

154. *Mr. Arnold.*] Do you say that, if it was necessary to discharge one-fourth of the hands in any particular mill, the capital would be lost?—I understood Mr. Field to suggest the shutting-up of the mill altogether.

155. That was not the question I asked you. I asked you the question as to a certain number of men being thrown out of work. Mr. Field is trying to minimise the reply I got from you. If the whole mill is shut down, do you say then the whole of the capital will be lost?—Not entirely. There must be some value attached to it.

156. What do you mean by "capital"?—Money expended on the plant and land.

157. Is that all the capital expended in a sawmilling business?—As I have said, I know nothing about the sawmilling business. I do not know the amount of capital required. We buy our timber from the mills, and are not interested in any mill in any shape or form, but if you discharge your hands there would be a loss of wages in the district.

158. Now, if you have a capital of £2,000, and you close your business, would you not use that capital for some other purpose?—You might not get £2,000 for your mill.

159. Again, with regard to the railway, do you suggest that if a certain portion of the milling labour that is done now ceased to be done, that the railway is going to suffer? Would there be a less consumption of timber in the Dominion?—Well, I should think that the railway in the district would suffer to the extent of the loss of freight on the timber it previously carried.

160. But, then, the Dominion is the proprietor of the railways?—But America's timber comes into our ports, and there is not much railway freight on it.

161. You know there is an extra railway freight on the imported timber?—Yes.

162. And therefore if there was the same consumption there would be a gain and not a loss?—It cannot be a gain if the Oregon comes into a port and is not carried on the railway. I take it that nearly all the Oregon that comes to this country goes to the four large centres, and there would not be much railage on the stuff that goes to three of them. I do not think there is much Oregon used in the country districts.

163. But the suggestion is that if the duty were taken off it would be used, and if it were used would not the railway suffer in consequence?—I think the railway would suffer the same because, as I pointed out, the Oregon comes into the ports, and there must be a greater percentage of Oregon used in the cities than in the country.

164. Why not in the country?—In the first place, there is not so much work done in the country as in the cities.

165. At the present time there is a certain revenue derived from the local scantling, and the suggestion is that if the imported scantling is to be used instead, would it not have to go into the whole of the buildings wherever they were?—Certainly, if we do not use our own article we shall have to use the other.

166. Therefore the argument that the railway is to lose the revenue is a bogus argument?—Well, I should say the railway must get a good deal of revenue from the bush sawmills, because there are millions of feet of timber carried from the bush sawmills to the port of shipment. The mills are getting further back, and there must be railage paid on that timber from the sawmill to the boat, and, seeing that such a large proportion of the timber comes from the coast to this market, I should take it that the Westland railways would suffer considerably if they lost all their timber trade.

167. But would they lose it all? You do not suggest that, do you?—I am not suggesting anything. When you go into statistics and what might happen I have nothing to say, because I am not an authority on it.

168. You admit that Oregon pays a heavier freight on the railway than the local timber?—Yes, they pay a little more on it, but I am not certain.

169. *Mr. Stallworthy.*] What is the relative proportion of the West Coast timber you buy at 9s. 6d. as compared with the 8s. 6d.?—About 50 per cent.—about half of each.

170. *Mr. Field.*] When I asked you about the sawmiller's capital being lost, you assumed the capital actually invested in the business; you did not think I meant his outside capital?—I took it that you meant the money spent in his mill and bush.

171. *Mr. Mander.*] Supposing Oregon timber displaced the rimu timber in the principal towns of New Zealand, would that not prevent the country millers from sending their timber into those principal towns?—If the duty on Oregon pine was reduced by 2s, I do not see how rimu could compete in the cities.

172. But rimu could compete in the country in consequence of the extra freight put on Oregon pine?—Yes, I should think so.

173. *Mr. Morris.*] As a builder and timber-merchant, can you say what percentage of the timber you get from the mills is fit for dressing and manufacturing purposes?—About fifty per cent., roughly speaking.

174. *Mr. Barber.*] With regard to the question of railway freight, have you any idea whether or not there is any profit made out of carrying timber on the railways?—That is not for me to say. I do not know whether they get a profit out of it or not.

175. Do you say the Dominion is going to have a very heavy loss through not having this timber to carry?—I do not think it would be a very heavy loss. I should say it is reasonable to assume that it must lose something if there is no rimu carried on the railways.

176. And when the Government, for the purpose of helping the industry, carry it at a very low rate, you do not know whether they are carrying it at a loss?—I do not think they would carry it at a loss.

177. *Mr. Hanan.*] Can you tell us if the timber-merchants in Christchurch have increased in number during the last twenty-five years?—I think there are one or two more in the town.