

192. Yes, but that is the price there?—Then you quoted rusticated.

193. That was 16s. 6d.?—Ours is £1 0s. 6d., and I may say that it is very seldom used here.

194. Allowing for the 2s. difference for seasoned timber?—It is an anomaly, because it costs us as much to purchase the one as the other. Our lengths are up to 22 ft., whilst theirs are only up to 20 ft. Moreover, it does not say there whether it is dry or not.

195. *Mr. Morris.*] It would seem from what we have heard that the practice in Southland is to dress the timber green after being sawn at the mill?—Yes.

196. How would you get on if that was adopted in Christchurch?—I do not think the Christchurch trade would take that, because it would not be good enough for the trade. Timber that is dressed green is nothing like so good as timber that is dressed dry. A few years ago we always dressed it green, but we found it did not give satisfaction. We now dry the timber first and put it through the mill, and we find it makes a good job, but that costs more money. We could supply timber at about 16s. 9d. if it came straight from the mill. If we supplied it green we should get it straight from the mill on the other side, and we could supply it at something like the Dunedin price-list, and our price would be in that case 16s. 9d.

EDWIN HENSHALL, Timber-merchant, Papanui, sworn and examined. (No. 43.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] I understand you are a timber-merchant at Papanui, about three miles from Christchurch?—Yes.

2. I shall be glad if you can assist us in the subject of our inquiry?—I do not know that I can say very much, as the subject seems to have been thoroughly threshed out from a merchant's point of view by the previous gentlemen who gave evidence before you. We are in business at Papanui, and we keep stocks there. I cannot say anything about the cost of felling. Nor can I speak of the cost of cutting at the mill. We are not interested in any mill. We get our supplies from the West Coast.

3. Will you state to the Commission how you get your supplies?—We get our supplies from the mills through the agent here.

4. Are there many agents in Christchurch attending to the West Coast millers?—I only know of two.

5. There may be more?—I could not say. I only know of two.

6. Will you name those two agents?—The West Coast Trading Company have an office in Christchurch, and there is also a Mr. Budd who handles timber here.

7. Those are the two agencies that you deal with?—I think Mr. Reese handles timber also. He was in partnership with Mr. Budd at one time, but they have dissolved partnership.

8. That makes three?—Yes.

9. Do you do much business direct with the millers through them?—The order goes direct to the miller through them. They forward the order on. We understand that it is to the convenience of the millers to have one representative, so that all orders can go forward in order and be executed.

10. How is the trade of Christchurch now compared with what it was two years ago?—It is very much less. Our experience is that there is much less trade being done at the present moment.

11. Less building trade?—Yes, less sales of timber.

12. That accounts for less building, I take it?—Yes.

13. Do you take any contracts for building, yourself?—If any one comes to us and wants a house built, we do it.

14. So that you are a builder as well as a timber-merchant?—Yes.

15. *Mr. Hanan.*] You are not interested in any sawmills?—No.

16. How do the timber-merchants in Christchurch who have no mills compete with those who have mills?—I do not know. You see there is one price set by the West Coast sawmillers. It really matters little whom you get the timber from; it is one price, I understand. Perhaps the man with a mill would have an advantage; he would be entitled to that to compensate him for his capital invested.

17. How long have you been in business here?—As a seller of timber, about six years.

18. Has your business increased during that time?—Yes, it increased rather rapidly up till a couple of years ago, but there has been no increase since then.

19. Does your last balance-sheet show a falling-off?—Yes.

20. What is the date of it?—The 31st March twelvemonths was our last. We have not completed our present one. We are working at it.

21. As regards expenses, comparing your balance-sheet with the previous balance-sheet, how do you stand with regard to increased expenses?—Do you mean the yard costs and so forth?

22. The expenses of carrying on your business?—They have been less during this last year.

23. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Does that mean that you have fewer hands?—Yes, and we have also had to economize. We have had to do a little paring on account of the state of the trade.

24. *Mr. Hanan.*] It is only within the last two years that you have found a falling-off in your business?—Yes, the last twelve months, strictly speaking. It has been more pronounced then.

25. Business has been fairly good with you, and there was really nothing to complain of up to the last twelve months?—No, nothing much to complain of.

26. Can you say that that remark applies to the timber-merchants so far as your knowledge goes?—I can only speak for ourselves.

27. Have you been importing any Oregon?—Yes. We have taken Oregon, with others. Cargoes come here, and we have taken some.

28. Have you taken a share of a shipment?—Yes.