

—I do not know of any place, except on the peninsula here, where the vessels could get very close to the mills, and, that being so, there would be railway freight to the port. I do not think the peninsula timber was ever supplied at that price. The prices I referred to are the selling-prices of the timber.

109. You admit you were buying timber at 5s. f.o.b.?—Yes, twelve years ago.

110. What were the facilities for milling timber thirty-five years ago?—I do not know.

111. Can you tell me whether the mills were better equipped thirty-five years ago?—I had not seen a mill thirty-five years ago. My experience of bush sawmilling goes back to ten years ago.

112. In regard to the importation of Oregon pine, you say Oregon has replaced foot for foot the red-pine?—That is so. You must bear in mind that I did not say, in New Zealand, but in Christchurch.

113. You disagree with the evidence that has been given in Christchurch that Oregon has been used to replace kauri more than red-pine?—I am giving you my own opinion to-day.

114. And that is that none of it has replaced kauri?—Not that I know of. We do not use kauri in long lengths here in Christchurch.

115. Now, with regard to the 2s. extra for stacked or seasoned timber: I presume if you had a quantity of timber stacked and a builder came to you and said he wanted timber out of a stack he would have to pay 2s. extra if it had only been stacked for a fortnight?—That is true, but I do not know of any builder who would do such a thing.

116. It comes back to the question that if it is once stacked that timber is 2s. extra?—We undertake to supply dry timber, and for that we charge 2s., and if the builder pays 2s. a hundred he gets dry timber.

117. You say that Oregon pine does not come to this country dry?—That is so.

118. In what part of the ship does the Oregon come that you handle?—I do not know.

119. Has it been deck cargo?—No, not deck cargo, but I do not know what part of the ship it comes in.

120. We saw a cargo landed in Dunedin which was all wet: it was not sap, but was sodden with salt water, and that may account for your experience that Oregon pine was landed in Christchurch wet?—I do not think so.

121. You made a statement that you are not importing more than 25 per cent. of the timber from the West Coast that you did eighteen months ago?—Yes.

122. Have you been importing timber from anywhere else?—No, I am talking about the timber coming into Christchurch. The red-pine that Mr. Morris was referring to comes from the Sounds and Collingwood district, and from Greymouth.

123. It is all reduced in the same proportion?—Yes.

124. You stated you were prepared to submit a balance-sheet to an accountant: will you also submit invoices giving exact figures?—Yes, I will show the cost.

125. You say that you are not importing more than 25 per cent. of the timber that you were eighteen months ago?—I say that Christchurch is not importing, and that was the question Mr. Morris asked me.

126. How are you in a position to say that?—Because I saw the returns.

127. You cannot submit the invoices?—That is so. I have not got them. I think you could get the whole of these returns from the Customs.

*Hon. the Chairman:* I think we shall have to curtail these questions. Many of these questions have a tendency to confuse a witness who is at all nervous.

*Mr. Barber:* I do not feel inclined to let certain statements go without cross-examination.

*Hon. the Chairman:* I am sorry I did not curtail the statement made previously.

128. *Mr. Arnold.*] If a duty is placed upon Oregon pine, or if it is increased, is there not a likelihood of the local or native timbers rising in price in proportion to the duty?—I do not think so, unless the demand largely increased.

129. You think the internal competition will be sufficient to keep the price of the local timbers down?—Yes, for some years to come.

130. Is the supply of local timbers—rimu, totara, &c.—sufficient to cause that?—I think so.

131. Now, you have a very heavy stock in your timber-yard, which we were very interested to see this morning, of well-seasoned timbers, and I want to ask if you are prepared to take an order from anybody for timber?—Yes, I am prepared to take an order from anybody. I do not care who it is. The only condition that I stipulate for is that he will pay for it.

132. You have a combination amongst the merchants?—We have an association.

133. Can you tell me when that association was first formed?—The association was in existence in an informal way I should say nine or ten years ago, and it was formed as the Christchurch Timber Merchants' Association some seven years ago, and then a year or so later it was formed into the North Canterbury Timber Association. It has been in existence now for six years.

134. What are the objects of the association as it now exists?—The mutual protection of its members, the betterment of the timber trade, and the arrangement of all matters in connection with the business.

135. You have price-lists?—We have a price-list accepted by all members of the association.

136. You are united with regard to arbitration matters and things of that sort?—We have discussed the advisability of being registered under the Act.

137. What is your relationship with the Builders' Association?—We have none whatever.

138. No relationship?—None.

139. If you received a communication from the Builders' Association requesting you not to serve a certain builder who was outside of their association and who refused to join, what would you do?—In the first place, I do not think that the Christchurch Builders' Association is at all likely to send such a request; and, in the next place, I do not think that we should consider the letter.