

9. Can Mr. Collins, who is an expert in timber business, give us what we want later on?—I think he would be able to give you anything you require in addition to what I have supplied. He is thoroughly conversant with all the milling business in this district, and he knows all the localities, as well as all the mills. He can be examined on any point with regard to any of that.

10. *Mr. Hanan.*] Can Mr. Wilmot say what bush has been reserved?—There have been reserves of national parks, scenic and climatic reserves, amounting in the aggregate to 855,600 acres.

11. Do you know where they are located?—The bulk of it is in the national parks.

12. Anything reserved in Longwood?—I do not think there is, speaking from memory and without consulting the maps.

13. Any bush reserved for scenic purposes?—Yes.

14. Where?—From memory, a small piece at Waikawa, and there is one at Pahia.

15. Are there any nearer to Invercargill?—Yes, there are reserves where you were the other day, near Riverton.

16. Do you know of any others?—Yes, at Edendale. At the settlement there there are two small reserves. There are a great many reserves scattered all over the place.

17. Within twenty miles of Invercargill?—That information can be got for you. I cannot speak exactly from memory. I have a schedule here that supplies information as to all those reserves. The scenic reserves have an area of 55,600 acres.

18. Where do you say they are?—They are all over Southland; they range from close handy to Invercargill, Edendale, and they go right down to Pegasus and South Cape.

19. As to the bush burnt off by your tenants under the Board, have you anything to say regarding this destruction by Crown tenants on their holdings?—You mean as to the advisability of its destruction? Well, I have thought over that matter, and it seems to me that when the bush is heavy enough to pay for the sawmiller to go into it, the land should not be opened for settlement. It is a great pity to have good sawmilling bush burnt down and destroyed as it used to be. That, however, does not occur now so much as it did formerly.

20. Has much bush been burned in this district by settlers clearing their property?—In Southland a good bit has, but not so much as in other districts. The place I was thinking of was Otago, especially Catlin's, where a great quantity of valuable timber was destroyed.

21. What does your Board do in the way of preventing this destruction of the bush?—The Board, once it has leased the land, is powerless to prevent the destruction of bush, because the Act provides for the felling and burning of bush as an improvement.

22. The fact of the bush being on the land—is that a material factor in inducing settlers to take it up?—You mean that, if there is a lot of milling-bush on the section, it will be more readily taken up in consequence of the tenant being in a position to sell the timber to a sawmiller? That is so. It is an inducement when they are able to sell the timber.

23. Have your Crown tenants been selling much bush off their property? Do they sell more than they burn?—Well, I think they do nowadays.

24. In your opinion it would be better if the sawmill went in before it was let to tenants?—I certainly do think so.

25. *Mr. Jennings.*] With regard to the land formerly covered with bush, is it suitable for grass-growing, cropping, and generally for practical farming purposes?—The Board has reports respecting all land they propose to open for settlement, and it is not opened unless they think it is good enough to be grassed and cultivated otherwise. A great deal of it, of course, is fit for grass only.

26. Generally speaking, is it good for grass land?—Yes, generally speaking it is.

27. *Mr. Field.*] Have you given any thought to the question of tree-planting?—One experiment that was made down here some time ago was not a success. The position was bad, which might account for it.

28. Are you careful to see, where the bush is being cleared for timber, that noxious weeds are kept out fairly well?—That is a matter for the Stock Department.

29. *Mr. Leyland.*] Are there any areas available for settlement that are not bush lands?—In Southland I do not think there are.

JAMES COLLINS sworn and examined. (No. 14.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are you?—Crown Lands Ranger.

2. We wish you to give the Commission some information with regard to the amount of leased land in this district, and the amount of sawmill timber on the unleased land?—Well, there is a return that we made out showing the area taken up for sawmilling purposes.

3. And in occupation under the sawmiller's license?—Yes, both in State forests and Crown lands.

4. Are they sawmilling in the State forests now?—Yes.

5. Will you state to the Commission the quantities?—All the areas taken up are marked in red on the plan [produced]. They are taken up and held at the present time as sawmill areas in connection with different mills and by different sawmillers.

6. Can you give us the number of acres in occupation at present?—27,482. That is all State forests and Crown lands.

7. Under lease?—Yes, and in Crown forests 8,871 acres.

8. Do you know how many lessees you have got?—Twenty-two in State forests, and fifteen in Crown forests.

9. Are you aware how long it would take them to work out the leases they have now in occupation?—Some will be worked out within a couple of years, and others will take, most probably, twenty years or twenty-one years to work out.