

113. About the increase in wages, it was 8s. per day twenty years ago: now it is 11s. and 12s. How many are employed in an ordinary-sized mill?—About twenty.

114. And the man gets nearly as much as he did?—No, 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. more.

115. You say the small millers have not got a chance with the large ones. Is it a reasonable combination, or is there anything unfair done by the millers?—I would not like to say it is unfair in them to combine to protect their own interests.

116. We had it from Mr. Massey that when timber was low there were a number of failures—bankruptcies. Do you recollect that?—I do not know really whether they were amongst millers. I did not remain long in the milling business. I shut the mill down six weeks after I bought the property.

117. You are not a red-pine miller?—No, I do very little in red-pine; there is only a small quantity in my bush.

118. *Mr. Leyland.*] You stated that when you closed your mill down the prices were low. That was in Invercargill?—It was absolutely at the rails; you could have thrown a stone from the mill to the railway.

119. Where is the mill now?—About five miles from the railway.

120. What is the distance from Invercargill?—Twelve miles.

121. What does it cost you to get your timber from the mill to Invercargill now? I want to know the difference in cost?—Eight pence per hundred feet.

122. That means an increased cost of 8d.?—If I sell the timber in Invercargill, which I do not.

123. With reference to the refund of these license fees, do you not think that the Crown Lands Board may have had very satisfactory reasons for that, which have not been published?—I am only speaking on general principles.

124. Would it not be rather harsh on the part of the Government to insist on being paid twice for the same timber?—It is the usurpation of parliamentary rights that I object to.

125. Just now you stated the royalty was 6d.?—Yes.

126. Do you mean the sawn output?—Yes.

127. The loss in conversion has been stated to be about 40 per cent.?—Not in white-pine.

128. In rimu?—I believe it is.

129. We ought not to say the royalty costs 6d., but about 8½d. on the sawn timber?—Yes, that is so; we estimate the royalty on the log.

130. Do you know if this association is a registered union of employers under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act?—I could not tell you.

131. Is it not almost necessary that it should be?—Yes.

132. *Mr. Clarke.*] I wish to ask a question with reference to what you said with regard to clearing off the timber, and the idea was expressed that it was desirable to make use of the forests and the timber at once at all hazards. Did you ever consider the value of the forests in relation to the rivers and watersheds?—It has been said they exercise a great influence in connection with the rain.

133. And it would be evident that if we cleared all the timber from our country we could not reasonably expect the rivers to be so high?—I would not like to say that the clearing-away of the timber absolutely diminished the rainfall.

134. But the question is whether the clearing-away of the timber would not prevent the rainfall being conserved for a good length of time: would it not have the effect that the rivers would be diminished by the outflow of the water so quickly?—That might be the case, but I have no experience in New Zealand to say so, but I may say that in Australia, where the timber has been cleared away, rivers that never existed and creeks that never ran ran freely after the bush was cleared away. I can assure you that when I first went to reside in Melbourne it was impossible to get a drink of water from Melbourne to Lilydale, and when the bush was cleared away there were dozens of streams.

135. Are you aware of the fact that it is considered by experts that a forest in its natural state will hold a large amount of water—that 12 in. in depth in the soil of a forest may contain 6 in. of water?—That may be the case. I can quite understand that the forests conserve the water in so far as they conserve a large quantity of it and prevent rapid evaporation.

136. And that being the case would it not be wise to exercise some care in preventing the rapid running-away of our rivers?—Yes, conserve the forests upon the hilltops, but not on the low lands. Let them be cleared away and the lands used for agricultural purposes so that we may get an annual return from them.

137. *Mr. Morris.*] You said you considered 800 acres a sufficient area of bush land for a man to erect a mill upon?—I was speaking from a Southland point of view only. I do not know anything about the West Coast or the North Island. I say that 800 acres is quite sufficient holding in Southland to erect a mill upon.

138. What has been your average per acre of timber of Southland bush?—About 6,000 ft. to the acre.

139. Well, I suppose it is not too big an estimate to consider that some of those mills have cost £5,000 to erect, with the tramways and the railway sidings?—I dare say some of them have, but I do not see the necessity of putting up such a mill. There are plenty of mills that have been put up for as many hundreds which will cut as much timber.

140. You wish us to believe that the men who spent this money in installing these big mills did not understand what they were doing?—I do not wish to say that, but I do say this: that a cheap sawmill is equal to the larger one. A mill that costs £5,000 does not necessarily have a greater output than a mill which costs £1,000.

141. At an average of 10,000 ft. per acre, and you say you are getting 5s. 6d. per hundred?—Yes, face measure—not superficial inch.