

24. Is there any land in private hands that could be bought for the purpose, say, at from £1 to £1 10s. per acre?—I do not think so.

25. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] What about at Rissington?—You would not get it much cheaper there now. I know nothing so easily accessible as the Kaiwhaka Block.

26. *Mr. Adams.*] What is the difference in the elevation of these blocks?—Kaiwhaka is lower than the other one.

27. *The Chairman.*] What is the position with regard to the wind-swept areas in this district?—I would suggest that the Department might perhaps send an officer to examine them and report whether something could not be done in the way of planting shelter-belts to prevent the wind blowing the pumice and soil away. I am sure the marram-grass would take in these places.

28. *Dr. Cockayne.*] What is the nature of the soil?—Pumice. It blows all over the country and fertilizes other parts, but the places affected are denuded of soil.

29. Is there much of it?—One place is at Glen Ross, 350 acres, on land that ought to be carrying a sheep and a half to the acre, and the tops of the ranges. It would be best to deal with a piece of Crown land, which could be made an object-lesson to private owners. There is Crown land at Glen Ross where the experiment could be tried. I think the area of the “blown” country is increasing.

30. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other bush that ought to be reserved?—There is a patch near Te Puhuhu on Native land—Donnelly’s bush—between 2,000 and 3,000 acres. It is the nearest bit of bush to Napier, and ought to be preserved. There is also another piece of bush on the road to Taupo of 300 or 400 acres. It is on the eastern portion of the Kaiwhaka Block; it should be taken as a scenic reserve.

31. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Are there any gullies in these patches of forest which could be preserved as samples of the flora if the surrounding land were cut up?—Yes. A lot of streams in that district are now dry as the result of the stripping of the bush; formerly they were full of water.

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JOHN GRIFFIN sworn and examined. (No. 40.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You represent the Napier Builders’ Association?—I am the president of the Hawke’s Bay Builders’ and Contractors’ Industrial Union of Employers. Mr. Ward attends with me. As to the timber industry in this district, I may say that our local present supplies are principally derived from Pohui, Patoka, and Puketitiri districts. Besides these mills supplies also come from the Main Trunk line. The present high cost of timber is regulated by the difficulty of hauling from the inland mills, through want of railway service, the timber having to be brought in by traction-engine and horse teams at a cost of about 6s. per hundred feet, independent of 9d. per hundred road-tax charged by the County Council. The supply from the inland districts is good for years to come. The question of the conservation of timber, especially in the inland districts, is rather a difficult one to deal with. A large part of the bush lands is held in small holdings, and where not in a position to be milled commercially the timber is felled and destroyed by fire. It is perhaps opening up a large question to propose a way to get over this matter. In many cases the land is held under lease, in some instances freehold, but there is no doubt that some scheme should be formulated, either by repurchase of the land or bringing a law to bear, to prevent the awful waste of first-class building-timber. There are blocks of Native land carrying large quantities of bush which could be dealt with as indicated here. To give one example, it may be stated that on the Ohurakura Block, near Te Pohui, which skirts the main Napier Road, and is about thirty miles out, there is a block of about 3,000 to 3,500 acres of excellent bush suitable for milling. There are also large blocks of bush country through the Upper Mohaka, Ngatapa, and Te Haroto districts. As to future supplies of timber, we think the Government should acquire land suitable for planting on the route of the proposed Napier-Wairoa Railway. Nearer at hand, running through Hawke’s Bay, are extensive river-flats where no doubt certain classes of timber could be grown to advantage.

2. Can either of you gentlemen tell the Commission how much timber is imported here?—

3. *Mr. Ward.* We can buy almost from anybody in the larger towns where they deal directly with the merchants, and the latter with the sawmillers; so that we cannot say what the imports are. We buy in Napier and do not import ourselves. The timber-merchants seem to know nothing about the meeting of this Commission, and one man told me they had received no intimation. I should have thought he could have given valuable information. He is a builder, sawmill-owner, and timber-merchant. I have been sawmilling for the last eighteen months at Puketitiri, but the rates of haulage put me out of court. There is plenty of bush there, and with proper cartage facilities the price of timber in Hawke’s Bay would come down, because now the Main Trunk line regulates the price by reason of the cost it puts us to in obtaining timber from the inland bush. The men cutting the timber could tell a great deal better than the Lands Department what the bush is producing.

4. *The Chairman.*] Do you know, Mr. Ward, whether *Pinus insignis* has been milled in this district for building purposes, or gums?—In an experience of thirty-seven years I have not known of any. *Pinus insignis* has been cut for fencing, but the blue-gum is not suitable for building, being of too quick growth, and it splits to pieces.

5. Have you any knowledge of any private lands that could be acquired for tree-planting in Hawke’s Bay?—I have not considered the question.

6. Do you agree that this district should be planted for future use?—No doubt it should. It should be made compulsory that when land is cut up so-much of the barren spots should be