

to obtain the necessary shelter for the rest. There is a block of 6,000 acres across the river belonging to Mr. McKelvie, who is, I understand, prepared to deal with it in the same way. If the Government agree to plant the block I first referred to, the owners stipulate that the rabbits must be kept down, and that no lupin be planted, as it is apt to spread. As to planting building-timbers, possibly you have had evidence that the quantity of softer or inferior timbers that will be wanted in the future is likely to increase very much, and also for the butter, cheese, and fruit industries. For this purpose *Pinus insignis* seems the most suitable, as it grows very quickly, within twenty-five years yielding a certain amount of millable timber. Inland of the district I mention gums grow well, and would prove generally more payable and useful than the soft woods.

3. What is the average width of the belt of sandy country you refer to?—About half a mile.

4. What rentals are the holders of the leases paying?—Very small rentals. McKelvie's lease of 6,300 acres carries with it a rent of £132 10s. a year. One I am interested in, of 1,818 acres, involves a rent of £31 per annum. In the case of a lease of 3,500 acres, farther up the coast, the rental is £59 per annum.

5. In the event of the Government deciding to plant these dunes would it be necessary to erect fences to keep the stock off?—Yes, but the marram-grass could be planted in the meantime, as the stock would not interfere with it.

6. Are there any rabbits on the sand-dunes now?—Practically none, but they would go there if marram-grass were planted.

7. Are they very bad on what might be termed the mainland portion?—Not very plentiful, but still they are always there, and there is a liability for them to increase.

8. Do the runholders keep them down?—Yes, by poisoning and killing generally.

9. Have you made any personal experiments in reclaiming sand-dune areas?—In a very small way I have planted some marram-grass, and it has taken very well. I tried sowing *Pinus maritima* seed on the marram-grass, but no result followed. I planted *Pinus muricata*, also a few natives, but they died.

10. Did you meet with any success?—No; the sand seemed to kill everything.

11. What area did you plant in marram-grass?—7 or 8 acres, and after nine years it is still growing well.

12. It prevented the spread of the sand?—Quite.

13. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Do you know of any plantations on private land along that coast?—There are none very close to the coast, but there is one at Heaton Park, inland from one of the runs I have mentioned. It has in it a good many pines, which have been planted twelve or fifteen years. I recommend the Commission to visit the place and note the growth of these pines on the bare sand. The owner is Mr. J. Simpson. The plantation is six miles from the sea.

14. *The Chairman.*] In regard to the offer the landholders are prepared to make in respect to tree-planting, has there been any meeting authorizing you to speak on their behalf?—I wrote to and saw them all, excepting one man named Wilson, who owns land in the centre of the sand-dune block. He seemed not quite certain as to what view he would take, but I think he would fall in with the others. He was afraid of rabbits spreading over his place from the proposed plantations. His run is numbered 18 and 19.

15. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Has the Heaton Park Estate done much planting?—Yes, on the inside of the sandhills. I wish to add that the area I refer to is going back rapidly, the quantity of feed there is falling off, and if something is not done to check the sand-drift it will become entirely valueless.

16. Is the sand going farther inland?—Not much, because its spread was stopped by the marram-grass.

17. *Mr. Murdoch.*] If the area were planted what opportunity is there of getting the timber to the market?—The railway-line is near.

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, 16TH MAY, 1913.

WILLIAM HENRY BENNETT sworn and examined. (No. 73.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What matter do you wish to bring forward?—I am a builder and contractor, and chairman of the executive of the New Zealand Builders' Association. For a number of years our federation have had the matter of the future timber-supplies of the Dominion under their earnest consideration, and the matter was brought to a head last year in a memorial to the Government setting forth our views on the subject. I beg to hand a copy of that petition to the Commission.

2. I take it that this pamphlet sets forth fully the opinions of the federation on the question?—Yes, and it is not necessary for me to add anything to it.

3. Is there any marked shortage in the timber-supplies of this district?—Yes; within the last month or two certain classes of building-timber have advanced very much in price. For O.T.G. heart-of-rimu lining, 4 in. and 6 in. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in., the quotation is £1 5s. and £1 6s. per hundred feet superficial. That is a large increase, and the excuse is that heart timber is very difficult to get, and it is very largely sought after for joinery purposes and general inside finishing-work. O.B. timber has also risen slightly. It has been urged that foreign timbers should be admitted free of duty in order to help the local supplies out, and the fear was expressed that the market would be swamped with Oregon pine; that fear has not been borne out by facts. To-day we are paying £1 1s. per hundred feet for Oregon in lengths