

62. But supposing you wanted a hundred 12 by 4 in heart of rimu, could you get them in Christchurch?—No.

63. Do you think you could get them more quickly in heart from the mills?—In perhaps six or eight weeks' time.

64. And in the meantime operations would be stopped?—Yes, if you wanted them immediately.

65. If stocks of Oregon were held there would be no difficulty in getting an order like that?—No.

66. Do you not think that is an advantage to the trade and also to the colony?—Yes. I had that experience this time last year. A warehouse was burnt, but the walls were perfectly sound, and a new roof had to go on. It was six weeks after signing the contract before I had a stock landed on the ground. An order had to be sent away specially to get the tie-beams for the roof. After that Oregon came in.

67. Do you think there would have been anything said about Oregon if it had not been for this depression? Would not the builders have rejoiced if they could have got Oregon?—I do not think there would have been anything said myself as far as my experience goes, and I do not think the merchants are losing anything on the Oregon. In fact, I think they are making more on Oregon than on red-pine at the present time.

68. *Mr. Clarke.*] With regard to the retail price, the commonly accepted retail price of sawn timber here is—what?—Fourteen shillings and sixpence, less a discount.

69. But does not that represent the price of only a portion of the timber; for instance, is there not an increased price for timber over a certain width?—Yes.

70. How much a hundred feet for the first?—I have not a price-list with me, but as far as I recollect now it has increased in price up to 19 in. in width.

71. And does the price go on increasing as the width increases?—Yes.

72. And there is a further increase over a given length?—Yes. Over 22 ft. it is 6d. a hundred feet extra per foot in length.

73. Further than that, over and above your rough-timber price, you have a price for timber suitable for dressing-lines—how much is that?—I think it is 2s. a hundred extra for dressing.

74. Is not a large quantity of that used in building operations?—Yes, for ordinary building you might say there is more than one-half of it dressed timber.

75. Then, in addition, there is a further price for timber that is filleted?—Yes, that is another shilling, I think.

76. Is it not 2s. for what they call seasoned timber?—All stripped timbers selected for dressing up to 12 in. is 18s.

77. So that quoting 14s. 6d. per hundred as the market price of timber conveys a very poor idea of the actual cost of the timber used in that case?—That is quite so.

78. In regard to the necessity of having foreign timbers, assuming you had an urgent order for a building for temporary purposes requiring a large number of not long lengths, but moderately long lengths, could you procure them at short notice?—I should say that from my experience it would have to go through as a special order. None of the merchants care to stock those large sizes of ordinary building red-pine for that particular purpose.

79. Then, you do not agree with the statement which would imply that any builder can get anything he wants in the building trade in Christchurch at short notice?—Certainly not.

80. *Mr. Morris.*] This question of seasoned timber seems to be a very serious one in Christchurch?—Yes.

81. Have you any experience of artificially seasoned timber?—No, I cannot say I have. There is no such process in Christchurch as far as I know. I have seen artificially seasoned timber in Melbourne, but have not had any experience in using it.

82. How does it stand after being put through the process?—I could not say.

83. We were told yesterday that the artificial process generally deteriorated the material?—I have seen the process, and I should say it would have that tendency. It is principally steamed.

84. Do you consider the samples of wood you have shown us here a good class of wood for finishing-work in buildings?—For ordinary housebuilding purposes I consider it is the average class we always get.

85. In regard to the question of big joists and beams, is it not usual for a builder when he gets a job to order those things right off the reel: he does not wait till he wants to use them?—No, the orders have to be sent straight away.

86. And in most cases they get them on the ground before they are required?—Yes.

87. But not sufficiently long to season?—No.

88. There is really not much in regard to the question of having to wait long for big joists?—There is this in it: the timber when you get it is not seasoned. Very often we get it on the jobs in such a condition that men have remarked that they have heard the birds singing in it.

89. We have heard that Oregon is not seasoned, too?—That is a mistake. I have had a good deal of experience in Oregon.

90. How long do you think it would take to season an Oregon beam, say, 14 in. square?—Probably it might take two years.

91. And do you think the timber that comes here should be kept in the stack for two years?—The sap is virtually out of the log days before it is milled.

92. I understood that the timber in many cases goes straight off the saw on to the ship?—That is different to what I have heard. When being brought down from the mill it is generally done by water carriage, and that has a tendency, even if the timber is long in the water, to take the sap out of it. The water will gradually draw the sap out of the timber. The experience we have is that if you have unseasoned timber, especially colonial timber, it will very soon show itself.