

102. And would it not at the same time affect the rents paid by the working-man?—Yes.

103. Do you know of any kauri being imported into New Zealand from outside?—Well, there is the case of those counters I mentioned a few minutes ago.

104. Do you know of any kauri being sent away and imported back made up?—I did hear of a case in Christchurch of some flooring that had been imported, and it cost 1s. 6d. less than they could get it for in the ordinary market here.

105. Can you give that individual's name?—Well, it was the gentleman who bought those counters here that gave me the information, and I dare say he could give the names of the concern in Christchurch.

106. You heard the evidence of Mr. Broad here to-day?—Yes.

107. Were you present yesterday when he gave evidence?—Part of the time.

108. Did you hear Mr. Haddock give his evidence?—Yes.

109. And you heard those two say they had purchased timber at 6s. 6d?—Yes.

110. Do you think there is any reason why they should misrepresent the fact?—No, I do not.

111. Would it not be to their advantage to have quoted an increased price rather than have quoted a low price?—Yes, I suppose it would have made a better case for them.

112. So that you do not think there was any reason for saying 6s. 6d. if they did not actually get it for 6s. 6d.?—I think they spoke the truth so far as they are concerned.

113. *Mr. EU.*] If rimu for flooring is put into a building and covered over with linoleum, what is the result?—If you exclude air from below and also cover it with linoleum, I think you would find it perish with dry-rot unless properly seasoned. Even if it is fairly well seasoned and you exclude air all round, it has the effect that any natural sap in the timber would kill it very quickly.

114. So that, by putting unseasoned timber into a building you lessen the life of that building?—Yes, certainly.

115. How long have you been in business as a builder?—As a builder actually about twenty-four or twenty-five years. Of course, I had been working as a carpenter some years before that.

116. Seeing that there is 15,000 ft. of timber required for a cottage, and that it cost 2s. a hundred feet more for seasoned timber than for unseasoned, that would make a difference of £15 in the actual cost of the building?—Yes.

117. Would the building gain considerably by having seasoned timber as compared with green timber?—I should say it would be worth his while to have seasoned timber. Of course, in a small cottage the matter of dry-rot would not be a fact to be considered as in a large building, but the work itself would, of course, come to pieces, and he would have a bad job as long as the house did last.

118. It would have a longer life with seasoned timber?—Yes.

119. And you have a difficulty in obtaining seasoned timber?—Yes, a great difficulty.

120. If the architects require seasoned timber to be put in, and it only involved £10 or £15 at the outside in the increased price, do you think that would check the building in any way?—I do not think it would have any very great effect.

121. I think you said that when there was a combination among the timber-merchants prices hardened?—Yes.

122. And that when the combination broke up prices eased?—Yes.

123. You were asked with regard to the price of building a four-roomed house?—I cannot tell offhand.

124. I would like very much if you would get a price-list of, say, ten years ago, and work out the cost of a house in comparison with the cost of a similar house to-day. I should like to see the difference, and if you can do that it would be something like accurate information?—It would take a little time to take out the quantities. You would require to get accurate measurements, and you would have to be very careful, otherwise the information would be misleading.

125. *Hon. the Chairman.*] How long would it take?—I cannot say very well.

126. *Mr. EU.*] I really want this question of the difference in cost settled?—There may be some gentlemen here who have already done that. I may say that I am to some extent neglecting my business while I am here, and any one undertaking to give information of that sort would want to take time to do it thoroughly.

127. With regard to these counters that we are importing?—That was owing to the prohibitive price charged here. I am unable to assign it to any other cause.

128. Have you heard of any kauri being imported into New Zealand from Melbourne?—Not of my own knowledge.

129. Would you be surprised to hear that kauri, 12 in. by 1 in., is listed in Melbourne at £1 2s., whilst the New Zealand price-list which I have here is £1 7s. for the same timber?—I have heard about that.

130. *Mr. Hanan.*] Do you consider it legitimate for sawmillers and others to combine for the purpose of regulating prices for self-protection?—So long as they do so within reason.

131. Do you not think that competition would usually regulate matters sufficiently?—Yes, I find it so in my line of business.

132. You said you could not quite understand the increased cost of production during these last ten years in respect to timber?—I do not know that I said that. I said I could understand that the more accessible parts of the timber lands had been worked out, and that, therefore, the cost of obtaining the timber was now greater, owing to additional tramways, &c., and I assigned that as a reason for the increase.

133. Those people have now to pay a railage of 2s. instead of being able to deliver it for 4d. as they used to?—I do not understand that.

134. From Riverton and such places they have now to pay 2s. railage?—Of course, every charge must account for something.