

152. Then, it would be very little benefit in that case. Do you think it honest, when a combination takes place in the timber business, or in any other business, and it is arranged to allow a certain discount to builders, for one or two members of that association to allow a higher discount in order to get the trade?—You ask me in reference to the timber-merchants?

153. Yes. They allow now $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. discount: in order to secure trade from other members of the association do you think it would be fair for some to allow $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. discount?—No, it would not be honest to do that. They should be true to their association.

154. *Mr. EU.*] You do not agree with the statement of the timber-merchants that there is an abundance of seasoned timber always to be obtained in Christchurch?—No, I do not agree with it at all.

155. I may say that this scarcity of seasoned timber was also complained of in both Invercargill and Dunedin. Now, from your experience as a builder, is a house built of seasoned timber of more value to the person having it erected than if it were built of unseasoned timber?—Certainly, and the amount of difference in the cost would be trifling—not more than £10 on a five-roomed cottage. It would be 2s. per hundred feet extra, and that would only mean on the dressing-lines, as the ordinary rough stuff would only be 1s. extra.

156. It would be less than £10 extra?—Yes—about £7 10s. The public would be gainers, because houses so built would last much longer. There would be a distinct gain from a national standpoint.

157. Do you think that the matter of not being able to obtain seasoned timber is due to the trees being cut at the wrong season of the year?—I think so.

158. If a sawmiller in the Riverton district told me, as he did, that beech cut in the winter-time was not so liable to warp and shrink or split as beech cut in the summer-time, would he be saying what was correct?—I think so.

159. You have already told us that you do not approve of a heavier duty being put on Oregon?—I would allow the duty to remain as it is. It would not hurt if it were taken off the larger sizes.

160. If any alteration was made, it should be taken off the larger sizes?—That is my opinion. It would be a greater benefit to the consumer to take the duty off the larger sizes and lengths.

161. With regard to prices, have they advanced materially lately on dressed lines?—There has been a slight increase lately in these last price lists on dressed lines and a small reduction on the rough lines.

162. According to the Christchurch price list, rusticated red-pine boards have been sold here for £1 0s. 6d.?—That is so.

163. In Dunedin, 16s. 6d., being a difference of 4s.?—Yes.

164. Do you consider that the difference in the price of timber justifies a difference of 4s. per hundred feet?—As far as Christchurch is concerned, and as far as the timber-merchants are concerned, they do more as regards having dried timber, such as rusticated and flooring, than the other centres do.

165. It is only fair for me to say that the 16s. 6d. priced timber is not seasoned?—That is so far as Dunedin is concerned.

166. There is still a difference of 2s.?—Yes.

167. Are there any different conditions? The labour is about the same. Can you explain why there should be such a difference?—There is extra handling in connection with dried timber. After it is run through the mill it has to be stacked again and put away. There is a certain amount of extra handling.

168. With regard to jarrah, has it advanced a little in price?—Yes, I think it has.

169. You were able to obtain it twelve months ago at less than black-pine?—Yes, a little under black-pine.

170. Are you aware of any change having taken place in the management or ownership of the Jarrah Supply Company in Christchurch?—Yes. I believe the present company is a local company which bought out that Western Australian Millers' Company.

171. With that the price advanced?—I cannot say for why.

172. The price was advanced?—Yes.

173. You do not know whether it was due to the rise of the price of jarrah in Australia?—I could not say.

174. With regard to the supply of timber, will the millers on the Coast or down south supply any builder in Christchurch with a line of timber should he want it?—Yes, I think so.

175. Without going through a merchant?—There are some mills that you can get a supply from.

176. Now, with regard to the supply of timber generally, you have had a lot of experience as a builder, and you know the needs of the country: are imported timbers essential to the building operations of this town—that is, where New Zealand timbers cannot well take the place of them?—There are no timbers required as essential if we had a sufficient supply of our own. We have plenty of timber here. For myself, I consider we have timber equal to Baltic in the kauri, or even in totara, for certain classes of joiners' work outside. We pay £2 2s. for Baltic, and those timbers if properly grown and selected are quite equal to any of the imported timbers.

177. That is, kauri and totara are quite equal to any of the imported timbers if properly sorted and seasoned?—Yes, that is so. Because they are not properly sorted and seasoned you cannot rely on them. They would command a better position in the market if they were properly treated before they passed into the hands of the builder.

178. In view of the fact that kauri is one of the best timbers in the world for general purposes, and is needed by the people of New Zealand, do you think it desirable that we should place an export duty on it with the object of preserving it for our own needs?—Well, it is an open question.