

not know. I do not think it is a fair exchange, because we are sending away something that we are absolutely in need of, and that we cannot get any other timber to replace.

149. We have had evidence in other parts of the Dominion that Oregon will answer all purposes for which kauri is used, or very nearly all?—I have never heard of wash-tubs being made of Oregon, neither do I think it suitable for vats. There are a hundred and one things for which it cannot well be used. Oregon would not do for the outside linings of window-frames. It will rot in a very short time.

150. You are aware, in regard to our New Zealand forests, and especially kauri, that there are very great risks in regard to fire?—Of course, there is a risk in regard to fire—that exists all the time. Nearly all the timber that the Government have tried to conserve has been destroyed by fire.

152. *Mr. Ell.*] With regard to the use of kauri, Mr. Taylor, you are speaking with a knowledge of twenty or twenty-five years' experience?—That is so.

153. You say, with a knowledge of both timbers, that Oregon cannot be used for the same purposes to which kauri can be put?—No.

154. Do you consider it wise to put huge beams of kauri into a building, when the kauri is exceedingly valuable for cabinetmaking and for the finer descriptions of work?—I think it is absolute waste. The same remark applies to figured red-pine. Oregon could take the place of these timbers for beams, &c.

155. Have you used beech?—No, I have no experience of beech.

156. *Mr. Jennings.*] Would you give preference to local timbers, under fair conditions, if you had a chance?—Yes, if all things were equal. If I was satisfied that red-pine was as suitable for a job as Oregon I would use red-pine.

157. Have you had any opportunity of using totara from the Waimarina forests?—No. I have used totara, but I do not know where it came from.

158. I judge that you are in favour of the importation of timber for the general good of the public?—That is so.

159. If you followed that out, would you not destroy the principle that was initiated—viz., the protection of our own industries?—Well, that opens up another question altogether. What I did state was that I am favourable to importing timber where we have no timber equally suitable for certain purposes. In my opinion there is no native timber so suitable for certain purposes as Oregon is.

160. You are a member of the Builders' Association?—Yes.

161. Is that a local association or a colonial one?—Local.

162. Does it exist for the purpose of keeping up prices?—I do not know what it exists for, but I suppose there is ascertain amount of mutual benefit.

W. Goss, Timber-merchant, of Christchurch, sworn and examined. (No. 41.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you kindly tell us what you know of all or any of the subjects within our order of reference?—Gentlemen, I am a timber-merchant in Christchurch, and as such I am appearing before you. We are prepared to show that the profits we are making in Christchurch are not only not excessive, but we consider that they are really not enough considering the amount of financial liabilities that we have. The position of the trade in Christchurch is very different from any of the other large centres. We are a long way away from the source of supply, and we are handicapped in that we are a long way from our harbour. Owing to that the timber-merchants have to hold extremely large stocks to be able to do their business, and, in addition to that being so, of course, our expenses are very much greater than those of the southern merchants that have been referred to by the Commission to-day, and I think in dealing with the Christchurch trade that is a matter which should certainly not be overlooked. To explain the system that obtains, I might say that, as has been pointed out to-day, we draw the main quantity of our supplies from the West Coast. That is principally due to the fact that they were the only people from whom we could be sure of getting a sufficient supply. Some few years ago the position of the trade in Christchurch was bad. Then we had the Exhibition mooted, and that was the cause of what I was going to call a boom, but it meant a tremendous increase in the building being done. The Exhibition building consumed an immense amount of timber. We found there was at that time some difficulty in getting our supplies, and, owing to the fact that the West Coast millers were then doing their best to encourage sawmilling there, and enlarging their output, we drifted to them for our supplies. Before that we had been getting our supplies from various parts of the colony. We had had supplies from the South, and in the early days a good deal of timber came from our own peninsula here, and we were also drawing some of our supplies from Little River. We have also had supplies from the North Island and from Pelorus Sound, but we found those people were not able to supply, and therefore we drifted to our present source of supply. There was a considerable amount of timber being used at the time of the Exhibition, and owing to the Exhibition, trade increased very largely and very rapidly in Christchurch. Owing to that the output of the mills increased, the stocks held by the Christchurch merchants increased, and the industry became a very large thing. Things went on well until, of course, the financial stringency pulled us up, and now we find that we are not only not able to keep ourselves fully employed, but in many instances we find it extremely difficult to keep going at all. I might say we have never, even during the immense increased business, increased our profits beyond what any one would call a reasonable amount. I am satisfied that were any body of competent men to go into this question of what the timber-merchants in Christchurch have been charging for their commodities, it would be proved conclusively that we have been only reasonable in our demands, taking into consideration the amount of expenses we are put to. We get our timber