

I would respectfully submit, Sir, that the Forestry Department would be doing a great public service were they to instruct farmers and others as to what class of trees could be profitably planted, how to plant and tend them, and facilitate their obtaining them at a reasonable cost.

I have, &c.,

R. MARIS CLARK.

The President, Forestry Commission, sitting in Auckland.

No. 14.

The Chairman of the Forestry Commission, Wellington.

I BEG to submit the following as a written statement for your Commission's consideration :—

Present Forests.

I am desirous of presenting my views upon the utilization and conservation of the existing New Zealand forests.

1. *Utilization.*—It is of far-reaching importance that the Government should demand a proper and economical utilization of the present natural forests. These forests represent a big convertible asset, and, from an economic point of view, waste in production and waste by fire should be guarded against as much as possible.

The waste of timber in the process of conversion is more pronounced where the millers pay royalty on the sawn measure and where royalties are low than where royalties are high and royalty is paid on the standing measure. On the west coast of the South Island the conditions at present are particularly favourable to negligent and wasteful methods both in bushworking and milling, the reason being the system of basing royalties on *the amount of timber carried by the railway from the respective mills.*

There are many reasons why this system of ascertaining the Governments interests in a forest should be discontinued.

In the first place, when it is desirous of acquiring milling-bush, an area up to 2,000 acres can be pegged out and secured under certain conditions by any one providing a nominal deposit and being the holder of a miner's right. This slipshod method has induced more or less "gridironing," and the acquisition of bush in some cases for speculative purposes. It also gives a milling access to any bush that may be served by road, and induces a class of millers that, from a bush-utilizing point of view, are undesirable. The reason of their undesirability is that as they are at the disadvantage of having to cart their output in some cases several miles to railway-sidings, and, as they have to compete with millers who have their mills served by railway-sidings, they have to make up an increased value of their produce by producing a better class of timber, and this is done by taking only the cream of the logs and leaving logs that will produce timber of a lower market value to rot in the bush.

Then, again, the railway quantities being the base for payment, there is no check on any local sales that may be made. I do not infer that millers so situated are guilty of trading on this chance of evasion, but it gives the officer whose duty it is to collect royalty no opportunity of ascertaining any leakage that may take place in this connection.

There is also the fact that mills of more or less a bogus character are put up not for commercial purposes, but for the purpose of complying with conditions of the Act, which enables the owners of such mills to hold additional areas which otherwise they would not be entitled to.

With bush so easily obtainable and with inadequate supervision much waste is induced, and there is no guarantee to the State that the areas so secured are worked with system and economy. An examination of the areas worked reveals the fact that millers invariably take the easiest timber to win, leaving the more difficult and isolated patches, which become valueless as soon as the tramways serving them are taken up or become unusable. Cases have been known where bushmen in working flat ground have left the edge of the forest in a series of curves, with the length of the hauling-rope as their radii. Gullies and awkward corners are left because if taken out would increase the log cost, and this is naturally avoided where keen competition exists.

Then, again, no royalty is collected on timber used in mill buildings, cottages, and tramways, and although a great proportion of this class of timber is unmarketable, owing mainly to trade customs, still the fact that it is used for the purposes indicated shows that it has some commercial value, and for which the State receives no benefit.

In sawing, again, there is no restriction as to what gauge of saw the miller shall use in converting a log into sawn timber, and as the wide boards are usually produced by the big circular or breaking-down saws which generally takes a kerf of $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (which in the case of 1 in. boards represents three-elevenths or between a quarter and one-third of the whole fitch), it is easy to understand that a big loss can take place in this manner. It should also be understood that it requires a less expert sawyer to manipulate a thick saw than a thin saw. Then there is the waste of timber by careless sawing. In some cases, where orders are only for the better-class timber, the whole of the inferior quality produced is consigned to the slab fire not because it has no commercial value, but because of the millers being harassed into supplying a class of timber too good for the purpose for which it may be required. Although it is not desirable for the proper utilization of forest, there would be less objection to the miller improving the quality of the timber by this method were the State to receive proper payment for it before the waste took place.