

10. This association does not interfere with tendering for work?—Not in the least.

11. Each member is a free agent?—He is a free agent when tendering for a job.

12. *Mr. Field.*] Have you any complaint to make about the price you pay for timber?—Personally I have no cause to complain, as far as that goes. It is a recognised fact, I think, amongst builders that if they have to pay a high rate for their timber and are working on a certain basis on the cost of the building, they lose nothing by it.

13. Knowing what you do about the matter, do you personally think the timber-merchants are getting too much?—Of course, you might say it may be purchased cheaper.

14. Some lines cheaper and some lines dearer?—Yes.

15. Taking it all through, is it a fair price?—On the average there is nothing to complain of. The timber-merchant has always to keep a certain amount of stock on hand to supply the demand.

16. Could you give the Commission any idea as to how much timber has gone up in price in the last ten years? Have you been here ten years?—Yes, fifteen years.

17. Take the last ten years. You know that timber has gone up all over the world, of course?—Yes. I think, taking it right through, it would average 15 per cent. That is, over ten years.

18. What is Oregon pine used chiefly for here?—Principally for joists, beams, and truss-work, and all like that—big timbers. Latterly it has also been used for lathing for plaster-work. It is far preferable to kauri in that respect.

19. Have you seen it used for framing?—Yes.

20. The framing of an ordinary building?—Yes. I had eleven years' experience in Victoria, and the same thing applies there. You might say they have their ordinary building-timber, which is used similarly to our red-pine here for the common class of cottage-work, but principally Oregon is used for the better class of buildings—for framework and so on.

21. If Oregon were not here, rimu would be used for that purpose?—Yes. The greatest trouble we have as regards the rimu is that we cannot get sufficient stocks in hand for the supply of what you might call thoroughly seasoned timber. I heard Mr. Goss and several of the timber-merchants on this point. The builders' idea of seasoned timber and the merchants' idea are two different things.

22. What is it, precisely, that you have to complain of, then?—That you cannot get it seasoned as you would like it seasoned. The timber does not stand a sufficient time to season. If the Commission took the trouble to walk round the different yards in Christchurch they would find that most of the timber is stacked out, exposed to the hot wind and sun. Necessarily that involves a great deal of waste.

23. That is the loss of the timber-merchant?—Yes.

24. While so stacked, of course, it is seasoning?—Yes, to a certain extent.

25. When the merchants charge you—as I understand some of them do charge—2s. a hundred feet extra for seasoned timber, do they not give you seasoned timber?—It is not always what you would call seasoned timber. It might have been in stack three, four, or five months—sometimes less if there has been a run on particular lines.

26. Is not that sufficient for ordinary framing and ordinary boards if properly stacked?—No, I do not think so. I consider that with most of the New Zealand timbers it requires from eight to nine months. The best time of the year for seasoning timber is the winter, when it gets the frost. The frost draws the sap out better than the north-westerns.

27. Do you mean to say that if you take any New Zealand timber, in small pieces, that has been stacked for four months, you cannot rely on that?—No, you cannot. I had an experience some nine years ago with black-pine. It was taken out of a building that had been up here for forty years. It was some heavy beams—12 in. beams. It was taken out, and I cut it up for joiners' work—for panelling—and after that had been put through the mill again and left to stand and was glued up, it shrank even then. That was the old Lane's mill. That is one of the greatest drawbacks with New Zealand timber—we can never rely on it.

28. Is there a serious result arising from using timber that has been stacked four months?—If the sap is not thoroughly out of it and it is placed in a position where the air does not get at it, it rots quicker.

29. It is not that it opens at the joints?—No. Often enough it will twist and warp, especially if it is for plaster-work. For instance, if it is for the first floor of a building where the ceiling underneath is plastered, if the joists are not thoroughly dry, directly the atmosphere makes itself felt the timber begins to shrink and the plaster to crack. Of course, it is put down to the unseasoned timber that is used.

30. If timber has been stacked for nine months, what would be a fair additional price to pay for it? It is rather an expensive matter, I suppose?—Yes, most decidedly. There is another thing. Most of the timber is felled at the wrong time of the year. Timber is felled all the year round.

31. You say that it ought to be felled in the winter-time?—Yes. From the reports we have, if it is felled then and is left lying before it is cut, the sap gets out of it quicker. For special-order stuff we have to send the order away, and get the timber and use it straight away. We can never rely on going to any yard in Christchurch and ordering a sufficient quantity of joists and putting them into the job next week.

32. Do you think it makes as much difference in the case of our evergreen trees as in the case of the trees in the Old Land that shed their leaves in the autumn? Do you not think there is more sap going up in the spring, when the trees are budding, than is the case with the evergreens?—I do not think so.

33. Has Oregon been coming in in large quantities here during the last year?—In fairly large quantities, I think, this last twelve months. Of course, there is a slump in the American market, and the price of Oregon went down; and the freights, I think, were reduced on Oregon coming here.