

9. Have you made any experiments in this district in the way of utilizing other timbers, such as tawa or taraire for butter-boxes?—None have been made to my knowledge. The kahikatea has always been so handy, and the time has not yet arrived when we have to think of providing other timbers. Taraire is being utilized for furniture, and it goes to Sydney for that purpose.

10. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Do you know of a bush from which the kauri has been removed and the rimu, leaving other timbers growing, and where fire has not run through?—No. It is difficult to find a bush in this district where fire has not gone through.

11. In that case the bush is done for?—Yes; fire follows the bushman and the settler.

12. *Mr. Clarke.*] And there is no timber available in those old burnt areas?—No, with the exception of the small timber that a few years ago would not be cut. Now they are cutting the “rickers,” because they have become valuable.

13. Your main reason for wishing to dispose of the Waipoua Forest is the inability to protect it from fire?—Yes.

14. Later on you suggested the bush should be sold, and the proceeds applied to the purchase of another bush, which you reckoned could be saved from the fire?—Oh, no; but more easily saved. I do not know of any kauri forest that could be saved from fire, but Mr. Trounson's bush could be better protected than the Waipoua Reserve.

15. Do you not think there would be as much danger in the case of Mr. Trounson's forest, seeing that it faces the main road, and will be near the proposed railway?—I think not, for the reason that the road is there and also a lot of open country. It is not so liable to fire, being a small area, as one of over 20,000 acres, with much high fern and grass country surrounding it. Settlement is approaching Waipoua all the time, and the danger arises from the settler who is burning off his land, from whence fire may spread quite accidentally to the reserve. Or it might be set fire to by a gum-digger.

16. Do you recognize that your argument would absolutely preclude the saving of any bush?—To a greater degree as regards Waipoua, and to a lesser degree as regards Mr. Trounson's bush.

17. Why sell one reserve to buy another in its place in the same district?—It is less liable to be burnt than Waipoua.

18. Supposing the Waipoua Forest were opened for sale, what do you think would become of the timber itself?—You are getting on tender ground now. Opinions are divided as to where the timber would go. There would be great competition for the timber, and the State would get a very good price for it, but as to where it should or would go I do not profess to know, as I am not an expert.

19. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] What is the rainfall in the Waipoua Forest?—I do not know.

20. Well, it is so much that it is said that it is impossible almost to burn it?—I have been there on several occasions, and only once met with rain.

21. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other matter you wish to speak about?—With regard to afforestation generally, I am a member of the Hobson County Council, and that Council has now approved of a suggestion to plant all its reserves. In each county there are a large number of reserves fit for nothing, and bringing in no revenue, and we intend to plant them with utility trees, which will also assist the climatic conditions. The Government should encourage and assist local bodies and private individuals in this direction. My Council is going to put its planting scheme in hand this winter. We intend to plant some pines as shelter-belts, and useful trees inside.

WILLIAM THOMAS HUNT sworn and examined. (No. 43.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What matter do you wish to refer to?—I am a farmer, and a member of the Otamatea County Council, and wish to mention the matter of the block of 4,500 acres at Ruawai. It consists mostly of kahikatea, and was known as Butler's timber-cutting right. The Crown set aside Section 4, Block II, of 74 acres, as a reserve, but the timber having been cleared out of the adjoining block this small reserve is gradually decaying, and in a short time the timber will disappear. It is good land for settlement. I would suggest that the reservation be lifted, and the area be exchanged for portions of Sections 1A and 2 of Block XII, Tokatoka Survey District. Kauri-trees are growing on the hilly land in the sections I suggest for exchange, and there is no other bush within a hundred miles of the piece on those sections.

2. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] You think the Government should sell the present reserve?—Yes, and put the reserve I suggest in place of it.

3. *The Chairman.*] Are there not timber-rights over the portion you now want reserved?—Yes, and we suggest that the Crown should buy the timber thereon from the Butler people.

4. Has any estimate been made of the quantity of timber involved?—Yes, all the kauri has been estimated, and 6d. royalty is being paid for it.

5. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Would it be worth while putting a tram into it?—I think so; but in 100 acres you would not get more than twenty-five kauri-trees. I cannot give an estimate now of the quantity of timber there.

PETER BROWN sworn and examined. (No. 44.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a settler residing at Waimata, about seven miles from here. I wish to refer to the question of the Waipoua Forest. I agree with Mr. Dargaville that it would be wise to dispose of the timber there, and open the land up for dairy farms, as the latter are a better asset to the community than timber, which is liable to be destroyed by fire at any time.