

135. There are also greater difficulties in getting the timber out of the bush?—Yes.

136. You are aware that the timber is not so good as in former days?—Yes, I have heard gentlemen giving evidence making that statement, and I have no reason to doubt but that the statement is correct.

137. In reply to Mr. Ell you spoke of the advantage it would be to have seasoned timber in buildings?—Yes.

138. If you put in a tender for a cottage and you could get seasoned timber at 2s. extra would you as a builder put that timber in unless it was specified by the architect?—I do not think I would put the stuff in actually green if there was time to season it to some extent; it is, however, questionable unless the specification distinctly said it was to be dry stuff. Two shillings per hundred is a consideration. I would do my best in such a case, and it would be better for me to put in the dry stuff rather than be disgraced by a bad job if the timber was very green.

139. Could you be so generous as that?—You generally have time to dry the stuff, especially for cottage work. In a month or six weeks or a couple of months, properly stacked, it would dry almost sufficiently to make it in fairly decent order, and it would go on drying as the work went on. It is all the better to stand a little.

140. How much sooner would a house decay if built of green timber as compared with one built of dried timber?—If you do not paint the house for a while and cover it in, apart from the joints, the timber would season just as well in the house. If, however, you painted the house whilst green, you would find you could pull it apart with the hand in a couple of years.

141. The studs you use in ordinary cottages are inch and a half?—About 4 by 2 is the usual size for cottage-construction. Inch-and-a-half studs do not take long to season.

142. *Mr. Field.*] About the cost of production and the price of timber, you threw some doubt as to whether the cost of production would be 8s. or over: what do you include in the cost of production?—I take the 8s. to mean probably on the trucks.

143. What does it cover?—Cutting down timber in the bush, dragging it to the mill, cutting it up, and the handling of it generally until it is placed on the truck and sent to the siding.

144. Of course, you are aware that royalties have to be paid for timber; then you have to remember that there is depreciation to be accounted for, also salaries paid, interest on capital, and interest on bank accommodation?—As a general rule all these things have to be included. Royalty has to be paid in one form or another, because if it is freehold land there is interest on the capital which has to be accounted for.

145. Do you think it possible when giving an order for a house to a sawmiller that you could get the timber for 6s. 6d.?—Six shillings and sixpence I should say would be a minimum price for ordinary scantling sizes. The small sizes often accumulate about a mill.

146. *Mr. Barber.*] With regard to your opinion as to the cost of production?—I could not give an opinion as being worth much.

147. With regard to the 6s. 6d. which you mentioned. Was that the output of the mill for ordinary building-timber?—I understand that 6s. 6d. was in reference to ordinary building-timber, and 7s. 6d. for clear, and in purchasing that they took the whole output of the mill?—Yes.

148. *Mr. EU.*] Do you use kauri to any great extent?—I have not been using much kauri for a number of years. It is used extensively in some parts of joinery, and for counter-tops.

149. Is the price against it?—Yes.

150. Seeing that it is a fast-diminishing quantity in this country do you think it desirable in the interests of the people that an export duty should be placed upon kauri?—Yes.

151. Especially when we can import counters from Australia cheaper than we can make them here?—There is certainly something wrong when our timber can be taken away and sent back to us at a cheaper rate than we can buy it in New Zealand.

A. R. WALLIS sworn and examined. (No. 29.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a sawmiller at Invercargill.

2. We want you to give evidence in this inquiry on the points set out in the order of reference as far as you know?—I was invited to come here, and I am prepared to answer any questions that you may put to me.

3. You have heard the witnesses this morning? Can you give us some evidence with regard to this association that was referred to? Do you belong to it? Is there an understanding with you or those outside the association as to prices to which you strictly confine yourselves?—I am not a member of the association, and there are no fixed prices outside the association.

4. You vary your prices according to circumstances?—Exactly.

5. Would you tell the Commission how long you have been in business?—I have been connected with the business for about twenty-five years, but not actively until recently. I was interested in a mill in 1884.

6. Would you tell us what your prices were in 1884?—I closed the mill down in 1887, and the prices then were 3s. 9d. per hundred feet.

7. That was the worst time you had?—It was a very bad time indeed.

8. The ordinary price was 3s. 9d. then?—Three shillings and nine pence for rough red-pine.

9. Was it on account of low prices that you closed down?—Yes. Well, perhaps not that altogether. I had too much else to engage me.

10. Had it been otherwise you would have continued the mill?—I might have if I was engaged in that only.

11. Was there any difficulty at that time with regard to contracting for getting your logs into the mill?—Yes, the bush used to be let by contract for supply on to the trollies, and, as near as I can remember, the price was about 1s. 6d. per hundred feet for producing the logs.