

201. To buy at this price they must use it for special purposes?—Yes.

202. *Hon. the Chairman.*] If the Government were to enact that in future kauri should be sold only in the Dominion, would not that be giving too much of a monopoly to those who have already bought kauri bush?—I do not know.

203. At the present time half of the kauri is in the hands of millers, and if the sale of that were restricted to the colony it would allow those to have a monopoly of the outside sale, because none of the owners could do it?—Every miller would be in the same position, as far as I can see.

204. No, the man who has signed is not in the same position as the man who has paid a price and got possession?—I do not understand—I thought everybody was to be restricted.

205. Do you take all the produce of that mill that is connected with your business?—No, just all we require.

206. Then, there is this mill that you mention: does the timber come by rail or by water?—Stewart Island and Waikawa come by water.

207. Is the mill connected with other places?—Not on the main line.

208. Do you find that you can make better terms with Stewart Island and the other to come by water?—We practically pay the same money for it, but make a difference in railage and freight—the railage is 2s. 11d., and the freight and dues are 2s. 3d.

209. Virtually you make 7d.?—Between 7d. and 8d.

210. *Mr. Arnold.*] I understood you, in reply to myself, to state that you bought timber from the cheapest market, and in answer to the question you said that was from non-associated saw-millers, and that the cheaper price from non-associated millers, together with the water freight, enabled you to get this timber cheaper. Now you say you pay the same price to all sawmillers. What is the explanation?—I must have misunderstood your question. We practically pay the same money to everybody, but there is a difference between the steamer fares and the railage.

211. And you do not get better terms from the non-associated millers?—No.

212. With regard to the question of one profit and two profits, McCallum's mill was mentioned. If you had a city mill and also a bush mill you would have capital invested in both cases?—Yes.

213. And you would expect the management of each to show its own profit?—Yes.

214. Therefore it is fair to assume that Mr. McCallum gets two profits as well as you?—I suppose so.

215. That enables you to compete?—Quite so.

216. *Mr. Barber.*] You say you pay the same price to a mill at Stewart Island owned by one of the proprietors?—Yes.

217. That is 6s. 6d.?—Yes.

218. Where are these others situated?—One at Colac, Woodend, and different places.

219. They are working different places?—Yes.

220. They sell at 6s. 6d.?—Yes.

221. So they are making a profit when selling at 6s. 6d.?—I do not know.

222. *Mr. Field.*] Could you tell me what millers sell to you at 6s. 6d.?—Two or three different mills at Waikawa, Stewart Island, and the New Zealand Pine Company, Southland.

223. Is that rimu?—Six shillings and sixpence is for ordinary building-timber.

224. And you buy on the trucks there?—Yes.

225. From the Southland Pine Company?—And the New Zealand Pine Company.

226. Anybody else?—Moffatt and Co., Waikawa, and the Magara Sawmilling Company, Waikawa.

227. Have they all got their places of business at Invercargill?—I think Moffatt's have; I do not know about the others.

228. *Mr. Mander.*] But you pay a higher price for some timber?—Yes, we pay 7s. 6d. for stuff for dressing.

ROBERT CRAWFORD, Builder, sworn and examined. (No. 28.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you give us some evidence on the matters we are here to inquire into—those you are conversant with? If you do not understand sawmilling you need not trouble about that?—I do not know anything about sawmilling.

2. Well, you are dealing with sawmillers—you can tell us about that?—As a builder I deal with sawmillers in the usual way. As I have not any particular statement to make it might be just as well to draw out any information I can give you by asking questions.

3. You heard the last witness's statement as to prices?—Yes.

4. Six shillings and sixpence for ordinary building-timber and 7s. for superior timber for dressing. Is that the price they sell to you for as a builder?—I think so. We generally deal with the timber-merchants in town here; that means that the freights, &c., are added on to that price. The price here, of course, for rough 8 in. wide is 13s. 6d. with the usual additions; 10 in. 14s. 6d.

5. And the discounts?—Ten per cent. and 2½ per cent., if you pay your account within the proper time.

6. Is there no variation of these prices? You understand there are some of the Southland millers having a union or association?—Yes, I understand that.

7. And there are a number not in the association?—Yes.

8. Does it make any difference in price whether they are in the association or not?—In my experience it has not, so far.

9. With regard to the building trade, is it as good as it was three or four years ago?—Not quite.

10. Can you account for the falling-off?—I suppose there are various causes. I should think the principal cause was the tightness of the money-market.