

NAPIER, THURSDAY, 3RD APRIL, 1913.

ROBERT THOMAS SADD sworn and examined. (No. 39.)

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

2. This is not a very extensive timber district?—No; most of the timber lies a long distance back, some thirty to thirty-five miles.

3. Is there any sawmilling in operation at present?—There are five mills at work, partly on private and partly on Crown land: one at Norsewood, with about twelve months' cutting supply; Anderson and Sons', eight miles from Dannevirke, with about two years' cutting on Crown lands. At Puketitiri there are two mills cutting on private land, with about eight or nine years' cutting, chiefly rimu, thirty-five miles from here by traction-engine, but in winter timber-wagons only are used—a two days' trip. Bull Bros. have a mill at Tepuhu, on private land, with five or six years' cutting. There is another small mill near the same place. The Ranger, Mr. Brooks, has reported on the timber-areas, and I will forward a copy of his report. As to the area at Matawai and Motu, there have been efforts made to get it thrown open for settlement. The milling-timber is worth from £10 to £12 an acre, but it is deemed advisable to withhold the area until the railway gets closer. The rimu there is supposed to be some of the finest ever seen.

4. Is there any danger from fire if left in its present state?—It has escaped the recent fires when all the country was on fire, so that there seems to be no risk.

5. *Mr. Adams.*] Is there any estimate as to how long the present supply will last at the present rate of milling?—No; it might last ten years, but it would depend on the demand. It could be cut out in five years.

6. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Do you know the beeches by their scientific name?—I think the one referred to in the report is what they call "brown-birch."

7. *The Chairman.*] Has the *Pinus insignis* been used in this district for building?—A great deal is grown on the runs, but I do not know of any which has been cut up and sold for building; or gums either.

8. Are there any large private plantations in the Hawke's Bay Land District?—I think there are none over 50 acres. There are shelter-belts at Hastings, some of which would be thirty years old; but, of course, I am only a recent arrival here.

9. *Mr. Murdoch.*] There seem to be some decent trees on the Park at Hastings. Do you know their age?—They would probably be forty years old.

10. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider it advisable that the land on the northern shore of Lake Waikaremoana should be acquired and reserved for scenery purposes?—I do. It is a very important matter. It is Native land, and is situated in the Auckland Land District. If the forest there is not shortly acquired it will be destroyed along the face of the lake, the value of the lake will be affected, and the forest-area we have reserved on the other side of the lake will also be rendered worthless. Only recently another 100 acres has been burnt. The lake is looked on as a most important source for the development of electrical energy.

11. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do you think that taking the forest off the hills will diminish the rainfall?—Tremendously. Taking the south-west wind in the Nelson District, that wind becomes a dry wind after it passes the Hope Saddle.

12. *The Chairman.*] Is the caretaker at Lake Waikaremoana a Government employee?—He leases the place and boats from the Government, and is the Ranger for the trout-fishing.

13. Do you think he should be appointed Ranger for the scenery as well?—I certainly think so, and have recommended accordingly. He should have power to arrest offenders.

14. Are there any large areas of inferior land in this district belonging to the Crown that you could recommend as suitable for planting?—There are two large blocks at Kuripapango, on the road to Taupo, about seventy miles from Hastings.

15. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Any chance of getting a railway there?—Not the slightest; but one could be put into it.

16. *The Chairman.*] Have you any more accessible?—The Kaiwhaka Block, worth from £1 to £1 10s. an acre. The value of the other I would estimate at £1 an acre.

17. *Mr. Adams.*] Which block would you expect the trees to grow the best on?—I think they would grow equally well on either block. The first block is 15,710 acres, and the second 14,000 acres. Then there is the Timahanga Block, of 17,000 acres, which is suitable.

18. *The Chairman.*] Have you had any complaints from settlers that the scenic reserves have been allowed to become breeding-places for weeds and rabbits, or have been laid off in unsuitable places?—I do not remember any; they generally only make those complaints when they want to obtain the lands so reserved.

19. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Then you have had some?—In the Nelson District, but not here.

20. *The Chairman.*] Do you know if the deer are numerous in this district?—Yes, out in the blocks near the Omahi Saddle. I saw two red deer near the track.

21. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Do the sheep-farmers like them?—I do not think they trouble the farms to any extent. They are more troublesome to the cattle-farmers in the rutting-season, when they knock the cattle about. The red deer are spreading very fast in the forest reserve around Lake Waikaremoana. They are eating out the young growth, and no doubt thereby rendering the bush more liable to fire. It also induces campers to go into the bush to stalk the deer.

22. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do they shoot in the bush?—Yes. No doubt the deer are a great nuisance in those places and should be exterminated.

23. *Mr. Clarke.*] Are there any areas belonging to the Crown nearer than those you have indicated that could be acquired for planting purposes?—You would not get anything nearer than Kaiwhaka of a reasonable value. That block is Crown land, and not very valuable. It would run a sheep to the acre when broken in.