

20. What is your opinion with regard to planting these gum lands with pines of a commercial value?—It would depend on the price of labour. If you utilized prison labour it might work out all right, but with free labour at its present price it would never pay. You could import your timber very much cheaper.

21. But supposing other countries are in the same predicament as ourselves, and have no timber to spare for us to import, what then?—That will not be in your time or in mine. There is plenty of timber in Siberia, and it is being imported into Melbourne now. Vast forests are being opened up there, while in the Pacific islands there is good timber. I submit you will be able to import timber very much cheaper than you can produce it here, and you only need to grow forests for climatic reasons.

22. I suppose you know that not only here but in other parts of the world, including Siberia, the estimated timber-supplies are very much in doubt?—We have no difficulty in getting timber, and foreign agents are continually pressing us for orders.

23. What about the future? Do you not think it would be a wise policy to be prepared with local supplies, so as not to have to depend on countries we might go to war with?—If you are going to pay two and three times the value of the timber it would not be worth producing it here.

WILLIAM ARTHUR CUMMING sworn and examined. (No. 51.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I believe you are the president of the Auckland Branch of the Institute of Architects?—Yes.

2. Could you tell the Commission the comparative price of building, say, a six-roomed house in timber and in permanent materials such as brick, stone, or ferro-concrete?—The better reply would be that the price to-day in brickwork would be about from 19 to 20 per cent. more than it would be in timber, taking the question on broad lines without regard to any special-sized house.

3. How would the price in ferro-concrete compare with that in brickwork?—The difference would be comparatively trifling in the case of a small job, as the amount of labour involved in fixing up the false-work is inconsiderable.

4. I suppose the timber used in that case would be inferior?—It is not necessary that it should be of a durable nature for false-work, and *Pinus insignis* lends itself extremely well to such a purpose.

5. Can timber used for false-work in the case of a concrete building be used over again?—There is always a tremendous lot of waste on account of the odd lengths required for the frames and moulds, and only a very small percentage may be used again.

6. In the event of the price of timber going still higher, of course the margin between the price of the building in wood and the one in permanent materials would lessen until it would be cheaper to build in permanent materials than in wood?—Providing there is no corresponding sympathetic rise in the cost of the permanent materials, such as brick, lime, and cement.

7. Do you think it is probable there will be such a sympathetic rise?—One can only speak from the experience of the past. Bricks have gone up considerably in price of late years. I may say that this inquiry has caught me quite unprepared, and if you will formulate questions as to the information you require we will call a meeting of the Institute and be only too pleased to supply the particulars the Commission wants.

8. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Do you think the time is fast approaching when the present supply of timber here will run out?—I think the day is very far distant. There are so many uses in connection with a building to which timber can be applied, and the other methods, such as steel for sashes and frames, becomes very expensive. Such material may be suitable in a building like the Post-office here, where cost is of very little importance, but private individuals would find it beyond their reach.

9. *Mr. Clarke.*] Does it not appear rather absurd to talk of getting substitutes when we can get the original itself?—It is acknowledged all over the world that the timber-supply is getting less, but it would seem that the energy and ingenuity of man would be capable of designing some means of meeting the demand. At present there is a material on the market which when it is used looks like timber, and it is used for lining. Nothing, however, can replace, as far as the structure is concerned, the timber in a wooden building.

10. Are you aware that, notwithstanding the supposed substitutes and other things being used in place of wood, in reality the actual consumption *per capita* is increasing throughout the civilized world?—I have heard so.

11. Can you refer us to any official data on the question?—No; I have seen it in a magazine.

12. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Is timber being used to a greater or lesser extent for building purposes than it was twenty years ago?—Taking Auckland, the consumption of timber in the city is considerably less per head on account of the brick area. Buildings in that area have to be replaced in brick.

13. *Mr. Clarke.*] But the buildings that are being pulled down now are being replaced by others ten times as big?—Yes, and the building that would take ten times as much wood as the present one it is replacing would also accommodate ten times as many people.

14. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to add anything?—I only wish to say, on the question of tree-planting, that if it is decided to introduce an extensive scheme of planting the locality planted should be as near the market as possible, and the question of the temperature and climatic conditions under which the trees should be raised should be carefully studied, in order that good, durable timber can be produced. My reason for urging the latter consideration particularly is that an oak, which I am informed was planted in Government House grounds here