

115. Do you find the West Coast timber twist about in that manner?—Not quite so much as in Southland, but still it does so. It is of a milder nature, but it will twist all the same if you give it a chance.

116. *Mr. Barber.*] What is the net selling-price of red-pine in Dunedin?—At the present moment we are selling on the basis of Southland lists, which is about 11s. 2d. net.

117. And the net price of Oregon is 18s. 6d.?—That is so.

118. According to your experience with red-pine at 11s. 2d. and Oregon at 18s. 6d., there is no likelihood of it interfering with red-pine?—No, I do not think so, except in a few isolated instances.

119. Taking other parts of the colony where Oregon is landed at the same price, or where the red-pine is a percentage higher, do you think there is any likelihood of it competing in those districts?—To some extent, yes.

120. You say you know it is largely used up in the North Island, but not in these districts?—That is so.

121. What was used in the Auckland District for building purposes previous to the importation of Oregon during the last few years—for ordinary scantlings?—They worked off a lot of inferior kauri and red-pine.

122. But is it not a fact that some of the buildings in Auckland were built entirely of kauri?—Yes, that is so; they worked off the inferior kind for scantling.

123. So that, although it is used in Auckland for scantling, it is replacing kauri and not red-pine?—That is so.

124. You said you were in favour of reducing the duty on long lengths of Oregon, but increasing it on the small sizes?—Not the long lengths, but the large sizes.

125. The increased duty on Oregon would increase the Customs revenue?—Yes.

126. You objected just now to the rate because it was increasing the Railway revenue?—Yes, that particular revenue.

127. Why should there be a particular object in increasing the Customs revenue?—I recognise the country has to have revenue, but I do not think one section of the community should be penalised as against another. The country man has to pay the duty at the port, and also 50 per cent. railage, so that the country man is paying more on his Oregon than the town man. The local timber in that particular instance is about one-third dearer. The taxation on that timber should be equal to every user as near as possible.

128. You believe that for the purpose of encouraging this particular industry the town worker should be compelled to pay a high price for his timber, that Oregon should not be allowed to come in in competition, and that the country man should be protected—he should not be called upon to do the same thing?—No, I do not say that. All I say is that the taxation on Oregon should be the same with the town man (who pays the duty in any case) and the country man. Immediately you put on the 50 per cent. increase the country man has to pay the extra railage, and also the duty.

129. Does not the same thing apply in regard to the delivery of timber in the town—is not the town man nearer the source of supply?—Our railage to Dunedin is 2s. 9d., whereas the railage to Mosgiel is 3s. 3d., so that the country man is again paying more than the town man, because there is steamer competition against the railway, and the railway charges come down to meet the steamer competition.

130. You do not class Mosgiel as a country district, do you?—Certainly, as against Dunedin. I am only taking that as an instance.

131. With regard to the seasoning of the timber before it arrives in New Zealand, I understand that the timber that has been landed off this boat is deck cargo only?—That is so.

132. No dry cargo landed at all?—No, nothing out of the hold. Why do you say “dry cargo”?

133. Well, it is deck cargo that is landed?—Yes.

134. And that timber has been saturated with salt water during the voyage?—Yes, and all the better for it.

135. So that it is difficult to tell whether that timber is wet or dry, or whether it is the salt water that has given it the appearance of being wet?—I should say that a deck cargo of Oregon timber coming to New Zealand has a better chance, because it is all the time in the open air and seasoning.

136. You can see by the general marks on the timber that it has been saturated with salt water, so that the probability is that the wetness is not due to the original moisture, but to being impregnated with salt water?—Very probably, in a large measure, that is so. The captain told me he had a lot of rainy weather all the way down the coast. I asked him how the timber fared with regard to sun splits, and he told me I need not trouble because there was a lot of rain all the way down.

137. *Mr. EU.*] I suppose one reason for selecting Oregon is that it can be got seasoned?—Yes, being heart stuff it is more nearly ready for use.

138. You do not carry heavy stocks of New Zealand timbers because of the cost?—We do carry fairly heavy stocks—in fact, too heavy at present; but, unfortunately, the position is that we cannot get anything extra for seasoning, although we can sell it more readily.

139. But you get no more for it?—Yes, that is so, except in a few isolated cases where it is required for cabinetmaking, &c.

140. And that is how it is that there is a difficulty here, and why there are complaints that seasoned timber cannot be obtained?—Simply because there is no inducement given to the merchant to season the timber.

141. I think you suggested in your evidence that houses would be more expensive if the architects were a little more strict with regard to demanding seasoned timber?—The people who build the houses would have to pay a little more, but it would be beneficial in the long-run.