

railways. The Baltic and Oregon timbers are very much lighter than ours, and we could not compete with the Johannesburg market. But they are quite satisfied with the timber.

1832. But, being carried dead-weight such enormous distances, the difference between the specific gravity of other timbers and ours put us out of the market?—Yes.

1833. With regard to the export to Australia?—We have a very large market there; more than we can supply—white-pine especially.

1834. Are you sending any there now?—All we can get in the district; we are not cutting so much as we used to.

1835. How is that?—One reason is that a few years ago we were cutting a very large quantity of white-pine, and the market got rather overstocked in Melbourne and Sydney, with the result that the merchants there began to find fault with it and lower the price. The result was that we lost a considerable sum of money on several cargoes, and several other mills started cutting white-pine. The market has got better now. We have got the price up by 8d. a hundred. But it depends on the Auckland people, because they are sending a larger quantity.

1836. You have markets in Australia at the present time which at any time you can supply if you think proper?—Yes, as far as white-pine is concerned.

1837. *Mr. Graham.*] You stated that you considered the population of Greymouth had considerably increased?—It is increasing.

1838. And, as evidence of that, you said the buildings were increasing rapidly?—Yes.

1839. Have you any idea of the number of new buildings erected within the last five years in Greymouth?—No; but I have a very good return by knowing the quantity of timber used in Greymouth per annum for the last few years, and I know by the increase of timber that there must be an increase in the number of houses. The Greymouth local trade—that is, the average—was 600,000 ft. per annum from 1890 to 1895; 1896, 752,000 ft.; 1897, 900,000 ft.; 1898, 1,241,000 ft.; 1899, 1,132,000 ft.; 1900, 1,714,000 ft.; and this year it will be greater still.

1840. And you have reason to believe that the whole of the timber has been used in the local building trade?—Yes; you must understand this is not all the timber used in Greymouth, but our firm are the principal suppliers of Greymouth.

1841. That means only what has been supplied by your firm?—Yes; but, as we supply nine-tenths of it, you may take that as an indication of the progress.

1842. If we added about one-tenth to those quantities, that would show the increase in the building?—Yes.

1843. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us an idea of the quantity of timber used in the construction of a cottage such as is occupied by working-men generally—say, a five- or six-roomed cottage?—Not from memory; I will write you a letter giving you the information.

1844. *Dr. Findlay.*] You were a contractor on the Midland Railway line: can you tell us whether, in 1891, a large number of men were employed in the construction of the line?—Yes.

1845. Can you give me any idea of the total number of men employed?—We employed from three hundred and fifty to four hundred men.

1846. How many would you add to that number?—Of course, there were other contracts going on besides ours.

1847. Would you double the number?—Yes, I should say so.

1848. That would give us about six hundred men?—Yes.

1849. And they, with their wives and families, might be put down at—what?—About three thousand.

1850. Would any number of the men have their wives and families in Greymouth?—Most of the men lived in their own huts along the line, but some would have their homes in Greymouth.

1851. Now, in 1896, I understand you can tell me whether the operations of the Midland Railway practically ceased?—Yes.

1852. So that a large number of men employed in 1891 were not employed in 1896 in railway construction?—They went away.

1853. So you would expect the census returns of 1891 to be considerably in excess of the census returns of 1896?—Yes, for the country districts.

1854. And you would expect some depreciation in Greymouth itself?—Yes.

1855. But both in the town and country, taking them generally, you say there was a considerable decrease owing to the dispersion of the workmen?—Yes.

1856. You said you thought the demand for houses in Greymouth three years ago was not as great as the demand for houses in Greymouth to-day, although in those two years this immense amount of timber was employed in building in the town?—Yes.

1857. So that, given the enormous increase in the number of houses, the demand for houses is greater now than it was three years ago?—Certainly.

1858. Does that not conclusively show that the population must have increased?—Certainly.

1859. Supposing the price for timber increased to the same extent as it has done during the last two or three years, could you give me a rough idea of the extent to which the output of timber from Greymouth will be increased?—Our output at the present time is about 14,000,000 ft. for the year for the port—that is, including all timber; and, taking a business view of the timber trade, I am quite prepared to believe that the timber trade will increase on the West Coast, for the reason I gave before—namely, that the West Coast timber will eventually have to be sent to other districts besides Christchurch. Christchurch is our principal market, but we shall have Wanganui and Wellington. Wellington supplies Wanganui at present, or the Wellington district does. Ultimately we shall send to Wanganui when their timber gets cut out, because our timber is going to last a considerable number of years longer than theirs. Therefore our trade, I think, must increase.

1860. Could you say within what number of years you would expect the export from this