

22. Who made it?—The previous Ranger at Westport.

23. What class of timber is general in your district?—Rimu. Very little kahikatea. There is birch also, and very small patches of totara.

24. Are not the birches milled out in that district?—Parata's have a standing order for birch, but other mills do not cut it.

25. Is there much timber used in connection with the mines?—Yes. It is cut by contract with the mine-owners, and no royalty is paid on it as far as I know.

26. Is the timber used by the mines sawn before it is used by them?—It is taken in the rough state. A return comes in for what is sawn, and the royalty is paid on that quantity.

27. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Do you think the dual control between the Warden and the Commissioner is a good one?—No, for the reasons I have stated.

28. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Do you know the yellow-pine?—The white-pine is called "yellow-pine" in some places. I have not seen in my district any yellow-pine.

29. *The Chairman.*] Supposing the men with roving licenses to cut sleepers were to cut posts and supply them to private individuals, is there any check to ensure the payment of the royalty?—A lot of posts have been supplied to the Public Works Department by private individuals, and they were cut without license. That has been the cause of my trip down the line to-day.

30. *Mr. Clarke.*] Then they can use their license for a double purpose, and you cannot detect them?—That is so. They should only be allowed to cut in defined and stated localities.

31. And perhaps large quantities may be sold to private individuals?—No doubt it is being done. There are thousands of posts about the roads on which I do not think royalty has been collected. I spoke to one man on the subject who got some off Crown land, and he quoted a clause in the Land Act permitting him to do it.

32. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Have you any scenic reserves in your part of the district?—Little ones. There is one place at the Junction that should be reserved, but a lot of the existing ones are valueless. One place between the Junction and Three-channel Flat should be reserved.

33. Why are those you refer to no good?—They are spoilt from the scenic point of view, because the bush has been burnt off.

34. *Mr. Clarke.*] Are not they likely to regenerate themselves?—Not unless you plant the trees. If there is a good flat already burnt it is better to put it in grass than back into bush.

35. Do you attach no value to the scenic part of the matter?—Yes, when the scenery is there, and the beautiful native bush.

36. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Are the deer doing any damage to the native bush there?—I saw one head on the Inangahua recently, but I have had no complaints from the settlers. Up north I believe the farmers want to get rid of them. I have seen much damage done by them to the native forests in Nelson District.

37. Would they do much damage to the native forests if they were there in thousands?—No doubt they would. I have seen the undergrowth destroyed, the marks of their teeth on the scrub, and the trees half torn out of the ground and stripped. Once the deer have destroyed the scrub I have never seen it grow again, so that there would be little chance of the forest regenerating.

38. Are many goats here?—I have not seen many wild ones. There are some in the Maruia, but there are not many in the Nelson end.

BLenheim, SATURDAY, 29TH MARCH, 1913

WILLIAM HENRY SKINNER sworn and examined. (No. 35.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Chief Surveyor for the District of Marlborough?—Yes.

2. It has been represented to the Commission that in some districts the scenery reserves have been laid off in unsuitable places, that the timber has been destroyed, the reserves are becoming a breeding-ground for noxious weeds, and are also blocking settlement. Are there any places in this district to which that remark applies?—Not, generally speaking. The remarks may apply in a minor degree. There are only one or two small areas, as mentioned in our conversation this morning.

3. As to the one or two you mentioned, you will be able to forward a schedule later on showing the position and the reasons why they should be uplifted?—Yes.

4. In regard to climatic reserves: I notice your district has been fairly well attended to in that respect, but it would appear that in certain cases the advantages might be further extended?—I think so, especially in the Pelorus Valley and along the mountain backbone running south-west towards Tophouse.

5. It is not land that would be at all suitable for settlement?—Quite unsuitable—poor, rugged, barren country. A block in the upper part of Wakamarina Valley, adjoining the country in question and easy of access, has been open for selection for over two years, but no one appears willing to take it up. The timber on it is of little or no commercial value, consisting mainly of birch—no milling-timber in the ordinary sense.

6. In dealing with timber here what method is in vogue? Is it under the regulations of the Land Act, 1908?—Yes, that is on a royalty basis pure and simple. We have had no auctions here so far.

7. Do you not think the time has arrived now, in the interests of the Crown, that where an area is granted to a miller the timber should be carefully measured, the individual trees branded, and either put up to auction or tender with the upset price of the present royalty?—Certainly. That would be preferable to our present system, which is not, generally speaking, in the best interests of the Crown. There has been a great deal of waste in the past.