

40. Did the company in dealing with this question of timber suggest that *bona fide* miners for *bona fide* mining purposes might cut timber free of royalty?—It has been formally stated on behalf of the company that, so far as the company was concerned, they did not want the actual miners to pay a sixpence, either on the company's own land or anywhere else, for timber cut by them for use in their own mines. The company did frequently, as a matter of fact, call the attention of Government to the circumstance that people were cutting the forest without license or any authority, for other than gold-mining purposes, and strenuously urged upon the Government that this should not be permitted. The Government have recently taken steps to prevent this unauthorised cutting of timber. It has been stated over and over again on behalf of the company that, so far as the company was concerned, miners might cut what they themselves wanted for *bona fide* gold-mining purposes on the company's land. The objection was really made to a large number of persons who were cutting railway-sleepers. The reason for the demand for these was that the company themselves required sleepers, and the Commissioners of Railways have advertised for silver-pine sleepers. The silver-pine grows in clusters and patches. It is a very valuable timber, and there is only a small quantity of it. It is greatly wasted in being cut into sleepers. It is very wrong, I think, to allow people to cut it when and wherever they like. For these reasons the company objected to its being cut indiscriminately in this way. They had also found that the black-birch was practically as good for sleepers. Another fact was that the silver-pine being cut in this way seriously affected the value of any forest-area; the millers wanted some timber of all kinds in an area, and the silver-pine is regarded as the "fat" of the business.

41. Did the Government recognise the damage that was done to the forest, and take any steps to remedy that state of things?—I understand that the Government have recently taken steps to conserve the forest.

42. With regard to the effect these mining reserves have on settlement: would it be a loss to the company that they should be made in the form that is adopted? Do you think that in that form they would interfere with settlement?—Distinctly, they would interfere with settlement; there can be no question of that. Whether rightly or wrongly made, they would interfere with settlement.

43. You see a piece marked on the map near Nelson Creek. Did you interview a person connected with the Miners' Association in regard to that, and did he give you an opinion?—Yes; the "Miners' Association" may not be the correct title, but a man came down upon the subject, and saw me before any mining reserves were made. He said, "I would like to come to some arrangement on behalf of my mining friends in this district as to the particular lands you are going to take for the company. If you will undertake on behalf of the company not to deal with land between Callaghan's and Red Jack's Creeks, you may, as far as the Miners' Association is concerned, deal with all the rest of the land in the Nelson Creek Riding. We will not object to your dealing with any of the land outside these limits without reference to us; and as to the land within this area I mention, if you will refer to us, we will give each case fair consideration for it."

44. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] Who was the mining expert?—A man named Morris, of Hatters'. He has just been made a Justice of the Peace, within the last few months.

45. *Mr. Saunders.*] In speaking of the large area of timber-land, you said the greater part of that land was more or less valuable on account of its timber: is there not a large proportion of it that would be much more valuable without any timber on it?—Do you speak of all the land on the West Coast?

46. You were speaking of a large area: is not the greater part of that area birch, or scrub? That lessens the value, and does not increase it?—I do not think you could call the greater part of it scrub. You would call it fine forest if it were anywhere else. There is but a small quantity of scrub on that coast; the "scrub" at all events is very large. Black-birch is also a timber that is far from valueless; that has been lately proved by Mr. White, the cabinetmaker, of Christchurch, who says it is one of the best timbers for furniture. After trying it for three years at my request, he now proposes to use it in his own business for furniture. It is of excellent colour, easily worked, and is very strong and durable. In one part of the country the black-birch is called red-birch, and *vice versa*. It is very durable; the black-birch found in the Oxford district is the most durable of all.

47. Is that in the Oxford district better than in the others?—There is but a small quantity in the Oxford district, which I think for durability is unequalled. The black-birch, or red-birch, variously so called in different parts of the country, is exceedingly durable, and is found to be most useful for sleepers.

48. What proof have you that it is so very durable?—The proof is in the time that it has been known to last in the ground. I got specimens of some sleepers that had been lately taken out after having been ten years in the ground, and the wood was very sound. The Government railway authorities have taken out a lot of sleepers which had been many years in use on the Greymouth-Brunnerton Railway, and they were found, so far as general strength was concerned, to be very sound. There were portions where the sap had been which had rotted away, but the main strength of the timber was unimpaired, and some were as fresh as the day they were put into the ground. There was an old clearing made over twenty years ago, near Reefton, for a road. The company's railway was recently made through it, and the birch-trees, which had been lying as they fell twenty years ago, had to be cut up and removed, and I got samples of the black-birch taken from these trees, which for so many years had been lying on the ground covered with *débris*, in a very wet climate, and under the worst possible conditions for preservation, and the timber was in perfect preservation—as sound, and bright, and beautiful in colour as it is possible to find it if just felled.

49. Do you use the heart only?—Yes; we take all heart, if we can get it. The experience in Nelson is that nothing but the heart has any value for durability. It may be of interest if I mentioned that it has been found by Mr. Langdown, of Christchurch, to be the best bending timber there is to be had for wheelwright purposes.