

191. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Perhaps the first valuation was not a fair one, and the second might rectify the omission?—It might, but then one man valued the whole of the original areas, and the second man agreed with him in the main, and it was only in two or three areas that he disagreed.

192. Was there anything apparently in respect to those licenses to justify him putting on a higher value?—Nothing whatever, because we say that the timber is not there, and we say it is overvalued. Here is a schedule which shows the whole thing.

*Mr. Mander:* Is this within our jurisdiction?

*Hon. the Chairman:* I think it is. It relates to timber, and it is a very serious and most important matter.

[The witness handed in the schedule, showing the original and present values.]

*Witness:* You will see, Mr. Chairman, that this gives the quantity, the royalty, and the rate, together with the names of the grantees. As I have said, it gives the increases and decreases.

193. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What are the dates—there is no date apparently?—No, the date is not there, but that is not required, as it was only estimated within the last few months.

194. I shall be glad if you will add the date of the valuation to the schedule?—Yes, I shall now do so, and put the schedule in.

*Hon. the Chairman:* This wants looking into.

195. *Mr. Field.*] Are you personally affected by that?—Yes, I am personally interested, and I pay the amount under protest. I claim that the matter should be looked into and a revaluation made by another person.

196. Has any one else complained of this matter?—Yes, Mr. Cox, the other holder, has also complained. He considers the royalty greatly in excess of the timber on the ground.

197. *Mr. Leyland.*] I do not know whether I misunderstood you. I understood you to say that when 800 acres were allotted to a man the others were in reserve for him. Do you mean that he has to shift on to the other area?—Oh, no! What I say is that the license is for the mill. The area is simply a portion of Crown land allotted for that mill in order that the mill may obtain a supply of timber. There is power under the regulations to give the licensee rights over his tramways, and those rights are always reserved; but the lands otherwise may be made available for settlement. I say that a sawmill licensee can only hold 200 acres at one time—that he cannot hold two areas at the same time in connection with one sawmill license.

198. Then, in order to justify him in constructing a railway they give him another 600 acres in the way of a reserve?—Yes, that is the position.

FRANK WILLIAM PETRE, Architect, sworn and examined. (No. 30.)

1. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Mr. Petre, I understand you are an architect?—Yes.

2. Can you help us to solve any of these questions within our order of reference?—I cannot give you any expert opinion as to milling, and nothing in connection with the raw material in the bush, beyond my own opinion as to the conditions in which the timber comes into the market from the sawmills.

3. Have you practised long at your profession?—I have been practising in Dunedin for thirty-five years, and during that time I have always suffered from the same difficulty—viz., the want of seasoned timber. As far as the mills are concerned, the objection that we have to their handling of timber is that the timber is felled at the wrong time of the year—that is, it is felled in summer-time instead of being felled in winter-time. The winter here is generally used for breaking up the timber and trucking it to the mill. Speaking of our local timbers, I can only say that they are really quite useless for building under the conditions under which they come into the market, if you wish to make a permanent work of the building. One of the great mistakes we have been making, particularly in our southern towns, where the rimu is not so good as that of the north, is that we have been putting up houses, particularly for the workers, which must in the very near future produce very bad consequences and great and bitter disappointment. A man, perhaps in his early youth, who has concentrated all his resources to establish a home for the benefit of his old age, must suffer bitter disappointment when he discovers at fifty that his house is in a state of decay. Owing to the unseasoned condition of the timber none of the wooden houses which we are now putting up, and which we are finishing with paper and scrim, are worth more than twenty-five years' life. I regard this as a very serious matter, because it overtakes a man at a time of life when he can least afford it. The home which should be his shelter in old age will prove a delusion. If built for renting purposes it will prove a loss of capital, and if for personal residential purposes the upkeep in the way of repairs will equal a rent. When a man arrives at that time of life it is hard to find that his home is perishing over his head. The whole of our future must depend upon a settled and contented race of workers, workers settled in their own homes. Nothing can be better than for all workers to possess their own homes, because men under such conditions will not seek to upset things with communistic notions. Men will feel the responsibility of citizenship when they get their own homes, especially if they do not get dry-rot into them. I say that a man on the flat here, with a red-pine cottage, papered and scrimmed, has not got a permanent home. At the time when he wants it most it will fail him, because he will find that it requires constant repair. The valuator rates twenty-five years as its life, and the owner will find that the only value he has got is the land. We have great difficulty in getting seasoned timbers here, even for joinery. I am aware, of course, that it is worse in the South than in the North. In the northern towns you will find some fine joinery done out of rimu, whilst here in the South we have to condemn doors in all directions. The timber is dried, but it is not seasoned; when it is dried the sap-cells still remain full; they are consequently expanding, but time contracts them and the timber shrinks. Timber that is cut full of sap in the summer-time,