

15. Are you interested in more than one sawmilling business on the West Coast?—Yes, I have one of my own, and am also interested in others.

16. How has the sawmilling business paid, taking the last five years?—I cannot tell you exactly, because I have not seen a balance-sheet of the sawmill business only. The two businesses are mixed up together in my case.

17. Did I understand you to say that the amount of Oregon that came here was infinitesimal?—No. I referred to the other timbers that Mr. Seager mentioned, such as yellow-pine, Baltic pine, Californian redwood, and such timbers. I said that I was leaving out Oregon pine for the moment.

18. At about what time did the slump take place in the sawmilling trade in Christchurch?—I do not think any one could put his finger on any particular date and say that was the time when the slump started. It has been a gradual decrease.

19. Is that in consequence of Oregon timber coming in?—No, but Oregon timber I consider has been a small factor in the case.

20. Can you give us any information as to the quantities of Oregon that have come in during the last three to five years?—Prior to 1908 only one cargo of Oregon came into Lyttelton for a great number of years—over a period of perhaps twenty or thirty years. I suppose the Commission will be able to get the exact figures from the Customs.

21. The slump had taken place in the sawmilling business before 1908?—No. It probably was approaching, but it had not really taken place.

22. Seeing that only one cargo came in during the time you have mentioned, would you say that the importation of Oregon was a factor worthy of consideration so far as the slump was concerned?—Certainly, to a sawmiller.

23. But how much Oregon came in?—I will tell you the bearing it had on the matter, to my mind. There was a fear that Oregon pine was going to flood the market, and, that being so, merchants would not order red-pine from the sawmillers, and since then—since the beginning of 1908—the demand for building purposes for which red-pine or Oregon is suitable has been so small that, although the amount of Oregon that has come into the place has been proportionately small compared with the quantity of red-pine that had been coming in in previous years, it has been sufficient to act very detrimentally to the millers.

24. But the timber had to be obtained somewhere?—Timber was not required. I am not talking of any particular class of timber, but timber generally.

25. As a matter of fact, Oregon has not to any extent displaced New Zealand timber in the local market?—In the local market Oregon has displaced red-pine foot for foot for every foot that has come in.

26. You base that statement on how many cargoes of timber?—On the whole of the timber that came in in 1908.

27. Do you know what quantity that amounted to?—No. It would be only guesswork on my part.

28. Prior to 1908 the market here was not troubled much with importations of Oregon?—No, although probably a good deal was ordered before 1908.

29. As a matter of fact, there were no importations?—No, but if it is ordered people know it is coming.

30. Do I understand you to say that the timber-merchants here are making no profits at all?—I did not make that statement.

31. I ask you if that is so?—I am not speaking for the others. I am not making the profit I ought to make. I am not making the profit that should be made on the amount of money invested in a business of the size of mine.

32. How many years have you been in business?—The business I am in was established in 1859. It was my father's business before mine.

33. And it has gradually grown?—It has grown with the place.

34. And up to twelve months ago it was a successful, flourishing concern?—Yes. I do not say that it is not a successful concern now, but I say it is not so successful as a business should be with the amount of capital that is invested in it. I say it would probably be better if the capital were invested in something else.

35. That is based on the trade of the last twelve months?—Yes.

36. Have you made out your balance-sheet for the last twelve months?—Not yet. It is being made out.

37. *Mr. Jennings.* Are there any timber lands in Canterbury within reasonable distance of Christchurch—on the Peninsula, or such places?—No, none that I know of at all. There is supposed to be a little timber at Kaikoura. I sent a practical sawmiller up there to report on the district, and he brought back word that timber was not there in sufficiently large quantities to make sawmilling payable.

38. Then you are dependent altogether on outside sources for supplies of timber?—Absolutely, at present. There was originally some timber in the Oxford district, but it was principally birch, and it has practically been burnt out or cut out.

39. Are there any other factors that have determined what is thought to be the high price of timber beside the disadvantage that you labour under in having to get it from outside? It has been asserted in other places, for instance, that the men do not work so well, and that wages have gone up?—That is undoubtedly so. Wages have gone up all round, and everything that we use in connection with our industry is costing us more.

40. What is the increase so far as wages are concerned, comparing to-day with ten years ago?—That I do not know without looking up. I do not remember exactly what the wages were, but they have undoubtedly risen.

41. Do the men work as well now?—No, I do not think they do. I do not think there is the same output of work that there used to be.