

144. So that a policy which excluded Oregon and compelled the use of this inferior red-pine would be unfair and disastrous to the worker building a home for himself?—Yes; I should not like to see it made impossible for us to get this Oregon if we wished it.

145. A policy which excluded it would be unfair to the man who is trying to make a home for himself?—Yes, providing that we cannot get good New Zealand timber. I think it would be unfair to exclude Oregon under the present circumstances.

146. It would be unfair for a man to build a home for himself and find at the end of fifteen years that his capital was lost?—There is no necessity for him to do that if he exercises sufficient care in the selection of the timber, if he takes care to have it seasoned; but the difficulties of getting seasoned timber at present are very great, and they should be removed.

147. You say it is impossible to have the difficulties removed under present conditions?—Yes, that is so.

148. What is the price of kauri in this district?—Thirty-two shillings, I think.

149. Do you think it is fair if there is any other timber that can be had to take the place of kauri to compel the consumer to pay £1 12s. for material when one of equal value might be purchased at 14s. 6d.?—No, I think we should certainly be able to get Oregon.

150. With regard to the association that exists in this district, is that a combination of saw-millers and timber-merchants?—That I do not know; I do not know anything about it.

151. Supposing a contractor gave an order to a miller for a certain quantity of timber, would it be delivered unsorted?—Yes, unless the contractor gave special instructions for a special sort. It would come to him all mixed up, and it would require to be sorted by the contractor himself.

152. *Mr. Stallworthy.* Is the outer portion of the heart of a large rimu-tree more valuable or durable than the heart of a smaller tree?—I do not know.

153. Do you know the district in which that soft kauri of which you spoke grows?—I forget the name—somewhere beyond Auckland. It comes from one special district.

154. With regard to the competition: when things were busy was there keen competition between the timber-merchants?—There were a good many of them in business, but I do not know that there was any special competition; I think at all times there was a ruling price; I do not remember ever being able to get timber cheaper at one place than at another. There was always plenty of competition among the builders.

155. *Mr. Mander.* Do you find Oregon equal in quality?—As far as I have been able to judge it has always been well seasoned and of equal quality.

156. Did you ever know of a rimu house, built of ordinary rimu, rotting in ten years?—Yes, I have seen it beginning to rot before then. That would be on the ground and in any place where the water can collect. It used to be the fashion to scribe the stops over the end of the weather-boards, and so form a lot of pockets where the water could get in, and there it would rot under ten years.

157. Do you know of a rimu house lasting for generations?—We have not passed generations yet. I have seen rimu twenty years after as good as the day it was put in, and there seemed to be no reason why it should not last for generations.

158. A house built when I was a boy, fifty years ago, of sap-rimu for inside purposes is standing to-day?—I should regard that as an exceptional example. If it escaped by reason of avoiding ordinary decay it ought to have fallen a victim to the white-ant long ago.

159. You say it is absolute waste to put sap-wood into buildings?—Yes.

160. Are you aware that two-thirds of the timber you get from the West Coast and all other places is sap-timber?—That depends on what you define as sap-timber.

161. Sap as distinct from heart?—But there is an intermediate wood between the heart and the outer casing which is good wood. Sap-wood is sometimes defined as all wood which is not heart. There are really three varieties—outside sap-wood, intermediate, and heart. It is the first which, I say, it is criminal to put into buildings. Intermediate timber should not be regarded as sap-wood, and I do not refer to it as such. That will not last as long as heart, but longer than sap-wood.

162. Is it not a fact that when houses are built for speculative purposes invariably the cheapest kind of timber is put in?—I have not built any such houses, so I cannot say.

163. You spoke of an export duty being put on our timbers. Do you say that, having regard to the risk of fire among native timbers—by settlers clearing their land and so forth?—Yes, I think so. If there is that risk there is all the more reason to preserve as much as possible of our native bush.

164. Are you aware that it is very difficult to preserve it when the process of settling has to go on?—I understand that, of course. I understand that a great deal has been burned by accident—settlers perhaps setting fire to their own timber, and the fire spreading for miles.

165. And do you not think our own employees should be considered—that we should not import timber to come into competition with our own, and have our mills shut down and our employees thrown out of work?—Undoubtedly, and I have always worked on that principle. I have made it a practice to specify anything produced in New Zealand rather than elsewhere if I can do this with justice to my client. But if I cannot get good properly seasoned timber in New Zealand it would be a great injustice to my client not to use Oregon, and I should be sorry if I were prevented from getting Oregon under these circumstances.

166. If the timber-merchants made more profit out of Oregon it would force Oregon on the market?—It does not rest with the timber-merchant, but with the architects and the builders; they buy what they want.

167. Do not the timber-merchants have any influence over the architects?—No. Architects choose what they think best. The merchants, of course, send round their circulars, but the opinion of the architect is what counts.