

23. *Mr. Ell.*] I am perfectly justified in putting the question?—I think, certainly, that roads and railway should be made first. A great many of the earlier settlers were forced to leave the district.

24. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What quantity of timber will be tapped by this railway?—Something about 400,000,000 ft.

25. What does it carry per acre?—The average would be between three and four thousand feet.

26. *Mr. Jennings.*] Can you furnish the Commission with the number of settlers who have thrown up their land since they went on it owing to its unsuitability?—Yes, I think so.

27. In your opinion, was it owing to the smallness of the areas that they took up, seeing that some of them have now taken up larger areas?—Yes, to some extent, it was due to the smallness of the holdings, because the men with larger holdings now are making their living there.

28. *Mr. Arnold.*] This land was first opened up to meet the requirements of a certain class of people, was it not—viz., to meet the requirements of some coal-miners?—I believe it was. I understood afterwards that that was the reason.

29. Were these areas permitted to fall in in consequence of the unsuitability of the land, or was it not rather in consequence of the unsuitability of the settlers who first went there? They were men not adapted to the work?—I can only say that some good men went there, and they could not make a do of it. The particular soil that they were landed on was the cause of their failure.

30. *Mr. Mander.*] Is it always easy to tell in the centre of a dense bush whether the soil is suitable for grass before it has been cleared and tested?—I think a man with some experience of the bush land can give a very fair idea.

ALFRED MILLER HOGG sworn and examined. (No. 35.)

1. *The Acting-Chairman (Mr. Arnold).*] Mr. Hogg, what is your business?—I am a timber-merchant and general merchant in Dunedin.

2. Have you been in business here long?—About ten years.

3. You know the purport of this Commission: do you wish to make a statement in connection with this matter?—I did not come with the idea of making a statement, as I expected to be questioned regarding the business.

4. Do you deal with the local mills?—We deal with the Otago and Southland sawmilling people as a whole. We also do a good bit in foreign timbers, and also with the Auckland timbers.

5. Do you find a difference between dealing with the associated millers and those that are non-associated?—No.

6. They all sell at one price?—No. It is like every other business. Occasionally you can do better in one quarter than in another.

7. Has the association got a uniform price?—Well, they are supposed to have one.

8. A lot of evidence has been taken with regard to imported timbers?—We import a lot of timbers.

9. Do you think it is necessary that these timbers should be imported?—Yes, they come in for purposes for which our local timbers are not suitable, especially in joinery-work. Deal is used where our local timbers could scarcely be used. Oregon is also used. The price is materially better in the imported article. Oregon, for example, can take the place of kauri, and you can save, roughly speaking, nearly one-third of the price.

10. So that the importing of these timbers encourages the building trade?—Yes, in a large measure it does. Then there are certain other points. Elsewhere I hear the small sizes of Oregon are competing with red-pine, but down here they are not doing so at all. I do not think that during the last twelve months 100,000 ft. of Oregon has gone into competition with red-pine. Red-pine is holding its own except in a few isolated cases, and for a few long lengths.

11. You do not think it would be a good thing from a public standpoint to put a heavy duty on these timbers?—No, I do not think it would. So far as that goes, my own impression is, if any alteration was made in the duty on Oregon, that the duty might be slightly reduced on the larger sizes and increased on the smaller sizes, for the reason that the smaller sizes are the sizes that are competing with red-pine. By this means you would keep the labour of sawing in New Zealand. You would be making work for your local workmen in the recutting.

12. It has been said that it is difficult to get local timbers seasoned, and that the imported timbers are necessary on that account?—That is very largely true, but I think it is, to some extent, consequent more upon the fact that people here want things cheap, because if you season red-pine you will get very little more for it seasoned than unseasoned as it comes in from the bush.

13. You think seasoned timbers could be procured locally if the people cared to pay the price for them?—Yes, in a large measure.

14. There is a very large shipment of Oregon in town at the present moment?—Yes, it is coming through me.

15. Is it not a fact that this timber is cut green, and not seasoned at all?—How do you mean? Do you mean quite green?

16. I mean that it comes straight from the tree on to the boat?—That is so; practically speaking, these timbers are brought down in the log, resawn, and put on the ships. They lie in water for some time, which is the best way to take out the sap at the outset. Of course, they are cut in winter, and they are subsequently put through the mill.

17. Practically, when they are packed in the hold of a boat they do not season?—They are sufficiently seasoned not to go wrong during the voyage. Our native timbers would not stand that.

18. Does it not follow that as the demand for Oregon increases there will be a greater tendency to ship these kind of green timbers?—Well, now you are asking me to deal with the policy of the sawmillers in Vancouver, but I should imagine so. It is a natural deduction to make.