

There is a moral in this for the producer of Douglas fir and other woods of the Pacific Coast region. The increases of 10, 20 and more shillings per thousand feet which the Australian merchant pays in times of rising freight without diminishing his buying enthusiasm, would be as readily paid if they were increases in f.a.s. prices. It would only be necessary to assure him that the increases would be permanent or fixed for a definite period and not temporary or subject to rapid fluctuation. The Australian buyer cannot credit the frame of mind in which the Pacific Coast manufacturer sells.

Australian Coast town merchants, through whose hands all timber imports pass, are strongly banded together in city associations for trade furtherance and protective purposes. Price lists have been uniform amongst all association merchants in each town month by month for some years past. There are few merchants who do not belong to these associations and few instances where association prices are not maintained.

Increased purchasing cost is passed directly to the consumer. Douglas fir retails from \$40 per thousand feet in normal times to \$60 per thousand feet in war times. The use of substitutes, brick, stone, cement, tiles, slate and iron have reached their maximum. Douglas fir is only used where it is needed and has no really close competition. An increase of \$4 per thousand feet to the f.a.s. price would not affect its use.

The present system of exporting is conducted at the expense of the mill owners for the benefit of the vessel owners and Australian merchants. The producers of lumber, by far the most important group, in members and financially, compete against one another to fill the orders and keep the prices down. The exporters, fewer in number and with comparatively less resources compete against one another for transportation and put the freight up. A proper combination of the lumber producers who control the only suitable timber commodity available to Australia, likewise the only timber commodity which gives lumber freights from North America to Australia their value, with the exporters who possess the export shipping knowledge should be able to keep export lumber prices up to a fair and reasonable level and lumber freights also at a non-speculative and reasonable figure. The eliminating of the present great element of speculation from trans-Pacific lumber freights would encourage steadier buying, in itself a more favourable condition for the producers.

The representatives quoting to merchants on Douglas fir usually are agents for Scandinavian timber, and in certain cases Japanese and Russian also. The species of timber sold is immaterial to the agent.

NOT PUSHING DOUGLAS FIR.

There are very few amongst the agents or selling representatives soliciting orders from Australian timber merchants who push Douglas fir only. Nearly all are quite as keen to sell redwood or Swedish timbers.

Few people selling Douglas fir or other Pacific Coast woods to merchants have more than a casual knowledge of their qualities or possibilities for more than rough construction purposes. Few have visited the region in which it is produced, have seen the manufacture of the woods, or are acquainted with recent developments in the use of woods for various industrial purposes or for more valuable and decorative uses in interior finish. Pacific Coast timbers are sold not as a special product with certain definite qualities and values, but as wood, common wood. The sizes of Douglas fir from six feet by six feet are known as "junk." As a result of the merchant's lack of special knowledge concerning, and special interest in Douglas fir the quantity sold is not as great as it might be, as will be pointed out in this report.

The representatives in Australia selling imported timber quote on inquiries sent out by merchants. They rarely go further and endeavour to initiate a demand by showing engineers, architects or important builders that any particular wood has special qualities which fit it for use in fields which it has not yet entered, such as Douglas fir for panel doors, or spruce and hemlock for boxes and shelving. There is a great field for this class of work.