

boarding is finished in the mills in Christchurch. As a matter of fact, if you get the weather boards from the mills you have to dry them after. You have got to dry the stuff first and then mill.

162. Otherwise the buildings are not satisfactory?—I do not quite say that. If it is dry you produce a better article.

163. Why does that system prevail in Southland?—I do not know anything about Southland.

164. The builder almost invariably orders his supplies straight from the mill, and from Catlin's, and the freight is charged as from Riverton?—I have had many years' experience in this city.

165. Supposing a resident of this district was willing to give an order for, say, 50,000 ft., or even a scow-load of timber, from one of the West Coast mills, would they supply it?—Through a merchant.

166. They would not supply him, then?—I dare say. I do not know.

167. That would look as if there was collusion between the timber-merchants and the timber-millers?—We arrange to buy it all if they will sell it to us.

168. With regard to the retail selling-price of red-pine, you say it is 14s. 6d., less discount, which brings it to 13s. 5d.: is that the price of ordinary building-timber?—Yes.

169. If it is stacked and dried it is 2s. additional?—We do not stack and dry scantlings. It goes straight from the ship to the yard and from the yard to the building after it is all sorted.

170. What percentage of 16s. 6d. timber is there in a building then?—I would again refer you to my list. That will give you the proportion.

171. Unfortunately the example you give provided for a building that was erected almost entirely of Oregon or imported timbers?—It would have been the same if it had been erected of red-pine. All the Oregon that was used in that building had not one stick of it dressed. It was only replacing red-pine in that respect.

172. It would make no difference to the cost of the building?—No, none at all in either timber.

173. First of all you told us you could not tell us exactly what the cost of timber was some years ago?—I should say it was about 13s. ten years ago. We have witnesses here who can give you that.

174. Timber has always been dearer here than in Wellington?—Yes, it should be.

175. How is it that 13s. was the lowest ten years ago if timber was 10s. in Wellington ten years ago?—I think they were a lot of fools in Wellington, because they could not do it for the money.

176. They were doing it, and that was before the combination existed?—They could not do it.

177. Even with the increase in wages and the difficulty there is in milling timber at present, we have evidence that timber is being sold in Wellington to-day at 9s. 6d.?—I have sold timber at 8s., and was glad to get quit of it.

178. This is good timber that is sold for 9s. 6d.?—I should say there is some more madness going on.

179. Now, with regard to the increase in the price of timber, you say that it has not been very much in this district, whilst I wanted to show that while you gave an example that 1s. rise in timber would not add very much to the cost of the erection of this eight-roomed house, if the timber had been going up periodically and had risen 6s. in nine years it would have added considerably to the cost of the erection of this house?—Yes, that is apparent. It is about £10 for every 1s. rise per hundred feet of timber. It is easily reckoned out. I have not known the conditions to prevail that you speak of.

180. It will be proved by documentary evidence directly. While the cost of rough building-timber has increased, do you think that the cost of furnishings and fittings for a house has increased—for instance, register grates and similar fittings—have they increased in price, and are they dearer now than ten years ago?—I can tell you with regard to the iron-market only. During this last six months there has been a very steady decrease in the price of any goods manufactured from iron. The lists were quoted at list prices, less 50 per cent., plus 10 per cent., and in many cases now—just this last month or two since the depression—it is quoted at less 50 per cent., less 10 per cent., less 5 per cent.; and that is what it used to be in the old days. The price six months ago in grates was considerably higher than a few years ago.

181. That evidence is different to the evidence of an architect in Dunedin, who said they had been reduced in price?—I have documentary evidence in my office.

182. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What discount do you allow to builders?—Five per cent. and 2½ per cent. for cash.

183. How long has that been the practice?—Ever since I have been in the timber trade as a merchant seven or eight years ago.

184. Has there been no corresponding increase of price because of the builders' discount?—You will not give something for nothing. Nobody else but builders buy our stuff. Our sales are almost entirely through builders.

185. Where a builder gets a discount of 12½ per cent., does it affect the price to the public?—We have to provide for our profit.

186. Are we to understand that if a builder gets 12½ per cent. trade discount the price of timber must be advanced to meet that?—I should like to say that the builders do not get 12½ per cent. I am speaking of our own case. We protect the men who earn their living by the use of timber to the tune of 5 per cent.

187. Do you think that 5 per cent. is a reasonable amount to allow builders?—That is our reason for putting it at 5 per cent.

188. If they are allowed 12½ per cent. in some places do you not think that a bit high, seeing that you have settled 5 per cent. as fair?—Builders and others in other places are purchasers of timber. The matter of discount does not matter very much here because nobody else buys timber.