kauri.