

particularly in November, cannot be seasoned. It is always subject to the shrinking of the sap-cells afterwards. Another difficulty is that if we want long lengths for big beams we cannot get kauri, and the price is prohibitive when it is procurable. The red-pine we rarely get in long lengths. You cannot get 40 ft. in red-pine, and I only knew of it once, and in all the other cases I have had to use imported timber—either Oregon or some Australian timbers. We frequently specify a choice, including kauri, but the kauri does not get used, because as soon as the contractor comes to take out his costs he sees that he must take some other of the specified timbers in preference to kauri, not on account of its quality, but on account of its cost. For the purposes I refer to Oregon is most used now. There is no doubt but that the building trade of New Zealand must have a large quantity of imported timber, and the more you tax imported timber the greater our difficulties will become. The taxation will produce two results—firstly, the tax will fall on the consumer, and secondly, it will lead to the depletion of our forests, with the result that whole tracts of country will be thrown into waste or turned into desert. Climatic changes will be constantly occurring, and the country will become more liable to droughts. Then, you will steadily increase the cost of buildings, with the corresponding increase in rents which must follow. A man who builds to let his house must get a return for his expenditure. Obviously this state of things must result in a scarcity of houses, which will tell particularly on the worker, who has got no great margin to come and go on. The worker has to parcel out his weekly wage carefully, and if you put on another shilling or two of rent it has to come out of something else, and probably he will not be able to save what he should save for the maintenance of himself and family when he is out of work. Now, a condition such as this affects the whole country, and particularly so that large section of the population who are the workers. If a state such as I have mentioned is produced, the country cannot prosper. Speaking for my professional brethren in Dunedin, and I believe for all of them throughout the Dominion, the more facilities we can get for procuring cheap, well-seasoned timber the better it will be, not only in respect to the buildings that we put up, but it will be ever so much better and cheaper for the whole of the population. A few timber mills, when first closed down, might suffer to a certain extent; but I believe it is the opinion of a great many people that we are cutting our timber a great deal too quickly. If you can throttle that pace of cutting timber you will be doing a distinct benefit to the whole country. We are not only opposed to anything in the shape of taxing timber in order to prevent it being imported, but we are also quite in favour of anything that will hold our own good timber in the country, in the shape of an export duty. The difficulty of that is, however, when it comes to a question of reciprocity. We are wanting our neighbours' timber, and if we do not let them have ours they may pay us off in our own coin. We must have the Australian hardwoods, and we must also have the American softwoods. We want the Oregon for all strappings, as well as for beams, &c. The Oregon is a perfectly dry timber, free from any acid. All our timbers here are not. They are resinous, and they are all charged with acid in the sap, which discolours the plaster. When so many metal ceilings are put up that must have battening and plastering, the timber used must be perfectly rigid and in good condition, so that it will not twist, by warping or contraction, the sheets of fibrous plaster or the sheets of metal. For these reasons we are quite opposed to anything that would tend to throttle the importation of suitable timber. We are all of opinion that the rate at which our forests are being depleted will become a very serious thing for the country. We are producing a bad style of building for the very class that should have a durable and lasting building. In a word, we are producing a house that is not durable. It is a house that has only a twenty-five-year life.

4. *Mr. Jennings.*] You are speaking generally of local timbers?—Although it is a timber in itself, it is a good timber; but it does not come to the market in a proper condition, and any amount of drying will not put it in a proper condition. The shrinking of timber you will see in connection with furniture. It is very difficult to get properly seasoned timber for furniture. Those who are consumers using locally made furniture, though tolerably well made, are discovering that it does not last on account of the shrinking and twisting.

5. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You said something about the time that timber should be felled?—It is decidedly wrong to fell timber in the summer-time, and it is absolutely not allowed in European countries. It is not allowed in England, and in Germany nobody is allowed to fell timber without permission from the proper authorities, and then if timber has to be felled out of season for clearing purposes a permit has to be obtained—and it is the same in England—but the timber so felled is not marketable. Here it is common enough to see the sap oozing out at the nail-heads, or suggestive of the common saying—which is a fact—that the birds were singing in the branches of the tree from which the timber was taken a week previous.

6. *Mr. Arnold.*] How do you suggest that this difficulty should be got over?—The same as in other countries. I say that the State should forbid the cutting of timber in the summer-time.

7. Have you much knowledge of our bush country?—I have seen a great deal of it. My only experience in sawmilling was when I came here originally in 1873 as engineer for the railways here. We had a sawmill at Waipori.

8. Have you been through Catlin's Bush?—No, I have not been through it.

9. Have you seen the Longwood Ranges?—Not for many years—not since 1874 or 1875.

10. Have you seen much West Coast bush country?—A little, around Greymouth and Hokitika, over the range.

11. From your knowledge of this country, do you not think it would almost cripple the building industry if they were confined to winter work?—Yes, if you did it by anything like a sudden enactment, to country being milled now. You could set certain tracts aside as forest that must be only cut in the winter-time. You would not be touching the present industry; you would leave the forest required for mills going now in full swing, but there are huge tracts all over the Dominion that could be conserved in that way. Restrict the cutting of them. Have that regulation that they were only to be cut in the winter-time.