

159. Would you think 18s. an exorbitant price for it?—Of course, I do not know anything about the Wellington market. It seems a very good price, but they have to store and grade it. If they are selling it for that I do not see how it is, seeing it is such an open port, and there is such competition; but I do not know anything about Wellington.

160. You said that 1s. per hundred feet in the price of timber would mean a difference of about £7 10s, in a small cottage?—Yes.

161. Considering that it has gone up over 100 per cent., the cost in the erection of a building is very considerable?—It has gone up very little here. If it has gone up that much in Wellington it is news to me.

162. That is one reason why the argument has gone out, because timber has increased the cost of building, you cannot calculate it on a building?—You can here. I do not know anything about Wellington.

163. *Mr. Field.*] These are timber-merchants' prices?—I can only say if the timber people can get these prices they are in a very fortunate position, if the cost is no greater than ours. Is not that subject to a trade discount?

164. Only a very small discount?—Do they deliver at that price?

165. No?—I am not aware of any of these figures, so I cannot answer that question.

166. With regard to timber-milling in this district, how many men are employed?—It all depends. Say, an average of twenty men to a mill. I suppose that would be the average, and there are about seventy mills.

167. If this land were used for farming, it would not employ as many?—Twenty men to 600 acres?

168. Not small farms?—But they would be small farms. A farmer would never employ anything like that. An ordinary farm, I suppose, of 600 acres would employ half a dozen, except at harvesting.

169. The bush area is pretty well taken up in this district, according to the Crown Lands Report?—The open bush is taken up, but there is a lot not taken up.

170. If the area allowed to timber-millers is increased, as has been suggested, by a very large number of acres, is that not likely to create a monopoly, considering there is such a small area of timber land available in this district?—No. The position now is that millers are compelled to take up two or three acres, and they have therefore to put a mill on each.

171. Under existing conditions an individual can get more than 600 acres?—Yes. You can take up another area—that is, three or four people in partnership can each take up a separate area.

172. I do not quite understand?—Suppose I am in partnership with two other men, each may obtain 600 acres, and work it as a partnership. The rules and regulations compel you to put up a mill on each of them. We want to produce timber cheaper, and that is against us. Our mill would be quite sufficient for the 1,800 acres. What is going on is an entire waste of capital.

173. If you did that, the area would last longer?—Yes.

174. You would postpone agriculture for a number of years?—Yes.

175. You say that you would not conserve the forests?—Yes. It is all a question of demand in the matter of timber.

176. You want the life of the mill extended?—Yes, to make cost of production cheaper.

177. You are delaying the time in which that land would be brought into profitable occupation for farmers?—No, not at all.

178. You delay it for fourteen years?—Only that particular area. If the demand in any year is ten million, whether you cut that ten million with twenty mills or one mill is immaterial from a point of settlement, because you are not delaying the land being opened up. You can only cut the amount of the demand. It does not matter how many mills you cut it with, for the reason the quantity of timber taken off is exactly the same.

179. *Mr. EU.*] You say you are opposed, as a matter of public policy, to have any forest reserves at all?—Yes.

180. Then, you consider all the other countries of the world, ages older than this, are entirely wrong in their policy of providing national forest reserves as a constant supply of timber for local needs?—I think other countries are in a different position to us. We are a young country. We want to turn our assets into cash. Put the cash into the land, which has the effect of increasing our national assets.

181. But you said just now, in answer to Mr. Field, that if there was not a market for, say, a lot of rimu growing in a certain area of land, sooner than wait ten or fifteen years you would burn it?—Certainly I would do so, as a practical man.

182. You would leave the industries of the country entirely upon foreign importation?—Yes, we are doing that now, and, in any case, it is only a question of ten years' time.

183. You urge the destruction of the timber if we cannot use it in ten or fifteen years?—No; I would not urge it from a national standpoint. Personally, from a private standpoint, I would not keep timber for that time as a business man. I would turn the land into profitable use.

184. Then, you do not deny that the State is right in preventing the destruction of valuable timber?—Quite the contrary. I think they are right in conserving it.

185. I entirely agree with you. The policy of the Land Department should be to prevent the destruction of timber?—Most decidedly. I have made many complaints about farmers destroying timber.

186. Such a policy of destruction has been a national loss?—Yes.

187. With regard to kamahi, you say that it is good for sleepers?—Yes.

188. Can you give me any idea of its life?—I understand the Railway people regard it as satisfactory.