

89. It is not done with the object of bringing it into competition with our native timber?—No, I do not think so.

90. *Mr. Barber.*] I understand you to say that you are opposed to a reduction on the duty on imported timber?—It is a matter I have never gone into, therefore I cannot really say whether I am opposed to it or not. It appears to me that the present duty is sufficient. I should say it is about a fair thing.

91. Your opinion is that that should be retained?—Yes. I do not think there will be very much more Oregon come forward. I do not know authoritatively, but I hear that the price of it is rising, and if it rises at the source of supply Oregon will not come into this market. It cannot be sold any cheaper than it is sold now, and if the price rises at the source of supply that will block it from being profitable to handle.

92. You said that you are a member of the association?—Yes.

93. Do you know whether the association has, as an association, decided to oppose the removal of the duty on imported timber?—No, I have heard no discussion on the matter whatever at any of the meetings.

94. Why do you, as a timber-merchant and builder, advocate the retention of the duty which imposes an additional 2s. on the price of timber to all the people who purchase it, and consequently makes the cost of building dearer, and therefore rents higher? What is your reason for advocating a policy such as that?—I have not gone into the matter, and therefore I do not strongly advocate it one way or the other; but I suppose our local men will require protecting. We do not know under what conditions the Oregon is cut. It may be cut by cheap labour, or under other conditions which give it an advantage. That is a matter I do not know much about.

95. Do you consider timber a manufactured article or a raw material?—I suppose it is partly manufactured when it has had a saw through it.

96. In that case, would you class wool, after it has been clipped off the sheep's back, as a manufactured article?—I could not say. I have seen a few sheep in the paddocks—that is all.

97. Do you believe that the 2s. duty on timber is responsible in many ways for the high rents which prevail throughout New Zealand at present? It helps to increase the cost of building, and consequently increases the rent to the working-man?—No, I do not think that has much to do with it. For instance, the scantling in an ordinary cottage would not amount to very much. In an ordinary six-roomed cottage there would not be more than 5,000 ft. of scantling all told, and it would not all be Oregon.

98. But it is not used only for scantling, but for flooring, sarking, lining?—Oregon is only useful for scantling; it is not a bit of good dressed. It would not be used for flooring or lining.

99. It would not be used for the lining of a house?—No, it is never used here except in framework.

100. *Mr. Arnold.*] If Oregon and other imported timbers are only used for scantling in connection with a house, then their importation could not do very much harm if they came in free?—They would compete to a certain extent.

101. Only to the extent of the scantlings?—Yes.

102. It is a mere bagatelle?—The scantlings would represent about 50 per cent.

103. In an ordinary five-roomed house the increase in the price of the timber would represent something like £18 to £20?—No, it would not.

104. You say that that evidence is wrong?—There is about from 10,000 ft. to 12,000 ft. of timber in an ordinary five-roomed house, and 10,000 ft. at 1s. increase is £5. If the whole of the house was built of Oregon an increase of 2s. in the duty would only amount to £10.

105. If the whole of the duty were removed it would make very little difference so far as the building was concerned?—It would be a very small item.

106. Have you any idea how many men are employed in the sawmills in New Zealand?—No.

107. Then, you have not the slightest idea how many men would be displaced by the importation of Oregon pine?—No, I could not say. I do not know how many men there are working in connection with the sawmilling industry.

108. Then, you have no idea which is the better for the Dominion—to displace the small number of men employed in the bush mills or to tax the whole of the community by an increase in the duty on Oregon?—No.

109. So that your evidence is quite valueless so far as that question is concerned?—Yes.

110. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] In regard to the business of a timber-merchant, am I right in presuming that the man in a large way of business has an advantage over the man in a small way of business?—Well, naturally his output would be larger. He would be able to effect economies in the handling of it, I should say.

111. And he could sell his timber at a cheaper rate than the small man?—I do not know. He would have to get a bigger plant; he would have to allow for interest on his larger stocks and plant, and that would perhaps counterbalance it.

112. But it is not natural that a man in a large way would be able to sell at a larger profit than the man in a small way?—Perhaps so in some instances, but there are higher wages paid in large firms sometimes than is the case with a man in a small way of business, and therefore it brings the selling-price of the article to about the same.

113. Who fixes the price in the association—the larger or the smaller man?—It is a mutual arrangement.

114. But the influence of the men in a large way of business is greater than that of the men in a small way?—No, I think it is equalised. I should not say that the big merchant has much to do in the matter of regulating the prices any more than any one else.

115. You buy your timber from the West Coast through the agent here?—Yes.

116. Is it a uniform price?—Yes.