

AUCKLAND, THURSDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1913.

DAVID GOLDIE sworn and examined. (No. 50.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a timber-merchant in business in Auckland?—Yes.

2. One subject we have to inquire into is as to whether or not, in view of the increasing demand for white-pine timber in this country, its exportation should be prohibited. We should be very glad to hear your views and those of the other Auckland timber-merchants regarding this question?—It is a great mistake to continue shipping white-pine in planks to the English market, where it is used for piano-cases. I have refused to supply it for that purpose, as it discredits the timber of New Zealand generally; but I was informed that a cheap case was wanted, and the people concerned did not care whether it lasted or not. For that purpose I should certainly put an export duty on that timber. As to butter-boxes, the question turns on the supply and demand. The Lands Department could better supply that information.

3. The white-pine grows on swamp land of the best quality very often for dairying, and the question arises whether it would pay the country better to keep that land in timber or use it for dairying purposes. What is your opinion?—The matter depends entirely on whether the swamp land can be properly drained, and its situation generally.

4. Have you had any experience in using *Pinus insignis* timber?—Two mills here have used that timber for boxmaking, and some of it went to Rarotonga, where it was condemned.

5. That timber perhaps was not grown under forestry conditions?—No, simply for shelter. It was full of knots. Macklow Bros. and the Waitemata Milling Company were the firms that used it. They did so when they had no other logs, but I refused to buy any of it.

6. Have you had any experience as to the cost of building in wood and in brickwork or ferro-concrete?—No. Kauri is not used very much in building now. Rimu and matai are used, but on account of the inferior timber used present-day buildings are not very much more costly than in olden times. Timber grown on pumice soil is not as good as that grown in the north. Totara, for instance, grown on pumice land is not as heavy as that grown in the north.

7. The life of a building erected now is not as long as the life of one constructed twenty years ago?—No, especially if it is built by jerry-builders. There are buildings which have been erected fifty years, and the timber seems as good as the day it was put in. In those days kauri was cheap, and good timber was used—not the cheap stuff they are using now.

8. *Mr. Clarke.*] What are your views as to the question of the future timber-supply for the Dominion?—I think the Department could furnish you with reliable information on that point better than I could. Building is increasing, and the supply is becoming smaller. In the King-country from forty to fifty million feet has been cut in recent years by a few mills.

9. Do you find it more difficult to obtain supplies than you did formerly?—Yes. Royalty in the case of kauri is now 4s. and 5s. per 100 ft., when formerly it used to be only 6d. Then we have to pay much higher wages, and do not get an equivalent amount of work.

10. We are told that forests which have already been milled are now being gone over again, and trees that at one time were rejected as unfit for the saw are now being cut up and supplied as marketable timber. Is that correct?—Quite true. The mills are now taking it all out, when before it was rejected, kauri especially.

11. Do you think the Government are in general getting sufficient payment throughout the Dominion for the standing timber?—As far as the north is concerned they are getting the full value—every tree has to be paid for; but in the south the same system is not followed. There the Government are not getting the value, and the system is unfair to us. We pay for timber that it does not pay us to take out, and the Government gets it.

12. Do you not think that our supplies are not as great as they are commonly supposed to be?—They will not last as long as it is thought.

13. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Do you not think some method could be adopted to check the waste that goes on in connection with our bushes?—The kauri you cannot possibly save, because that tree is easily killed. Smoke will almost kill it, while the tapping for the gum destroys the trees wholesale. In some cases gum-diggers are allowed to tap the trees to prevent their setting fire to the forest, and in a dry season like the present there is an ever-constant danger of a bush-fire spreading and destroying thousands of pounds' worth of kauri.

14. What effect has tapping on a tree?—We never like it tapped unless we are going to cut it within three years.

15. Does tapping cause any injury to the wood?—It is like taking the life-blood from a man, and the timber is not nearly as good, to my mind.

16. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Have you had any experience as to the lasting-powers of timber which has been tapped and of timber which has not been tapped?—When cutting it up I thought the tapped kauri seemed very much softer and spongier.

17. *Mr. Murdoch.*] You have found great difficulty in saving a kauri bush from fire?—You cannot save it unless it is a large area and you have plenty of men on watch; then there is great difficulty. You can save any other timber but kauri.

18. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other point you wish to mention?—I suggest that you should consider the advisability of growing wattle, which forms capital wood for staves for butter-barrels. It grows rapidly, fire does not affect it, and it is used in Australia for the purpose I mention. Black-wattle is the one to grow.

19. *Mr. Clarke.*] Do you not think some of the gum lands could be profitably utilized for planting for future requirements?—The only trouble is as to the time it will take to grow the trees. Any tree to be of any value will take a long time to mature. You might try the Tasmanian gums. We use the peppermint-gum for shingles, and the stringy-bark for flooring and joists. These gums might do better in the south on account of the climatic conditions there corresponding to those in Tasmania, but they might be tried up here also.