

16. With regard to lining 6 in. by  $\frac{1}{2}$  in., what is your price here?—Fourteen shillings and ninepence. I had better put this price-list in. [Price-list handed in.]

17. *Mr. Barber.*] I think it would be as well if the witness put in the price-list of previous years?—I do not know if I can trace them back to 1900. They are hard now to get, and I want to keep these copies of previous lists.

*Hon. the Chairman.* We can have a copy made, and you can have it back again. [Agreed to.]

18. *Mr. EU.*] You say that your rates have been going up a great deal?—Yes.

19. You know that the general rate was  $3\frac{1}{8}$ d., and this year it is only  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d.?—I meant the general rates right through. I did not say this year from last year, because our prices have not gone up.

20. The rates are down in that respect?—They are up in other respects.

21. The other rates have not been altered. With regard to the rates which you pay, are you not gaining some advantage in this way, I mean in the large increases that have taken place in land-values in the city—is that not some compensation to you?—Am I to understand that you ascribe the increase to land-values rating?

22. No. I only say that your business sites are gaining in value?—I cannot say.

23. I know of one yard that was valued at £4,500, and it was sold for £8,400?—We pay increased rates on those values.

24. I admit that?—We may reap a benefit ultimately. Of course, we hope to get more when we sell out.

25. You are a timber-merchant, and you have had, as I know, a lifelong experience in business: now, what special sizes are you asking for in Oregon?—We are not asking for special sizes at present. If a job is Oregon it is Oregon right through, but we are not asking for any special sizes at present. I say that Oregon would be preferable to rimu only in a few sizes—that is, in long lengths and for large joists. I may say here that I was under the impression that Oregon was of a higher breaking-strain than rimu, and I think that this is one of the things that the Commission should inquire into and make public. My experience has been confined to Christchurch. I have not had a very great deal of experience in respect to Oregon, and my opinion has been formed from expressions of opinion from others.

26. You charge, as Mr. Page has told us, 6d. per foot for every foot over a certain length?—Yes, in rimu.

27. So that in a long length, say, 30 ft., it would make a difference in the cost of that?—Yes; but there is this to be thought of: in the house that has been before the Commission to-day there is not a 30 ft. in the whole lot of it. It is only in very few instances that these are required. Sometimes they use steel girders.

28. There is a good deal of Oregon used in a building I know of now?—That is a store.

29. Yes. Have you experienced the same difficulty as other merchants in getting long lengths?—No. We have had no difficulty in getting long lengths in native timbers, but the cost is more. The reason that the cost is more is this: I know a little about milling. I am interested in a mill. The reason that the cost is more proportionately for long lengths is because the demand is small. The case is different in America, because they would rather cut long lengths than short lengths. Their plants are more up to date than ours, and that is chiefly owing to the fact that they are able to take up larger areas than we do. Eight hundred acres is all that is given here, and it does not pay to put up a big plant, and that being so our mills are at a disadvantage in cutting long lengths. We should have no difficulty if we could get the Railway authorities and the Union Company to carry these exceptional lengths at no greater charge.

30. As a timber-merchant, knowing the demand there is for large sizes in big buildings, would you think it a wise thing to increase the duty upon Oregon in large sizes?—I do not know that there is a demand. If you could prove to me that there is a demand and that the demand cannot be filled in any other way, it would be a different matter. I do not see what we are going to do with the rough grade of rimu if Oregon should replace it. I have now a large supply of scantlings that I do not know what to do with. You have only to leave red-pine together for a certain time when it will become a fungus, a pulp, and rot away. I have to strip that stuff to keep it from becoming bad. Now, if Oregon is allowed to come in it will displace that class of rimu. If Oregon takes the place of that we shall have to say to the sawmiller that we cannot take lower than a certain grade of red-pine. He would reply that owing to the fact that he was unable to dispose of the rougher class, he would be compelled to charge a higher price for the finer qualities. It would simply mean that that grade of red-pine would have to be increased proportionately, as much as 30 or 40 per cent. The bringing-in of Oregon will not help the building trade whatever, and that appears to me to be the only logical conclusion in regard to the matter. We shall have to throw back on the miller a certain percentage of his product which will be valueless for commercial purposes, and so he must increase the value of the rest correspondingly. That being so, we had better pay the increased duty on the Oregon than have that occur in New Zealand.

31. You are aware that in the finishings of buildings it is not all heart and figured rimu that is used?—I have listened to what Mr. Seager said this morning. In many instances we sell timber that has absolutely no heart in it at all for finishings. If it is clean sap it will go. There is no other timber that I know of where sap can be used to such advantage as rimu. It takes the stain well, and finishes well. It is infinitely better than Oregon for outside work.

32. As to furniture-making, I understand the cheaper stuff is used—that is, there is a large quantity of sap?—All sap practically. We have now great difficulty to get figured rimu in New Zealand. The public now want it because they have discovered its value. A taste has been created for it, and there is a demand for good clean figured red-pine. The merchants have great difficulty in getting it, and, to my mind, it is really the finest timber any one could use in the internal finishings of a house. When I said it was all sap for cabinetmaking purposes, I might