

accumulate stocks which can stand for years, so that in future there should be no difficulty in obtaining seasoned timber if only they lay in good stocks.

43. Have you any difficulty in obtaining good heart of rimu?—Yes, it is all mixed with partly sap-wood. There are some excellent sticks among the lines, and these have been sorted out. It is impossible to get all heart; we have to take the heart with the outer wood. I have not noticed if there is a diminishing quantity of heart. Some timber I have obtained lately is quite good quality, but it all has to be sorted.

44. Where do the Christchurch people obtain their timber-supplies?—That I could not be sure of. Some of it comes from the south, and some timber from Pelorus Sound, and some from the West Coast. Still, I am not an authority on that; I cannot state exactly where they do obtain their timbers from. Different merchants have different mills in different parts.

45. In Dunedin they complained strongly about not being able to obtain good heart red-pine, and also in Invercargill?—Yes; I have not found any great difficulty, only that it has to be sorted—that is where the difficulty rests. You have to buy a large quantity to be able to pick out exactly what you want.

46. Have you much difficulty in obtaining kauri here?—The kind that is suitable for joinery-work you cannot get here; that is the reason why we fall back on yellow-pine and Baltic.

47. Is there much speculation in the building trade here—builders putting up houses as a speculation?—Yes, a great deal of that.

48. Has that fallen off lately?—Just now it has fallen off considerably, but a few years ago whole neighbourhoods were springing up—put up by builders as a speculation. Large districts sprang up like mushrooms, and perhaps the whole speculative.

49. You spoke of the preparation of a book dealing with New Zealand timbers: would you suggest by whom that book should be compiled?—No; I could scarcely suggest that, because it would be the work not of one man, but the researches of several working on a uniform line. For instance, all the testing would have to be done probably by Professor Scott, of Canterbury College; but if the book was to be valuable he must work in conjunction with others, so that all might be done on a uniform system. One man would have to go to the forest to see the particular tree, get it cut on a definite system, the different pieces marked as to locality and position in tree, and so on. It is valueless to take a piece of timber by chance and get it tested; a test is worthless unless we know from what portion of the tree the wood came, and we want to know whether the tree grew on swampy ground or high and dry ground. If the latter it would be much stronger and more solid. Therefore there should be a sort of committee working together to give us all this reliable information.

50. Do you favour an increase in the duty on Oregon pine?—No, I do not think I should, because we should not use it if we developed our own resources.

51. By allowing it to come in, you think it would conserve our timber-supply?—Yes, it is certainly useful in that way. It would tend to conserve rimu, because it is used in place of kauri and rimu now for joinery-work and ornamental purposes.

52. As to imported timbers, do you not think they have helped the building trade of this Dominion?—You mean that buildings have been put up which otherwise would not have been put up? I scarcely think that.

53. Do you think the price of timber has anything to do with diminishing the building trade?—No, I do not think so. If a person wants a house he will build it.

54. As to seasoning, have you got any scheme to suggest?—Natural seasoning is the only proper way—that is, to take care that the timber is cut at the right time of the year, that it is carefully stacked with fillets between, under a covered shed with open sides, so that the air can pass freely between every piece; that is the only good rational way. Any forced system of seasoning by hot-air chambers dries up the sap too rapidly and renders the timber brittle.

55. Would not that add to the price of the timber?—Yes, because the capital would have to be sunk in the timber, and would remain there perhaps for a year or more, and interest on that money would have to be added to the cost of the timber. That is perfectly natural, and we are quite willing to pay the extra money which the merchants ask for the seasoned timber.

56. Speaking of the working-classes—those of them having buildings erected—do you find that the price of timber is too high to be within their reach to build houses?—That I could not say. Architects usually do not have such people for their clients. These people generally deal direct with the builders, or else buy a house put up by a builder as a speculation.

57. Have the majority of houses been put up by architects?—Oh, no! the majority are the work of builders. For every house an architect does there might be perhaps ten put up by builders—that is, the small class of houses.

58. How does brick compare with wood for building?—Brick is dearer. It is extremely difficult to determine the exact difference in cost; it depends largely upon conditions as to finishing. It generally happens that when a brick building seems to be dearer a great deal of expense is in the proportionately more expensive finishing. A brick house is usually a better class of house than the timber house; therefore the extra cost is not wholly on account of the bricks used. The actual amount of walling done in brick is certainly above the cost of the same amount of walling in wood; how much more is merely a matter of calculation.

59. In the long-run the brick building would be the cheaper?—I do not think in the long-run it would be much cheaper, with this important condition: that the wooden building is built of thoroughly well-seasoned and proper heart timber. In a brick building the greater part is of wood; often only the outside walls are of brick; there are wooden roofs, floors, and joinery, and that has all to last in the brick house as in the wooden house; more than half a brick or stone house is wood. The floors always go first if the timber is unseasoned, and they will go as fast in the brick house as in the wooden house.