

not defending deer, but can hardly think they are so numerous as to be a serious menace to the bush. We had the same trouble in the Egmont National Park with the cattle. All sorts of remedies were suggested, unlicensed shooting amongst others, but now that settlement has advanced to the margin of the reserve the evil is curing itself. There, however, the forest recovers itself much more rapidly than in a dry district such as this, and the danger from fire need not be considered there.

28. Do you know how the estimates of timber in the report of 1909 were arrived at?—They were done by Mr. Stephenson Smith, the late Chief Surveyor, and Mr. Frank Ward, the late Crown Lands Ranger.

29. Is Mr. Ward here now?—He has retired from the service, and is in Nelson. Mr. Smith is here. The estimate of 1909, as regards private lands, I think was very much overestimated.

JOHN FAWCETT sworn and examined. (No. 36.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a builder and contractor.

2. Do you wish to make any statement or give any evidence in connection with our order of reference from the builders' point of view?—I am not quite prepared to make a statement at the present time. I would like to see other builders first and find out where they are getting their timber from. I think you have got the data as to the amount of available milling-timber in this district.

3. Have you a builders' association in this district?—No.

4. If the builders generally could arrange a meeting and reduce to writing the evidence they wish to put before the Commission, and forward the same to us later on, it would meet the case?—I think so. It is the only way to get valid evidence.

5. Where do you get your chief supply of timber from now?—From the Pelorus Valley. I have been getting some from the West Coast.

6. Through Picton?—No, round the coast and up the river—mostly rimu from the West Coast, and matai, rimu, and totara from the Sounds; but I think the timber in the Sounds is pretty well cut out. Our main supply is from the Rai Valley at present.

7. Do the builders here use the birches or beech-tree at all?—They use the birch if they can get it, but black-birch is very scarce, and brown-birch is not much to be had. Builders do not care about cutting it. If builders can get it they think it a satisfactory timber to use. Black-birch for piles and stringers is very difficult to get here, and builders have to fall back on ironbark and jarrah.

8. Are any of these timbers used for cabinetmaking purposes here?—None of the birches. Down in Greymouth there is some very excellent furniture being made from what they call the "red-birch": we call it "brown."

9. We find that red, brown, black, and white may refer to the same timber, and what they call "red" in one place may be "brown" birch in another: what is your opinion?—In the Onamalutu I used to get a good supply of red-birch, and it was so red it would take an expert to tell the difference between red-birch and totara.

10. Is there any *Pinus insignis* used here to your knowledge?—I have noticed a few trees milled, but it is only used for dray-bottoms. It seems to be light and tough for that purpose, but not suitable for the building trade. I bought some of those trees where you saw the row of poplar-stumps last night, and I built one or two sheds, and where kept off the ground—off the damp—that timber is as sound as possible, but I am using it mainly for fruit-boxes.

11. That is important evidence, because the poplar is a quick-growing tree. Do you consider it would be suitable for butter-boxes?—Certainly. There is no smell. It also makes very pretty furniture. Some of the boards I cut were about 14 in. wide. I made for a man a little clothes-box, oiled it, and it looked like birdseye-maple.

12. Is it an easily worked timber from the builders' point of view?—It is very soft, but very tough; no difficulty in nailing; does not split easily—good from that point of view—equal to if not better than white-pine.

13. Do you know the age of the poplar-trees in the avenue you mentioned when they were milled?—Yes, I can tell you to the year, because the man I made the box for—an old identity of Blenheim—asked me, when I was using some of the planks in connection with Levin and Co.'s new office, "What is that you are using, Fawcett? Is it poplar from that avenue of Mr. Neville's? I remember those being planted when they were the size of my finger. They were planted for a pig-fence about thirty-three years ago." I measured the trees felled on the ground, and they averaged about 97 ft. long.

14. And what was the mean girth, about?—The diameter would be about 2 ft., giving about 6 ft. of girth.

15. Would that be a butt measurement?—Yes.

16. And what measurement about 90 ft. up?—It would not be more than 20 in. girth from 90 ft., and 4 in. in diameter.

17. Four inches, you say, over 90 ft. That is useful evidence, as we are endeavouring to get the ratio of the growth of trees of various kinds?—I think it is a good average: thirty-three years old, and 6 ft. of a girth at the butt.

18. Is it fairly good land where they grew—shingle bottom?—No, river-bed silt; the very best soil. I think the poplar would grow on shingly soil. Whether it would be at the same rate of growth I do not know, because it is a tree the roots of which will find water, and it seems to grow quick and well enough. I had half a mind to send a few boards to the Government to see if they could not make use of them.