

60. During the last three years is it not a fact that most of the timber going into the houses you are erecting here has been unseasoned timber?—Oh, yes! that is so, because it is impossible to get it properly seasoned.

61. And, of course, you do not give these houses as long a life in consequence?—No, they will be a source of expense to their owners by reason of repairs and depreciation.

62. Do you know if the white-pine borer is here?—Oh, yes! it is very strongly in evidence in Christchurch. I have seen houses practically riddled with it.

63. And that has helped to sell a number of houses in other places?—It may be. Generally people are glad to get rid of a house with borer in it. I have dealt with houses affected in this way, with sheep-dip; thoroughly saturated all parts attacked; that will check the ravages. I have used Little's sheep-dip, but any arsenical or non-arsenical preparation would do, I suppose. I always take the precaution, when making additions to an old house, to coat the whole of the new timber where it touches the old with a preparation.

64. In Dunedin and Invercargill they had not yet dropped on an effective preservative or destroyer, and you say you find sheep-dip effective?—Yes, it checks the borer wonderfully. I found that out by trying it on a house in which I was living myself. The borer otherwise gets into the soft woods, and the furniture, and into rimu, and even black-pine when adjacent to white-pine. If there is no white-pine the germs do not seem to develop, but white-pine seems to form an active nest, from which the borer attacks the other timbers; so that we have long since given up white-pine for good work.

65. *Mr. Field.*] Talking about the grading of our timber, do you think it can be done fairly inexpensively?—It would cost next to nothing. When it is at the mill the timber could be made into different heaps just as well as into one heap.

66. It would not require close examination of each piece of timber?—No, because at the mill they would know from which part of the tree it comes, and the qualities, as far as we can determine, are owing to that. All European timber is marked, every stick of it, with a special brand showing to which class it belongs; and, as I have said, sometimes as many as eight or nine different grades are classified with one timber.

67. As a rule, every grade can be obtained from the same tree?—In respect of kauri that is so—all except the soft or silver-grained kauri, which grows in a particular locality. That is why the grading should be done at the mill.

68. With regard to seasoning: I suppose anybody can get seasoned timber if he wants it?—He can season it himself, and we take that precaution, and always get the timber immediately. The builder is under penalty to have the timber on the ground immediately, and it remains for as long as necessary to season it; but with the greater number of houses put up for speculative purposes no such precaution is taken.

69. Do you think the practice of putting up unseasoned houses is so rife that there ought to be some legislative restriction put upon it?—Yes, I have always thought that. It is criminal to put into buildings unseasoned timbers, and people ought to be forced not to build with unseasoned timbers; in other words, it should be easier to obtain seasoned than unseasoned timber.

70. With regard to the 2s. extra for stacked timber: does that obtain in Christchurch?—Yes, that is on the lists of to-day—2s. extra for stacked timber.

71. You do not know the practice in other places, of course?—No.

72. Do you express an opinion as to whether the post or pole should be put with the butt or top down?—My own opinion is that it should be put with the top of the tree in the ground, and if put in such a way I think it will last longer than with the butt down; therefore timber which has to be used in such positions should be marked for the top and the butt. That opinion is held by many, but there is a difference among experts, and it is in the interests of the timber trade that it should be determined scientifically which theory is right. My theory is that if put in the way the timber grows, the moisture will more readily penetrate.

73. You have deservedly earned a very high reputation as an architect, and have given a good deal of thought to this timber question?—Oh, yes! I have given careful study to it. It is included among the subjects for examination for the A.R.I.B.A.

74. With regard to the increase in the price of timber, has there been any complaint on the part of persons building houses, builders or private persons?—There have been very many complaints about the price of building generally, but then the price of building is not dependant only on the price of timber, but also upon the high rate of wages, which makes building so dear, more even than the price of timber.

75. Bricks and other materials have gone up in price?—Oh, yes! everything has gone up from what it was a few years ago, and, of course, the high rates of wages are accountable for the high cost of building, very largely indeed.

76. Take an ordinary seven-roomed house, well-finished: what proportion does the timber bear to the cost?—Generally about one-half, I think—that is, for a well-finished cottage having a good deal of internal fittings, but without calculation I cannot give accurate information on this point.

77. You were rather hazy as to the increase in price of timber. The increase, according to our evidence, was 2s. to 1s. 6d. per hundred?—I remember getting rimu at 9s. 6d., and now it is 14s. 6d., from the timber-merchants in each case.

78. Was there any difference then and now between the discounts allowed?—It is only of late years—two or three years—that discount has been allowed to the members of the Builders' Association (when the builders' associations amalgamated) and not allowed to the private purchaser.

79. I understand that you are very much against the destruction of our valuable native timber?—Yes, I regard it as a calamity and a crime that thousands of acres of our valuable timber in the North Island should be destroyed as is done.