

25. You would not think it reasonable for a man to go to the top of a hill overlooking miles of country, and from there be able to decide how many feet of rimu, miro, kahikatea, and tawa there were in that bush?—Certainly not; it must be only extremely approximate. As a case in point, take the estimate of the Motou timber: there was no comparison between the ideas of the officers sent to estimate that.

26. Is that on record?—Yes, in Wellington.

27. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Does the Department give the officers a reasonable time to estimate the timber in these areas?—I think so, unless the estimate is wanted urgently, when the officer has to do the best he can. I think, as a rule, he is given ample time to do the work. When a man has to go into the bush his only plan is to count the trees, but if he is where he can overlook the whole area he can form a fair idea of what is in it.

28. Supposing an estimate was wanted of the timber in the East Cape Peninsula, how long would the Department give their officer to do it?—If the matter were urgent the officer has to do the best he can, and probably he would only look over the tops of the hills. But if they wanted an expert report I think they would be quite prepared to give a reasonable time to do it.

29. Could a man over a piece of land like that do the work under several months?—In several weeks.

30. Could he do it at all?—Yes, if properly equipped with a party and tents. Sawmillers seem able to get a good idea of what is in the bush the first time they go through it before tendering for the same, and might consider the time another man would take to do the work wasted.

31. *Mr. Adams.*] Do you think these estimates are under or over the mark?—I have always been inclined to err on the lesser side. Several officers were appointed to estimate the timber in the Motu bush, and they differed from one another from 15,000 ft. to 20,000 ft. to an acre.

32. Can you recall one case where the bush has been underestimated and afterwards cut out and the true quantity ascertained?—The Motu bush has been altered every year by cutting, and by private or Crown lands being further opened up. I do not think I can answer your question.

DARGAVILLE, TUESDAY, 15TH APRIL, 1913.

FRANCIS JOSEPH DARGAVILLE SWORN and examined. (No. 42.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the Mayor of Dargaville?—Yes.

2. What point do you wish to bring before us?—I wish to refer to the question of the Waipoua Forest, regarding which a section of the community has endeavoured to induce the Government to keep it as a kauri-timber reserve. Speaking from experience, the idea of saving a kauri forest from destruction by fire has in almost all cases proved futile, as the kauri-tree is easily fired. Such a forest is not necessarily set on fire by the scrub in the immediate vicinity, but a spark from a distant blaze very often ignites a kauri-tree at its top, and soon the whole bush takes fire. Another point about the Waipoua Forest that has to be considered is that the bush there is spread over a considerable area of country which is admirably suited for settlement, enjoying an excellent climate, with soil of fair quality, and I am certain that if that area were opened for selection it would be eagerly sought after. I would therefore suggest that the Waipoua Forest should be offered for sale, and that the proceeds be utilized for the purpose of acquiring a forest belonging to Mr. Trounson, and which you will see to-morrow on the road to Waipoua. It is an isolated block, and more easily conserved from fire than any other block of timber in the district. It is also easy of access to a main road, and would be very handy to the proposed extension of the Kaihu Railway at Donnelly's Crossing. Mr. Trounson's area is from 300 to 500 acres. The Waipoua Forest is spread over about 23,000 acres, and this seems a large block of land to lock up for that purpose. The Government would be doing the right thing in disposing of the timber and thereby allowing the land to be utilized for settlement. Mr. Trounson's block adjoins the Kauri Park.

3. Has all the land adjoining the Waipoua Reserve been cut up for settlement?—Some of it is not yet in occupation, but the Prime Minister assured me the other day that the balance would be made available immediately for settlement. But Mr. Maxwell (caretaker, Waipoua Forest) will be able to give you more accurate information as to what sections are settled.

4. *Mr. Maxwell.*: It is nearly all occupied, but there would be other sections available if the timber were sold.

5. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other matter you wish to mention, Mr. Dargaville?—As to the question of the export of white-pine, speaking as a settler, and not on behalf of the sawmilling industry, I may say that the kahikatea in this district is within measurable distance of being cut out, and we ought to consider the advisability of preventing its exportation, seeing it is required for a special purpose.

6. Is the kahikatea here growing by itself or is it mixed with other timber?—In some cases it is the sole timber, but on the higher ground it is mixed bush. On the flats there is little kahikatea.

7. In some districts it has been represented that where that timber is mixed with other classes of timber if the kahikatea is not worked it is liable to be wasted through destruction by fire. Do you agree with that view?—That event might occur in the case of the drier country.

8. Where it is growing as a bush solely it is generally on very rich land, and the question arises as to whether it would pay the State to keep that land in standing bush or to put it into grass which would produce butter-fat. Do you care to express an opinion on that point?—It is a matter that requires careful consideration, but personally I am of opinion that the grass would pay this country better.