

142. You could not possibly recover the cost of your mill off 800 acres. How are you going to make it up?—That is 6,000 ft. to the acre.

143. With 10,000 ft. to the acre you would only get about £3,000 out of it at 9d. a hundred?—Yes, but the mill does not cost £3,000.

144. The tramways we went along, I am sure, cost nearer £1,000 to put down than anything else?—Oh, no! you can get tramways laid at 6s. a chain.

145. With iron rails?—No, not with iron rails. I am speaking of ordinary bush tramways from bank to bank. They do not cost more than 6s. or 7s. a chain to lay, but the timber is extra, and the timber is cut out of second-class timber which is not for sale. I am just about to lay a considerable stretch of tramway, and I am quite sure I shall not be asked to pay more than 6s. a chain for laying it.

146. It is worth at least twice that amount to clear the land of the bush?—In the bush there is a little extra work, certainly. There is an occasional stump to take out.

147. *Mr. Barber.*] In reply to a question you stated that in your early mill experience your mill was practically in Invercargill?—No, just on the top of the bank from Edendale.

148. How many miles from Invercargill?—About twenty miles on the Dunedin side.

149. And how much further is your mill from your market now?—About thirty-two miles.

150. Further than you were in those days—further from Invercargill?—Yes.

151. And is that where you send your timber to—to Invercargill?—No, not 100 ft. in a year.

152. You ship it away?—All over the north of Dunedin.

153. You are probably no further away from the market than you were by rail?—No. The railage charge is calculated from Riverton.

154. You do not have to pay any more railage?—No.

155. You said you were paying your sawyers 4s. a day additional to what you were a number of years ago?—Yes.

156. How many are employed in a mill with 4,000 ft. of timber a day?—About eighteen hands, but only one sawyer.

157. So that the increase on the output of that mill would be only a fraction over 1d. per hundred feet for the increased wages on that one item?—Yes, but, of course, all other wages have gone up.

158. But not to the extent of 4s. each?—No. The sawyer is a skilled man, and he commands a better wage, and even better than the award.

159. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] I think you said that the small millers are cutting for the larger millers, that the larger miller pays a royalty of 6d. and also interest on the capital. Now, is it not a fact that the smaller millers are put on to these large areas practically as dummies for the large millers?—No; the bush belongs to the miller, and it is let by contract, and the small miller cuts it.

160. The small miller has no bush of his own?—No.

161. *Mr. Mander.*] You said the cost of producing your timber was: white-pine 4s. 9d., and red-pine 6s.?—Yes.

162. Does that red-pine not include royalty?—Yes.

163. And also the cost of the mill and incidental expenses connected with the business?—Yes. It does not include the sale of the timber and bad debts. That is the cost of production on the truck.

164. Are there any other millers in Southland who are so favourably situated as yourself in regard to timber at the same price?—I do not know. That is the price I pay the contractor who runs the mill. It would cost me more to do it.

165. That is what you pay the contractor to produce it?—Yes, I pay the contractor 6s., and the royalty is 6d.

166. Does the contractor supply the material?—Yes, and lays his own tramways.

167. In your experience, does it take more men now to do the same work than it did ten or fifteen years ago?—It takes more men on hilly country, but not on flat country.

168. Then, according to your experience, the men are quite as competent as they were ten or fifteen years ago?—I think so. I think they are just as competent. It is thought they do not do quite as much.

169. If they did not do quite as much would it not take more men to do the work?—It depends upon who is bossing them. One man could get more work out of them than another.

170. You account for the difference in the cost between 6s. and 8s. as stated by other millers partly on account of doing the work themselves and employing labour?—Yes.

171. And you think if they let the work out by contract they could get it done cheaper?—I think so.

172. Now, in regard to the conservation of forests, do you not think there is plenty of rugged, hilly country that it would be advisable to conserve containing much marketable timber in this country?—Certainly. I say, with agricultural land carrying timber it is better to clear the timber off, market the timber, and utilise the land for agricultural purposes. Keep the timber on the hilltops by all means, and, if you wish, carry on a system of afforestation, but I think good agricultural land is turned to far better purpose when used for agriculture.

173. *Mr. Jennings.*] It is a lasting asset?—Yes. If you devoted that land to growing timber and replanted it you would have to stand out before you got any return, whereas agriculture gives you a return every year.

174. *Hon. the Chairman.*] In regard to the leases mentioned, you said that lease No. 465 issued on the 17th January, 1905, ran for the whole of the three years, and nothing was done with it?—Yes.