

merchants here are giving you the timber at 6d. less than entitled to when it is worked out?—That is so.

203. *Mr. Morris.*] You told us you believed that some merchants were giving preferential discounts?—That is so.

204. Have you any personal knowledge of this matter, or is it only hearsay?—I have knowledge myself of it personally.

205. You know it to be a fact, then?—Yes.

WILLIAM ALLEN JEWELL, Joinery-works, Christchurch, sworn and examined. (No. 46.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] We wish to get some evidence from you to assist the Commission in the questions enumerated here?—I am conversant with some of them. I am a joiner and cabinet-worker.

2. You are a builder?—No.

3. Then you are concerned most with the finer timbers?—Yes.

4. Will you tell the Commission of any special features in respect to timbers used by you which might be of value to them in the inquiry, together with any particulars as to your business generally, the employment of labour, the position of the retailer, manufacturer, &c.?—There has always been trouble with regard to the seasoning of timber, such as kauri and red-pine. Sometimes we have been able to get seasoned timber, whilst at other times there has been great difficulty in getting it. With regard to prices, freight, railage, &c., I have not gone into that fully, but I have seen several statements about it. In furniture we use kauri chiefly, and most furniture is now stained to imitate walnut. We invariably use kauri unless it is in the cheapest lines. A great deal of furniture manufactured now is made of red-pine, or rimu, but this is generally put into the auction-rooms. I consider these woods very unsuitable for furniture. They do not stand well. My experience of red-pine is that you may have had it for years, and then it will go.

5. You mean it will twist?—Yes, twist. The same thing applies to my little knowledge of building. It is all right whilst wet, but rimu twists very much in drying; and when used on a plastered wall the walls very often go to pieces, probably twelve months after the work is completed. We have one trouble with regard to kauri. We are supposed to get in New Zealand first, second, and third classes, but we only get one quality in Christchurch at the present time.

6. Do you know which of the qualities you do get?—No, I do not.

7. It would be the third quality you get?—Sometimes.

8. But you said just now that you only get the one quality here?—Yes.

9. My question was whether you knew which of the three qualities you did get?—Lately we have been getting a very good quality, but some months ago it was a hard matter to get a good quality.

10. *Mr. Ell.*] What you mean is that it is all called first-class?—Yes; it is paid for as first-class. At the same time we have circulars sent from Melbourne quoting us for first, second, and third quality of kauri. Of course, I have not had ocular demonstration with regard to that; I only know from the price-lists, and from firms in Melbourne and Sydney supplying first, second, and third qualities of New Zealand kauri. Of course, the kauri at the present time is very high, and according to those who are, as we say, "in the know," it will only be a few years when we shall not be able to get any kauri at all. Then I should like to know what we are going to use in New Zealand to take its place, because rimu is not suitable.

11. You say that kauri is the most valuable timber that you have for cabinetmaking purposes?—Of the colonial timbers.

12. How does that compare in price with the cheapest imported timbers that are equally suitable?—Favourably.

13. The price is favourable to kauri?—The price is favourable to kauri—that is, if you got imported timber suitable for furniture you would have to pay in many cases more. I have got oak in. Good kauri you cannot reckon less than, roughly, 4d. a superficial foot. I got oak here, kiln-dried, from America last week, and it did not run me into more than 6d.

14. About 50 per cent. increase if you could not obtain kauri?—Yes. Oak would not suit for stained work, but there are other woods used in America and England that are very cheap there, but they would cost as much as kauri to land here, probably more.

15. So that the effect on the general public would be, if the kauri-supply were depleted entirely, to advance the cost of furniture?—Under the present tariff?

16. Taking existing conditions?—Yes.

17. That being the case, and with the knowledge you have that a large number of people are employed in the trade in this country at good wages, and that you are able to supply cheap and good furniture to the people—furniture that will last—do you not think it would be an extremely wise thing on the part of the Government if certain provision was made for the future needs of these woodworking industries to preserve our supply of kauri for such purposes?—Yes, I have thought so for many years.

18. You think it would be the duty of the Government to make some provision for the future needs of these woodworking industries?—I think, myself, in view of the Kauri Syndicate and what Australia is able to get from New Zealand, that we ought to be protected in that way.

19. Seeing that we are not growing in our forests any timbers that are equally suitable for this work, and in view of the fact that those trees will not mature for forty years at the very earliest, what are we going to do in the meantime if we do not make some provision for the supply of native timbers for our industries?—I really do not know.

20. As regards beech, or birch as it is called here, have you used that at all?—We use a quantity of it.