

128. Do you think that rimu could compete successfully, in point of price and in point of quality, with Oregon in big lengths?—No. I think the price of Oregon will always be less than rimu, in long lengths.

129. Then there is something to be said in favour of using long lengths of Oregon. We have got to consider the consumer in the question of prices?—Yes, but the quantity used in those lengths is so small that I think the price hardly enters into consideration.

130. What do you find Oregon affecting most—your ordinary building-timber?—Ordinary building-sizes—framing.

131. You have no difficulty in selling your first-class rimu—heart rimu?—No.

132. You are not surprised to find that millers throughout the country generally are complaining that their stocks of second-class are increasing owing to the importation of Oregon?—No.

133. You are aware that the millers have offered to mill at a price to fixed by the Crown, as one solution of the difficulty?—Yes, I understand they made that offer.

134. Have you any idea what duty we are charging at present on, say, boots imported from America?—I believe it is something over 33 per cent.

135. Would you be surprised to know that it is over 50 per cent.?—No.

136. You are aware that America is charging a very big rate on our products?—Yes.

137. Do you think that a country, in considering its tariff, should be influenced by super-sensitiveness as to what other countries might think about it?—Not in the least.

138. Do other countries look at it in that light when putting duties on the things we produce?—Not in the least.

139. You are aware that Queensland came very near to putting a duty on our white-pine?—That is so.

140. Are you aware that Australia has put a duty of 2s. 6d. a hundred on beech timber?—I understand that to be the case.

141. And this had the effect of shutting up mills that had been erected for milling beech?—Yes.

142. You think it a fair thing to protect the timber industry?—I think so.

143. Do you see anything in the argument that we should be guided by a system of exchange? Do you think it a true exchange to send away 100 ft. of kauri to Australia and take 200 ft. of Oregon from the United States—do you see any exchange in that?—No.

144. Do you not think it better for us to be exporting as much as we possibly can and keeping our gold here as much as we can?—I think that is the right policy.

145. *Mr. Leyland.*] How long has your firm been established in business as timber-merchants and sawmillers?—Nearly twenty years.

146. I think your firm started in a small way at Otorohanga?—Yes.

147. And gradually built up a connection in the Waikato and the King-country?—That is so.

148. I suppose you would not suggest that those in the trade are wrong in forming the opinion that your business has been exceptionally well managed? You will not fall out with that opinion?—I am not likely to.

149. Yet you have found that it has taken years of great care and close and persistent application to make your business a success?—Yes, we have.

150. A few years ago your firm was the only firm in business in the sawmilling line in the King-country?—They were the first in the King-country.

151. A short time ago there were no others?—Seven or eight years ago.

152. Then there suddenly came a rush, and quite a number of new mills were erected: is that not so?—That is so.

153. And these new competitors of yours took a bush often at a considerable distance from the railway, did they not?—Some of them. Some took bushes close to the railway.

154. And they also had to pay very heavy royalties as compared with yours?—Not all of them. Some pay less than ours, I think.

155. Anyhow, when they went up there, knowing the conditions under which they were going to work, did you anticipate success or failure for these people?—In the state of the market then, there was room for them all.

156. Is it not a fact that nearly all of them have found themselves in difficulties?—That is so.

157. Did this not come about prior to the direct importation of Oregon pine?—To some extent, yes.

158. Then, it is not fair to blame Oregon pine for that?—I do not think any one does.

159. Oregon pine seems to have been made a peg upon which they might hang an excuse?—I think Oregon pine has affected the market to some extent, and made the difficulties greater.

160. In a general way you have admitted that they were in difficulties before the Oregon pine came here?—I think the difficulties had commenced.

161. In Auckland Oregon pine is not competing in price with ordinary building-rimu, is it?—I have no actual knowledge of what Oregon pine is being sold at in Auckland.

162. You say that every foot of Oregon pine imported is decreasing the earning-power of the worker?—Yes.

163. You are aware, of course, that it has not affected the kauri industry—the kauri-workers are all as busy as they were?—I could not say.

164. Perhaps you are aware that it has enabled kauri-workers to work when they have been short of kauri logs?—No, I am not aware of that.

165. The recutting and manipulating of Oregon gives a considerable amount of employment?—Not nearly so much as the New Zealand timbers would give for the same quantity.

166. So, to that extent, where it has replaced kauri, every foot imported has not decreased the earning-power of the worker?—It has decreased the earning-power of the working-man to the extent I mentioned, less the cost of the recutting of the Oregon in Auckland.