

5. Was the timber treated in any way?—No, just the plain timber, well seasoned.

6. With the butter-boxes used here is any preparation placed on the white-pine?—No.

7. In Otago and Auckland evidence was given that the white-pine was first paraffined. Is that done here?—No. That is the system followed in Otago and Auckland, but I do not think it has any value. The parchment paper, used properly, is quite sufficient. Nothing is gained by paraffining.

8. In the experiment in Wellington was the parchment paper used?—Yes. I had the box opened at the Palmerston Show three years ago. The butter had been in the box about three months, and it was of good quality. Tawa timber has been used for years for casks, but casks are not very satisfactory for butter exporting and storing.

9. Has poplar timber been tried?—I do not know.

10. *Dr. Cockayne.*] We were informed in Auckland by Mr. Thornton that if parchment paper was used for lining butter-boxes almost any timber would do. What is your opinion?—I think that would be correct, providing the parchment paper was of good quality; but at present we have a lot of inferior parchment paper, which becomes soft like blotting-paper, and it is damaging the butter.

11. Have you had any experience of butter-boxes made of paper-pulp?—I have seen the boxes here, but not used them or tested them. I should think they would be quite suitable if of reasonable cost.

12. Can we do without the white-pine if we can find something else to take its place?—You might have to use more lining to keep the wood from the butter, and it would be more costly. I do not consider it absolutely necessary to have the butter-box made in one piece of timber, as in the past.

13. *Mr. Clarke.*] With regard to white-pine timber, in the interests of the dairy industry do you think it advisable to prohibit its exportation?—I should say Yes.

14. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Even supposing the white-pine forests were standing on land which for the production of butter-fat was much more valuable than holding it for milling the forest?—I understood the supply of timber was rather on the short side.

HENRY OKEY, M.P., examined. (No. 70.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You wish to refer to a certain reserve, I think?—Yes, the Everett Road Reserve. It is in Mr. Hine's electorate, but some settlers have asked me to inform the Commission that they wish the reserve sold, and the land brought under settlement; otherwise it is going to be a nuisance to the district on account of the spread of blackberry. It is a costly matter to clear it, and as a reserve they do not consider it is required. Roads have to be maintained by the settlers, and if the reserve were brought under grass the land would be rated, and the rates would go towards the upkeep of the roads. There is no objection locally to the reservation being uplifted.

CHARLES AHIER sworn and examined. (No. 71.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a timber-merchant here, and may be able to give you some information as to the timber-supply of this district. The only Taranaki mill I know of is one owned by Mr. Symons. It is at the foot of the mountain, and turns out from 80,000 ft. to 100,000 ft. per month. Another mill on the Egmont Road, near Inglewood, is not turning out more than half that quantity. There is plenty of timber in Taranaki, but not handy enough to a railway to make it profitable to work. Until the railway is running between Opunake and New Plymouth, around the coast, where there is a good deal of timber, the latter supply will not be worked. Our supplies come from the Main Trunk, but it is very inferior timber to what we have formerly received in Taranaki, which produced the best rimu in New Zealand.

2. Is the timber at Opunake a red-pine forest?—Yes.

3. Is there a large quantity of it?—A great deal.

4. On Crown or private land?—I cannot say. We also get supplies from Mokau, a good class of timber. We import a considerable quantity of Oregon pine.

5. What price per hundred is good-quality rimu sold at here?—It averages according to quality from 15s. 6d. to 19s.

6. Do you utilize other timbers here, such as matai or tawa?—Tawa is not used for building. We have white-pine, but it is nearly all exhausted, until the railway is built.

7. Where is the white-pine growing?—It is mixed with the rimu.

8. What is the local price of white-pine?—I cannot land it in my yards under 11s. 8d. a hundred feet.

9. Do you do any manufacturing?—Yes, we have a large factory.

10. What can you supply butter-boxes at?—Until this year we have been supplying them at 1s. 3d., but next year we shall have to add a little extra and make it 1s. 4d. a box. There is always keen competition in New Plymouth, which keeps the price down. At the price I have quoted they are made at a loss.

11. Do you attribute the proposed increase to the supply of timber becoming scarcer?—Hardly. At Eltham there is a company of farmers who have bought up a line of white-pine bush up the Main Trunk line and erected a factory there. They are making butter-boxes for the farmers at cost price.

12. Are you personally acquainted with the bush that has been bought by the Egmont Box-factory?—No.