

8. You think if a miller has to pay for every stick that the land will be much better cleaned up—which is, of course, to the interests of the Crown. You will be aware that that system has been in vogue in Auckland for a considerable time?—Yes. That is, in my opinion, the better system, and if any further timber-areas are dealt with in this district it will be by tender or auction as mentioned. Unfortunately there is very little timber left now to deal with.

9. In regard to the timber, you have no trouble with dual control in this respect?—No trouble at all. We administer the whole lot here.

10. Referring to these climatic reserves, I understand the deer are fairly numerous in this district?—Yes, they are fairly numerous in the Pelorus, and the Rai, and the upper portion of the Wairau Valley.

11. Do they live chiefly in the bush?—Mainly in the bush. Mr. Hursthouse will give fuller evidence than I can. We have had numerous complaints from the smaller settlers that they come out of the bush and damage the crops.

12. If they live in the bush they live on the herbage there?—Yes.

13. Do you not consider that with the large number of deer eating out the undergrowth in these climatic reserves it will tend to open the bush to the light and wind, dry up the moisture to a considerable extent, and thus pave the way for destruction by fires?—Yes, I think so, especially in our drier valleys. I have no evidence that I could put before you of any great damage done so far by the deer, but this must eventuate if the numbers increase. It must have a damaging effect as time goes on.

14. In your opinion the herds are increasing in number?—Yes.

15. Then, in regard to lands for afforestation, are there any lands in this district that you could recommend for plantation purposes? Of course, you will understand that for afforestation we can only deal with cheap lands that are not fit for settlement purposes, and of only small rental value?—I should say that very little Crown land of a suitable character is at present available for this purpose. As already stated, there is a block on the Altmarlock Run—pastoral lease—Awatere Valley, which I think would be suitable, and which would be available in five or six years on expiration of lease. This land is eight or ten miles up the Awatere from the Dumgree plantation, which you visited yesterday.

16. What is the nature of that land—broken land or paddock land?—Sloping land, broken as it rises in altitude. There is nothing left quite like that which you saw at Dumgree yesterday. On North Bank Settlement, Wairau Valley, there is good land for this purpose, but this is land for settlement and would require to be resumed.

17. Anything fit for land for settlement we could not look at, because the compound interest over long periods of years would swamp it. Do you know of any, Mr. Hursthouse?—Why not plant the waste lands in and along the Wairau River bed. There must be some thousand acres available there in different localities.

18. We find that to economically plant it can only be done in large areas. The administration of small areas—the necessary buildings and fencing—would make the cost excessive. If there are a thousand acres, would it be in one block?—Not in one block.

19. What are the private plantations here like, Mr. Skinner?—With regard to tree-cultivation on a large scale I would refer you to the plantations on the Hillersden Estate, Upper Wairau. Those plantations are doing remarkably well. Shelter-belts a mile and a mile and a half long and two or three chains wide have been successfully established, and go to show that dry country such as this is—both as to soil and atmosphere—will grow trees.

20. Do you not consider that it would pay the settlers in this district to do a great deal more than they are doing at present in the way of shelter-belts?—Most certainly. One great drawback has been the fact that if the settler improves his holding by planting his taxation is increased. Under the liberal terms of the Vogel-Atkinson scheme a great impetus was given to tree-planting, and if such were in operation now it would have a good effect.

21. It was suggested in Dunedin that land under plantation should be exempted from taxation. Do you agree with that suggestion?—I suggested such action before the Scenery Preservation Society in Taranaki some years ago. There is no doubt, however, that the tenants on the land for settlements in Flaxbourne, Starborough, Blind River, &c., are alive to the benefits of tree-planting. They cannot farm to advantage without it. The Wairau Valley was so wind-swept years ago that they could not grow grain. They can grow corn now, thanks mainly to the Hillersden plantations and others lower down the valley.

22. Do you think it would be a good thing if the Government had an expert forester to advise the people in regard to the kind of timber they should plant in these shelter-belts, with the idea that in the future they would provide a certain amount of timber for industrial purposes, butter-boxes, &c.?—I think that is an excellent idea. The trees could be supplied from the Crown nurseries at a most reasonable price. Often in these shelter-belts trees are put in of no use whatever for commercial purposes. The expert forester could advise those desirous of planting as to the most suitable trees.

23. *Mr. Adams.*] Have you noticed what particular trees the deer attack in those reserves?—Not the birches or the large trees, but the smaller luscious growth—the houhou and the broadleaf, and the karamu, and those plants or shrubs which constitute the undergrowth of the forest.

24. That seems to be the main consideration, whether they are trees of milling-timber or undershrubs?—Mostly shrubs.

25. You think they will not injure the forest-trees very much?—Of course, when the trees are very small they are nibbled off, but it is mainly the shrubs they are eating out now.

26. What is your opinion, Mr. Hursthouse?—The forest-trees per'sh with the rest.

27. *The Chairman.*] Is there not a danger, Mr. Skinner, that when the underscrub is devoured the sun gets in and dries up the leaves, and renders the forest liable to fire?—I am