

Seasoning of Timber.

Another point that was emphasized by many witnesses was the great amount of unseasoned timber used for building purposes, with unsatisfactory results both as regards the "life" of the house constructed therewith and its internal comfort, and it is strongly recommended that more attention be paid to the felling of trees at the proper time of the year, and the seasoning of timber before being used for building or other purposes, in order that the public may be protected against having to purchase or live in houses that will not remain in a thoroughly habitable condition for a reasonable period of time. The use of unseasoned timber naturally tends to create a prejudice against our native timbers. This difficulty could be got over if merchants would purchase and stock them in large quantities for a sufficient period of time.

It was prominently brought forward in the course of our inquiry that various processes for artificially seasoning timber are now being established in this Dominion, and in particular the use of creosoting in several forms, and "Powellising" woods. Under present conditions it is difficult to form an accurate idea of the value of preservatives to our soft woods, and, although the evidence that was taken does not warrant us in making any specific recommendations in this respect with regard to any particular process, it appears desirable that full investigation should be made by the Government into the many processes of artificially seasoning and preserving timber, and that such investigations should include inquiry into—

- (a.) The extra length of life of timber after being so treated;
- (b.) The extra strength imparted to timbers in this manner;
- (c.) The extra cost of timber after undergoing treatment by each process.

As one of the causes tending to lessen the use of our own timbers is the general impression, not altogether erroneous, that few kinds will endure for any length of time when exposed to the weather or brought into permanent contact with the ground, there appears to be an increasing demand for Australian hardwoods, and a diminishing order for New Zealand woods for certain purposes, and if any process of artificially seasoning wood will enable our timbers to compare favourably with imported timbers, it is essential that such process should be brought into general use.

Australian Hardwoods.

In the meantime we are of opinion that consideration should be given to the question of admitting free of duty such sizes and descriptions of Australian hardwoods as are actually necessary to the Dominion, and the importation of which will not materially affect our own timber industry.

Kauri.

Although kauri has long been recognised as our most valuable timber, and it is in constant request all over New Zealand, it has been shown beyond all doubt that the supply of kauri to many parts of the Dominion is far from equal to the demand, though an extensive export trade to Australia has been carried on for years past. The evidence with reference to the building and furniture trades proves that there is great difficulty in obtaining supplies in certain lines. This is specially noticeable in southern centres, where the best grades of kauri are demanded and cannot be obtained.

Rimu.

There is also a constant demand for first-class heart of rimu, which exceeds the supply, and much difficulty has been experienced in obtaining rimu joisting of the 75-per-cent.-heart grade.

Sawmilling Industry.

From the evidence adduced during the course of our inquiry, we are of opinion that the sawmilling industry is not in a satisfactory condition at the present time, and that the main causes responsible therefore are—

- (a.) General trade depression, and local financial stringency;
- (b.) Over-production.