

11. The price of timber has nothing to do with it?—The price of timber would hinder speculative building, but I do not think it would hinder necessary building.

12. The term "speculative" would apply more to people who build for letting houses?—Yes.

13. *Mr. Arnold.*] You say that so far the association has not discriminated. What do you mean by "so far"? Do you anticipate in the future that there will be a close combine?—I do not know. In the past we have had fluctuations of that sort; then something has arisen which would bring about some modification in prices. I do not think it is likely to happen though.

14. Were you here when I asked another witness with regard to being refused supplies if they dealt with a non-associated party?—Yes.

15. Are you acquainted with anything of that kind in the past here?—I cannot recollect any instance at the present moment.

16. There is nothing of that kind being done now?—I am not aware of anything of the sort going on now.

17. Can you tell us about what is the increased cost of building a five-roomed house between ten years ago and to-day?—I could scarcely say definitely. It would be whatever the difference in the cost of material would amount to, which might be 2s. per hundred or thereabouts. The labour conditions would be pretty much the same. The chief difference would be in the actual cost of the timber.

18. Would you say £12 per room?—I do not think it would exceed that anyhow.

19. From £50 to £60?—I think that is as much as it would possibly be.

20. You are sure it would not be £100?—Not in ten years.

21. Have you any difficulty in getting timber from the millers in the quantities you require?—Not recently, but sometimes there is a good deal of difficulty, especially in large sizes—in rimu and kauri over 30 ft. in length. It can be got, but it generally means delay, and means that there is a good deal of hardship, and some will be condemned as unsuitable. The difficulty is to get the big sizes and get them sound.

22. What difficulty have you in regard to 20 ft. lengths?—No great difficulty in getting it up to 20 ft.

23. If you had a large contract specifying that timber must be highly seasoned what would you do? Would you find a great difficulty in getting that?—I do not think I could get it here.

24. You would have to import it?—Yes; it could not be got here seasoned; it would be impossible, in my experience.

25. What would you suggest could be done to enable a building-stock of seasoned timber to be kept?—Of course, I do not know. At present we have to get our dressed timber on the job as quickly as possible. Usually there is a stipulation to that effect embodied, and while the heavier portion of the work is going on the stuff for finishing is being dried. If we cannot find room where the building is going on we generally find a vacant section. It would take about three months to season.

26. How much does it require to season?—It would be all the better for six months; but you can generally get passable results for three months with 1 in. to 1½ in. stuff. Of course, it is not so important if the framing of walls or joists is put in unseasoned, because they are drying as the progress of the building goes on.

27. You pay an extra price for seasoned timber?—As a rule, in making arrangements with the miller it would be considered proper that you ought to allow something for him stacking the timber for you.

28. I understand that there is an extra charge?—Only according to arrangement, according to the facilities he had for stacking it.

29. If there was a by-law, or architects were to provide, that in every case only thoroughly seasoned timber was to be used, what would be the effect upon the building trade?—I do not know that it would affect it very greatly; to some extent it would have an effect, but if people want work done they would have to have it done. It would be a matter of the work being of a better class if the stuff were seasoned. I do not think that the public would take very kindly to any increase on the present rates. The general impression is that they are high enough.

30. Do you think any such interference would be justified or desirable?—I do not think it is wise to hamper any trade with too many restrictions. I do not know that it would be wise to have a by-law to that effect. Of course, the architects generally make what stipulations they think necessary in the conditions of contract in regard to those things. With large jobs, going to last six or twelve months, you have time to season your timber thoroughly. With a smaller class of buildings you may have to wait or be delayed in some instances putting up the framing and letting it stand for a few weeks. That is sometimes stipulated for in the specifications.

31. Do you build for speculative purposes?—No.

32. Have you any idea of the rents in Dunedin at the present time?—No, I am not much in touch with the rentals charged for houses at the present time.

33. *Mr. Hanan.*] Has there been much speculative building in Dunedin?—During the past ten years there has been a fair amount of it.

34. Any building to any extent that has taken place has been due to the money being borrowed at cheap rates of interest?—I think the building societies have had something to do with it. Of course, if people get money on advantageous conditions it would help building as a rule.

35. Do you know how much has been lent by the societies?—No.

36. Are you a member of any of the societies?—No, I am not.

37. Do you think the building that has taken place meets with the general requirements in Dunedin?—So far as I know, it does.

38. Do you think the demand has been met?—Yes, I think it has.