

not hold so far as you are concerned?—No; but still it might happen that I should be glad of being able to use a long stick sometimes. Hitherto I have not required it—other architects might have done so.

128. You say there is at least 15 per cent. increase in the cost of building now?—Yes, quite that, I should think; but, of course, it is difficult to determine, because we never have exactly the same work to reproduce. If we had to carry out the same design now and ten years ago, we could tell the difference exactly; but we do not have to do that.

129. Is not this increase due to the more luxurious class of buildings and fittings and conveniences as compared with ten or fifteen years ago?—There is, of course, a demand for a better class of dwelling than there was some years ago; but it does not necessarily follow that the better and more artistic house is the dearer house of the two. In many cases the inartistic house which was a commonplace of years ago, cost quite as much as the artistic home of to-day. It is not on account of the better designs that are produced that there is an increase of cost. It is on account of the rise in cost of material, &c.

130. You referred to builders not belonging to the association: cannot a builder obtain supplies from other sources besides the merchants belonging to the merchants' association?—I suppose he could; but I qualified my statement by saying that as far as I understood it was so. I have no definite knowledge. I have always understood that they must belong to the association to get the discount, but I suppose they could get their timber direct from the mill, unless there is some arrangement among the millers to prevent this. That I do not know.

131. You told us you thought an export duty should be put on rimu?—Yes, I think on New Zealand timbers generally. I am not in a position to state from personal knowledge whether there is a sufficient supply still in New Zealand, and whether that supply will recur and give us timber for all time; but if there is any likelihood of a shortage, unquestionably there should be an export duty.

132. With regard to seasoned timber: you said you had seen rimu taken out of buildings up for forty years as good as the day it was put there?—No, I did not say "rimu"; I said "New Zealand timber," not "rimu." It was black-pine and totara I referred to. In one case it was totara taken from a building where it had been used as floor-joists, and the space between the floor and the ground was unventilated—the worst possible position—and yet the timber was as good as when put in. In the other case, the timber was black-pine taken from the old mill in Christchurch, and there were some splendid blocks taken from there, which must have been in use forty years. The builder working for me cut these up into beautiful timbers.

133. You cannot say whether that timber was seasoned or not?—No, but I am sure it would not have lasted if it had not been seasoned, and I say this from a wide experience. [NOTE.—If green timber is placed in such a position in a building that it is freely exposed to the air it, of course, will season there as well as elsewhere.]

134. I think it is more than likely it was put in green. Now, with regard to heart rimu for joinery purposes: this is a difficulty that the builders have to contend with, you say you cannot obtain sufficient?—Often I cannot.

135. And the sawmiller cannot supply enough rough timber to be able to have the heart?—But I know that a great deal of choice and valuable rimu is all lumped together and used for ordinary purposes. Instead of using timber valued at 14s. 6d. they are using in its place timber valued at £1 2s. Figured rimu is used for ordinary building-stuff because it is not properly sorted, and consequently there is a loss of that difference in value. In many cases where timber has been brought on to the work, say, 12 by 2, I have looked over it and seen beautiful figured stuff, and have picked it out and used it for special purposes.

136. Have you any experience at all of the artificial seasoning of timber?—Not personally. I only know from study, and from intercourse with those who have had personal experience, that it does render the timber too brittle, therefore reduces its weight-bearing qualities if it is artificially seasoned; the only good form is the natural seasoning.

137. You told us that the cost of timber was half the cost of the building. Did you not make a mistake?—I have not worked it out accurately. I should imagine that the labour would generally be about half the cost of the material; that is merely approximate, it all depends on the amount of work put in.

138. Do you think it would be any drawback to building operations if the duty on Oregon was increased?—No, I do not think so. Supposing the rimu were not available, of course, it would increase the cost; we should have to fall back on the Oregon. If they are really burning and destroying timber because they cannot get a sale for it, then the sooner that is brought into the market the better. We should not buy Oregon, or I should not specify it, except under the necessity that we could not obtain New Zealand timber.

139. You, as an architect, never specify that Oregon shall be put in in preference to native timber?—No, not unless it is specially asked for by the client; then I have used it, and found it very satisfactory, but I consider our own rimu so good that I should always prefer to use it.

140. *Mr. Barber.*] The price of red-pine is 14s. 6d.: is that ordinary building-timber?—Yes, that is on the list of to-day—timber not sorted at all.

141. In order to get that timber dry you have to pay another 2s.?—Yes, that is 16s. 6d. a hundred for ordinary dry building-timber.

142. What is the price at which Oregon is sold in Christchurch—Fourteen shillings and sixpence, and that is dry, of course. It has been cut and stacked for a certain period, so that the Oregon is sold cheaper in Christchurch now than red-pine.

143. In this ordinary red-pine at 14s. 6d. there is a certain percentage which you said it is criminal to put into a house?—Yes. Oftentimes the builders get this and bring it down to the work, and I have to condemn it as unfit for use.