

39. What is your experience with the timber-merchants who have mills and those without mills in regard to prices? Can you buy cheaper from the timber-merchants than from those who also have mills?—No, the prices are the same all round, in my experience.

40. Do you know what the bush-mill prices are in Invercargill?—I have heard the evidence here, but I do not keep much in touch with them. We deal mostly with the merchants.

41. Do you know anything about the builders' prices in Invercargill?—No.

42. What is your opinion in regard to Oregon timber coming into New Zealand?—Of course, I consider it is necessary we should have a certain amount of Oregon coming in. It is much easier to get it in the long lengths that we require for heavy beams. It is better seasoned than the local stuff as a rule, and it is not so much inclined to warp and shrink and go out of shape as the colonial timbers. It is very difficult to get colonial timbers in large sizes suitable for beams. There are such things in connection with machinery as hoist guides, and we have nothing here that will suit. It is necessary we should have some Oregon for special purposes.

43. Does not the importation of Oregon tend to conserve our rimu timber?—Yes, to some extent.

44. You say you find it extremely difficult now to get rimu timber?—In long lengths—not in sizes up to 20 ft. or 30 ft., but beyond that there is a considerable difficulty.

45. What do you expect to find in ten years' time?—I would expect to find it rather difficult. As time goes on it will be more difficult to get rimu of suitable sizes.

46. Do you use kauri?—No; the cost is prohibitive to some extent. I know of one instance in a shop not 250 yards from here where the counters were made in Melbourne of kauri and brought back here.

47. *Mr. Field.*] What do you say has been the increase in the price of timber during the last five or ten years?—I should say something like 2s. I have not lately seen the price-list of ten years ago.

48. Do you think the price of rimu is a reasonable one?—I have no reason to think it is excessive. I can appreciate there is more difficulty in getting it. The tramways have had to be extended, and the more accessible part of the timber areas have been cut out.

49. Are you aware that throughout the world generally there has been an increase in the price of timber of about 50 per cent. during the last ten years?—I am not aware of it, but I am willing to believe it is so.

50. And therefore it is not unreasonable to find an increase of 10 per cent. in our timber?—No.

51. You buy from the cheapest sawmillers?—Yes.

52. What do you pay for your ordinary rough building-rimu?—I pay up to 8 in., 13s. 6d.; 10 in., 14s. 6d.; and 12 in., 15s. 6d.; and then, of course, it rises for sizes above that for width and length. There is 10 per cent. off, and if you pay your account within the proper time you get a further 2½ per cent. for cash.

53. Do you carry on business to a fairly large extent?—Fairly large.

54. And always building something?—Yes, kept going pretty constantly.

55. You are paying for the cheapest timber 11s. 9d.?—Yes.

56. If you could get it for 6s. 6d. would you not buy it?—Yes, I think so.

57. If the timber-merchants could buy from the sawmillers at 6s. 6d. is there not a very profitable business in selling it at 11s. 9d.?—Yes, it seems there should be a living in it.

58. Do you know yourself of timber being bought at 6s. 6d.?—I could not get it at 6s. 6d. The timber-merchant might get it cheaper, but the sawmiller would not sell to me at the same price that he would sell to the timber-merchant.

59. Do you think it would not be sold to all at the same price except for the discount?—I do not think it would.

60. Do you know anything of the cost of the production of the timber?—No, I do not.

61. If a number of reputable sawmillers came here and swore that it cost them 8s. to produce it and put it on the trucks at the nearest railway-station, would you have any reason to disbelieve it?—I do not think I would disbelieve it. I know that twenty years ago I had timber delivered on the job here in town for 6s. 6d. for rimu. I do not think any profit was being made out of that, but, of course, that included cartage to the North-east Valley—over two miles' cartage. Unless there was a very big loss then, and unless the increased wages are sufficient to show that it could not be done for 8s. now, I should be inclined to think it could be done for a little less.

62. Have you seen the conditions under which the sawmillers are working in Southland?—No.

63. Do you know that timber is very sparse?—I can understand the best bush has been cut, and also the easiest to get.

64. Do you know Mr. Massey?—Yes.

65. Should you say his evidence would be reliable?—Yes, I should think so. I should not say his statements are wrong.

66. I suppose you are generally in favour of working our own industry in a reasonable way?—Yes.

67. What do you use Oregon for here—in ordinary buildings?—For beams, very often in large sizes. I am doing a job just now where we are using it for sash and door frames and stair-cases, and that class of work.

68. You do not use it for ordinary framing?—No, not as a rule.

69. Are you aware that in the North Island they are using it for flooring and outside work?—We have used it for flooring many years ago—it was not an unusual thing years ago, but not in recent years.

70. Would you agree that, where there was competition with the Oregon which was spoiling our only building-rimu industry in this country, we should protect our own industry?—I think