

of bush in the Wairarapa—the only piece of native forest left between Napier and Wellington—and many attempts were made to get hold of it, the last excuse a settler urged being that his wife had rheumatism on account of the shade.

7. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] What was the ultimate fate of that reserve?—I suppose they got it at last. I came away.

8. *The Chairman.*] What are your views as to water-conservation?—The great difficulty we had when I was in the Department was to conserve the sources of the water-supply. In places in the Wairarapa you can see the dry beds of creeks where now after a heavy rain the water does not flow at all. From one-quarter to half a mile of shingle is now exposed at Ngapara Bridge, near Woodville, and there is great trouble in regulating the flow of the river. Where there is alluvial soil and a shingle bed the tendency is for the river to make on one side and lose on another, the reason being that too much bush has been felled. Settlers should be encouraged to plant trees, but the Government should make it a condition, when setting aside a reserve containing bush, that that bush should be retained in order to keep the water-supply intact. As to the question of forming plantations in suitable localities, in putting timber on a railway-truck you take the cream out of the profit. I would urge that plantations should be made in suitable localities where there is water carriage, in order to reduce the cost of production. The American red-pine grows very fast at Remuera, and is a fine timber. Silting is very prevalent in parts of the country, and is due to the bush being cleared off the hills, causing the rivers to silt up. As to officers' reports on timber land suitable for reservation, it is only necessary for a Minister to visit the district and the proposed reserve is wiped out. As to loss in the value of timber in milling operations, if we take the Waipoua Forest, it is estimated to contain 100,000,000 ft. of timber. That does not mean 100,000,000 ft. of sawn timber, but only 60,000,000 ft. perhaps, the loss in value being 33 per cent., and only two-thirds of the remainder is first-class material at the most. "Railway freights" simply mean freights on second-class timber. There is a lot of second-class timber left in the bush that it does not pay to bring out. A competent valuer should be appointed to decide what is first- and second-class timber, and adjust the matter accordingly. The Kaihu Valley Railway was not finished when that timber was all cut out, and a Commission recommended that the line should be taken up. The demand for timber is increasing, and too much is exported, notwithstanding that half enough timber is not put into the houses now. In the case of an eight-roomed house I inspected the other day I could carry all the timber in the roof in one load. I bought 42 ft. this morning for lattice-work, and paid 14s. for it. As to the use of kauri timber for mining purposes, this timber is too valuable for such use, and yet it is used for sleepers, posts, and mining.

9. Do you see any reason why a miner should get his timber for nothing?—Certainly not. He should pay just the same as any one else. Those regulations should be amended, for the mixed authority as between the Warden and the Commissioner imposes no check as to what is bought and what is taken away. A competent Ranger should be appointed to measure all timber. I notice that many people advocate putting an export duty on timber. I do not think it is fair that a man holding a timber-area from the Crown, in addition to rates and taxes, should have to pay an export duty on what he sends out. The position might be met by providing, in the case of all timber-areas now held by the Crown, that the preference should be given to any applicant undertaking to utilize the timber in the Dominion. More timber has been exported than has been used in the Dominion, and the best at that.

10. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Have you ever known of a kauri bush that was not burnt when the settler or gum-digger came about?—When Puhipuhi settlement was started I tried to prevent the gum-diggers going in, and suggested it should be confined to settlers only, so that in the event of a fire the latter would be able to give their services in putting it out. But the bush was burnt by the diggers eventually. When I came to this district there were townships in Waipoua Forest, and roads through it, but I had the whole lot cleared out. Then I started on the cattle, and the last time I saw it was in as good a condition as ever. There is an excellent man acting as caretaker, and he loves every tree in that bush. The only way to preserve that forest is to put on more than one caretaker to guard it, and keep everybody out.

11. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Even with all those risks that bush is not being burnt?—If the gum-diggers were allowed in there would not be a stick that would be worth removing.

12. Did these men burn the bush when they were living there?—No; there were plenty of places for them to camp. They did not start fires inside. It is the only kauri forest I know of that has not been burnt.

13. Can you account for that by the extreme wetness?—To some extent; but that bush is not as wet as Warawara, which is absolutely isolated. Some sections were about to be thrown open on the creek, near Waipoua, and I reported to the Government that to open that land for settlement would mean the end of the forest, as the trees would ignite at the tops from outside fires. To preserve that bush there should be fences and banks to check an approaching fire. At certain times you should burn off the strip of fern approaching it.

14. *The Chairman.*] That would cost a great deal of money?—The caretakers could be used for doing the work.

15. Do you advocate preserving that forest for all time?—It should be preserved as a nest-egg. It will be cut down eventually, but it should be reserved for the use of the people in the Dominion or for Government purposes.

16. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] And cut by the Government for Government purposes?—Yes.

17. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Supposing a recommendation were made that that bush should be milled by the Government, would it be a popular thing in Dargaville?—In milling by the Government you create a new staff, and incur large expense.

18. Would these agitators like the Government doing it?—The Government could not cut it out as economically as the large mills.