

tional cost for kauri also is very great. We want the long lengths for tie-beams. One line of wrought weatherboards I complained of only three months ago. It was charged up at £1 8s. a hundred. No wonder our villa residences are all stopped, and carpenters are walking about.

4. How would building in permanent material compare with wood?—About 30 to 40 per cent. higher.

5. As the price of timber advances do you think more buildings will be erected in permanent materials?—In our climate there is nothing to beat the large wooden villa. Properly built it will last fifty years, as some of the old buildings are doing now. Forty years ago they used nothing but heart timber; now either a medium kauri or O.B. rimu. I am living in a house thirty years old, which is just as good as the day I built it, and it will last another twenty years. Give me a good wooden building on a concrete or brick foundation, with slate roof, and you have a house that will last a lifetime.

6. Are there houses such as I describe now being built of brick or concrete?—Yes, and that means plastering inside, adding 50 per cent. to the cost. In using Oregon pine we can plaster with some security; not so in the case of kauri, on account of shrinkage at the ends.

7. Is the Oregon pine as durable as our good kauri?—Years ago we used a lot of Oregon pine, and about 1860 a cottage was built here of that timber, and it is perfectly sound to-day. In Durham Street, also, a store was erected in the early "sixties" of Oregon, and the joists are just as good to-day as when they were put in.

8. How would the insurance on a wooden building compare with that on one of permanent materials?—There is a considerable difference. At the same time it is generally supposed that a brick building will not burn. There are about ten thousand villas in and around Auckland, and how few are burnt in twelve months? The heavy insurance losses are in connection with brick buildings.

9. The companies must consider wood a worse risk, or else their rates would be lower?—A brick building is a much lower risk—6s. as against 12s. or 14s. for wood.

10. Have you had any experience with *Pinus insignis* timber?—None whatever.

11. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do you think the Oregon pine now coming in as good as that imported some years ago?—I could not say with any confidence, but my impression is that it is not as good as we got in the "sixties."

12. Have you had any experience of tawa or matai as a building-timber?—No; ten years ago we had plenty of kauri, and now we cannot get heart of rimu.

13. *Mr. Clarke.*] Do you not think it would be wise to immediately start planting in view of the difficulty of getting timber now?—Yes, if you plant quick-growing trees.

14. Do you not think our native forests are practically at an end, or within reasonable distance of it?—In another ten years the kauri will be pretty well wiped out.

15. Would you favour a proposal to retain the balance of the millable kauri in New Zealand for the use of this Dominion solely?—It is very deplorable that if we want a bit of kauri for our own use we cannot get it, while shiploads have been taken away of large fitches—all heart. What little we are able to get is sap—second-class stuff.

16. And that process is still going on to-day?—Yes. It is not doing New Zealand any good to have all its kauri going away overseas.

17. Then you consider it would be a wise policy to retain it here for our own use?—I think so. The exportation of kauri ought to have been stopped many years ago, but I understand the high price locally has stopped the exportation a lot.

18. Do you remember that during the Timber Commission evidence was given that rimu could only be depended on to produce from 7 to 10 per cent. of heart timber?—Certainly.

19. In the case of the other timbers we know that when the kauri is worked out we must of necessity depend very largely on timber which is not heart?—That is correct. If we want heart of rimu now we have to give a fancy price, because the heart is selected for the cabinetmakers.

20. Then if we want good strong timbers in the near future is it not the duty of the country to immediately carry on a large system of planting and afforestation?—That is a question of policy; but it is a great shame to see our timber going away, and we cannot get a stick.

21. Independently of the question of policy, do you not consider it is a matter of national necessity to start and replant largely?—Yes, but there is another side to the matter. Supposing you have from 2,000 to 3,000 acres of land of good quality, it would not be advisable to plant that area with trees when butter-fat would be more productive. Dairying is better than trees.

22. Assuming we have areas not fit for dairying, but which would grow trees, would it not be as well to plant them?—We have not those areas in the Province of Auckland.

23. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] What areas?—Areas that we can say are valueless excepting for planting trees.

24. *Dr. Cockayne.*] What would it cost to turn the waste gum lands into lands yielding butter-fat?—That is too difficult a question to answer. It would be only the gum lands you could plant with any chance of making the venture profitable. The gum lands look very poor, but I built a house in Union Street, and you cannot imagine anywhere a worse bit of clay soil than there is in that district, and before very long I had a garden there which could be worked by the spade and could not be beaten in the district. Gum land, if properly drained, will grow anything, especially fruit.

25. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do you advise any one with capital to take up fruitgrowing on those lands?—There is a great future before the north in regard to fruitgrowing.

26. *Mr. Clarke.*] Would not the proposed plantations on such land act as a protection to the gullies which could be used for fruitgrowing?—Yes. I have seen paddocks up north on the gum lands with good grass on them.