

328. Do you not think it would be far better to conserve our timber while we have got it, considering we can get all we want from outside?—I think it would be very wise.

329. According to reports, it is estimated to last seventy years?—I suppose that applies to the whole colony?

330. *Hon. the Chairman.*] That is problematical, because increasing population will shorten the time?—Yes; that is, at the present output.

331. I always think it is impossible to get at these estimates?—I know it is impossible, because you cannot survey this country, and I am in hopes, and believe, that the quantity in New Zealand will be very much greater than the estimate.

332. There is just one point here about what you think is little enough for the sawmiller for profit. You said 3s. over and above what it costs to produce the timber?—Yes; and contingencies, and bush-fires, and one thing and another.

333. But you provide in your estimates for insurance?—You cannot provide for bush-fires, extraordinary accidents, &c.

334. If you go by your evidence you will think so. It appears so to me. In your enumeration of what the sawmiller has to charge before coming down to horse-feed, it includes insurance for fire and suchlike?—Yes.

335. Do you not think 3s. is rather too high for profit?—No, because you only get one crop of timber.

336. But that was not used till you purchased it?—A bush-fire comes and sweeps away a lot of our timber. You cannot provide against that. Then, you make perhaps an enormous bad debt, or kill two or three men.

337. I do not think there would be many debts lately?—I think nowadays it would be greater.

338. Your output from one of these mills is 7,000 ft. a day?—Yes.

339. And from the others 5,000 ft., 4,500 ft., and 3,500?—Yes.

340. Putting that all together, it would be about 12,000 ft.—say, 14,000 ft. per day?—Yes.

341. To give you 3s. on that every day, you would be a millionaire very soon?—But what about the big depreciation that comes? I have two mills that will be cut out very soon, and 21½ miles of tramway that will not be worth a snap of your fingers. I shall feel it badly as I have got the largest number of mills down here.

342. *Mr. Hanan.*] How much have you sunk?—Thousands.

343. *Mr. Clarke.*] With regard to future supply, you think there will be more than the Government returns here. Is that based on actual experience of Government land you have taken up?—Yes; I know that in bushes where they thought there was very little available timber more has been discovered since, and they have turned out better than was expected. I do not think that in that estimate they have reckoned upon lots of places I know of where with better means of communication they will find timber they have not reckoned upon.

344. *Mr. Field.*] Take our timber that is growing: assuming that it cannot be milled profitably, what is the inevitable result?—They are burning it, and grassing the land.

345. By so doing we are losing railway freights, capital, milling, and labour?—If that land produces a crop every year it does not matter. If it is capable of feeding sheep or lambs you are getting something.

346. But take the sawmiller: he has to close his mill up, and he loses his mill; the men are thrown out of employment, and the railway loses its revenue?—Yes.

347. Then we are thrown entirely on the foreigner for timber?—Not for seventy years.

348. But assuming that this is done?—Yes.

349. What I want to know is this: We hear of Harvester Trust monopolies—if we destroy our timber, are we not in the hands of monopolists again?—No, that cannot arise, because you are in the hands of the whole world. There is the whole world to draw supplies from, and it is beyond the most remote possibility. I do not think there is the slightest reason for apprehension on that point. They have discovered immense areas in the Philippine Islands and Java, and I am convinced that there are millions of acres in Siberia.

350. *Mr. Morris.*] Is there any land being disposed of for settlement containing milling-timber?—Some has been disposed of.

351. At the present time, I mean?—I do not know of any now. But I think that where land is very sparsely timbered, and would not pay for a sawmill, it should be disposed of.

352. The reason I mentioned this matter is that in our district during the last twelve months timber lands that contain very good milling-timber were advertised for settlement under the lease in perpetuity. I wrote to the Crown Lands Commissioner, and he went and visited it, and it was withdrawn, and he wrote me a very nice letter thanking me for the information I had given him?—If he discovered there was milling-timber upon it he would sell it to the sawmiller.

353. They had no sawmiller very convenient?—That is what they do here.

*Hon. the Chairman:* I gave general instructions not to sell any bush that was fit for sawmilling in any part of New Zealand, and if there was any bush land advertised for settlement it was overlooked in some way. When they opened land without being surveyed, a man that was pretty knowing might include a portion of bush land in his application.

*Mr. Jennings:* If that was carried out in its entirety it would block settlement in these Islands.

*Hon. the Chairman:* I must compliment you, Mr. Massey, on the straightforward way in which you have given your evidence to this Commission. On behalf of the Commission I beg to thank you.