

12. Was the price paid for sawing—that is, for benchmen—different then to what it is now?—A sawyer was paid 8s. per day in those times.

13. What were his hours?—Eight hours a day.

14. What do you pay them now for the same class of work?—The award rate is 10s. 6d., but we absolutely pay more than that to sawyers. We pay 11s. and 12s.

15. Do they do much more work now than they did then?—No, they do no more.

16. Do they do as much?—It depends. The difficulty is to get good sawyers. Labour is scarce, and we have to give more than the award even if the man is not expert.

17. So that there is actually a difference of 4s. in wages for this class of labour by way of increase betwixt the present and twenty years ago?—Yes, so far as sawyers are concerned, their wages have increased.

18. What was about the output of your mill in the first instance?—The output was about 5,000 ft. a day.

19. And the output now in the mill you are engaged in?—Well, it varies from 4,000 ft. to 5,000 ft.

20. It would vary a little formerly too?—Yes.

21. So that there is not much difference in the output?—That is so.

22. So that the work you got for 8s. at a former period now costs you 11s. or 12s.?—Yes.

23. What is the average price at which you sell your building-timber now—I refer to building-rimu?—About 7s. per hundred feet.

24. Speaking of twenty years ago and comparing dressed timber and weatherboards then with those of to-day, is there a greater increase in respect to the dressed timber?—Dressed timber is far dearer to-day than it was twenty years ago.

25. I mean in proportion to the rough timber; has the price of dressed timber increased more proportionately?—In proportion to rough timber, not greatly.

26. Do you say that your profits are not much greater now than they were then?—Well, it is hard to say that. It is so long ago. I do know that the prices were very low twenty years ago. I think things are slightly better now than then.

27. *Mr. Arnold.*] Where is your mill at present?—In Grove Bush.

28. Where was your mill of twenty years ago?—On the railway-line near Edendale, at the top of the Edendale cutting.

29. In those days you were very adjacent to the railway?—Yes, very handy. In fact, the mill was on the road.

30. You are not in the same position now—you are farther back?—Yes.

31. Has that anything to do with the increased cost?—Yes, it has a great deal to do with it. The farther back you get the more tramways you have to construct to the railway-station, and consequently the greater becomes the cost of production.

23. The fact of the bush-work being done by contract in those days was part of the reason why timber could be sold so cheaply?—Yes.

33. Have you any idea of the wages made by men in those days and how the men lived?—The wages were less, but everything was cheaper, and I believe the men were better off than they are to-day.

34. Under present conditions you would not like to see the men go back to the old system—that is, so far as the rate of wages is concerned?—Under present conditions men receiving the old rate of wages could not live.

35. You do not belong to the association?—No.

36. Would you mind telling us why?—Because it is not to my interest to belong to it, although I did belong to it at one time.

37. Are these men not associated to some extent for self-defence—I mean the millers?—They are to some extent. There is the Sawmillers Association, but I am not a member of it.

38. About two years ago they had a case in the Arbitration Court with the workers?—Yes, but that affects every one—those outside and association millers as well.

39. Do you pay the same wages as they do?—Yes.

40. But if by the association their wages are kept down you participate in the benefit?—Yes, certainly.

41. If by the association prices are kept fair you also participate?—Yes, certainly.

42. Do you not think it is a fair thing that you should carry some of the responsibility of the association?—Truly, if everybody in the association would keep to the rules; and it was because they did not honestly keep to them that I retired.

43. Then, the members of the association are not all true to themselves?—That is my opinion and my reason for being outside. I prefer a free hand.

44. *Mr. Hanan.*] Are reasonable profits being made now in the sawmilling industry?—I think so.

45. Is it the large miller or the small miller who is doing the best?—The large miller undoubtedly, because his bush is far better situated. It is much more handy. The large millers have really possessed themselves of the most valuable bush, and so the small millers have to go back. That is the position in Southland.

46. So the large millers hold the best areas and the largest areas?—That is so.

47. Would you say that those areas were mopped up?—A great part of Southland is held under the regulations of 1886, and the areas so held comprise the very best positions in Southland. The whole of Seaward Bush is held under the 1886 regulations, and also most of the valuable sites in other localities.

48. You have referred to the regulation of 1886. Do you mean under the Act of 1885?—Yes.

49. How have these regulations been administered in Southland? If a holding is not worked within the time prescribed, you do not allow it to remain forfeited?—That is a somewhat diffi-