

10. With regard to the sizes, can you obtain in New Zealand timbers in the sizes required for building purposes in connection with large buildings?—Yes, I think so. You cannot, of course, obtain New Zealand timbers in the size or length that you can obtain Oregon pine, but now we use steel joists in the place of beams. Previously timber was used for the flooring, and it was essential then to get long, sound beams, but now we use steel girders in their place, and therefore it is not essential to be able to obtain straight beams of great length or growth. I do not think, with New Zealand timbers, that we should find it impossible to get all we required in that respect.

11. Now, with regard to the cost of building a five-roomed cottage ten or twelve years ago and now, has there been any great increase in the cost consequent upon the rise in the price of the timber?—It is certainly much dearer than it was.

12. How much do you think the advance in the cost has been?—I think somewhere about 15 per cent.

13. On the cost of the timber?—Yes.

14. *Mr. Field.*] Is that the total increased cost of the building?—Yes; say, the building is dearer by some 15 per cent., covering all things.

15. *Mr. Ell.*] I am confining my remarks to the timber only?—Without reference, I could not say.

16. But there has been a considerable increase?—Yes, there has been.

17. Do you think that has anything to do with the slackening of the building trade? There is a slackness at present, is there not?—I do not think so.

18. To what do you attribute the present slump in the building trade?—To the tightness of the money-market, and also to the fact that there has been such tremendous building activity in the last four or five years, and that such sufficient building has been done up to the present. That, together with the fact that it is not a favourable time for building, is the cause of the slackness in the building trade. I do not think the increased price of timber would influence the clients at all.

19. Have you had any difficulty in obtaining supplies of timber for building?—No.

20. Always a ready supply?—Yes.

21. Have you had any restrictions placed upon your securing supplies—have any millers refused to supply you or your clients?—No; it is always done through the timber-merchants and the builders. I have never heard of any objections at all.

22. If a builder is outside the association, have you ever heard of a miller refusing to supply him with timber?—No; but what I have heard is that if I dealt direct with the timber-merchant I should have to pay so much more than the builders who deal direct with them. They allow the builders so much in addition to their 2½ per cent. for cash. I understand they allow them a commission on all the timber they purchase—an allowance. If they are recognised builders or members of the Builders' Association they can obtain timber at a lesser rate than I can. When I say "I" I mean the rest of the public.

23. If a builder is not in the Builders' Association, would he get that discount?—I believe not—I have been told not.

24. Then, in regard to the uses to which kauri and rimu are specially adapted, you have had a good deal to do with such work. I want you to give the Commission your opinion with regard to the adaptability and the ornamental and utilitarian character of rimu for the inside work of houses?—I think I was one of the first architects here to realise the ornamental character of rimu, and I used it in the City Council offices here in 1884. It is an extremely beautiful wood, and I consider it compares very favourably for joinery-work with some of the best ornamental timbers to be found here, and I have used it continuously. I scarcely ever put up a house without using that timber, and have found it always extremely satisfactory, only with this qualification, that there has always been a difficulty in the fact that every line has been terribly mixed, and one has had to exercise the greatest care in examining every individual piece of timber that goes into the building to see whether or not it is the class of wood you want. That should not be. We, as architects, ought to be able to specify a particular class of timber, and we ought to know that that quality of timber is kept separate from all others, and that the timber-merchant would supply it. That is the great need for us as architects. It is not so now; it is all mixed together. There is some difference made if timber is particularly bad. For instance, if lying in the merchant's yard, a yardman throws on one side pieces obviously inferior as a separate line. My point is this: that it is not those which are obviously inferior that matter—everybody can see a bad stick for themselves, and it should not be used; but there are essential differences in the qualities of good timber depending on the part of the tree from which it is cut, and these ought to be separated and kept apart. Then, the difficulties in the use of it would be very much lessened, and we should be less tempted to use imported timbers. I might just mention in reference to rimu that I have used this largely for doors and joinery generally, but in several cases I have had, say, twenty doors made for a work, and perhaps eighteen of those doors will stand splendidly—not a twist or a warp—but the other two, simply by want of classification of timber will twist so much out of shape that they will have to be taken down and discarded. It is that unreliability in regard to the timber which makes us so anxious whenever we use New Zealand timbers.

25. *Mr. Ell.*] Take timbers properly classified and treated: do you know of any imported timber likely to replace rimu for these special works?—Oregon does.

26. Is it ornamental?—Extremely so; it works up to a beautiful finish, and the difference between the summer and winter growth is so marked that if cut on the slant you get a beautiful figure, taking a high polish, and very ornamental. It takes stain readily, and the stain sinking into the softer part of the wood gives a deeper stain, and consequently a fine variety of colour. It is really an excellent wood, and would be likely, if rimu was not available, to take the place of rimu very largely. It is now the same price as rimu.