

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

INVERCARGILL, MONDAY, 3RD MARCH, 1913.

WILLIAM MOSELEY ANDREWS sworn and examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What do you wish to state?—I represent, with Mr. Walker, the building trades and Builders' Association of the Southland District, and desire to place before you our views on the matter the Commission is inquiring into. The question of afforestation in this district is going to be a serious one if not grappled with at once, inasmuch as our forests are being rapidly depleted, and as no provision is being made for replanting it follows that timber fit for building purposes will soon be non-existent. We think that the Government should, in the first place, remove the duty on imported timbers, especially Oregon pine, which would, in our opinion, help to preserve the local timbers to a large extent, as they are more suitable for certain work than our own. We also think that the present wholesale slaughter by the mills is uncalled for, and that something should be done by inspection so that more care can be exercised in regard to the cutting thereof. Also, something might be done on these lines: sawmillers, after they have cut out an area, should plant a certain number of trees in place thereof in selected places. Trees could be supplied by the Government at a nominal cost. Arrangements might also be made to form a tree-planting society in various centres, Government to supply trees to this society free of charge. We would further urge the Government to use every endeavour to push on the tree-planting on the lines they are doing in the north, by planting suitable trees which would in, say, from forty-four to fifty years, be fit to use. We have heard of samples of timber from imported trees, grown in New Zealand, that have been fit to use in less than the above time. There are large areas in Southland that are not suitable for farming which could be planted—viz., all the eastern slopes of the Longwoods around Otautau, &c., which, lying to the sun and protected from the westerly gales, would grow trees to perfection. Another area is lying along the hills fronting the Hedgehope River. This country, being well watered and interspersed with many gullies, and of easy access, would make an ideal plantation. In conclusion, we hope that the Commission will use their best endeavours to promote a system of tree-planting throughout the whole of New Zealand.

2. Can you give us an idea of the areas you consider suitable for planting?—Only approximately. I allude to the Hedgehope district. The gullies there are suitable for agriculture, but the growth at present is merely scrub. The abandoned mining area lying to the south and facing north to the Hedgehope River would be suitable.

3. Do you know of any plantations that have reached a stage fit for milling?—No. I have seen *macrocarpa* used for window-sashes, but I cannot speak as to its lasting capabilities.

4. Are there any trees of that kind over forty years old in this district?—Yes, some distance from Invercargill.

5. *Mr. Murdoch.*] What do you mean by "wholesale slaughter by the mills"?—I mentioned the sawmillers, but I should also have included mining operations. As a miner I have seen the trees indiscriminately cut down and left to be burnt in dry weather. They were 5 ft. in diameter. The sawmillers are not doing that now; but still there is room for better methods of selection of the trees for cutting. The smaller trees should be left for timber, whether in mining or saw-milling areas, and then in time they would come into use. I think the methods of inspection of milling-areas should be improved.

6. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] But these people are cutting their own bush?—Yes, but a special safeguarding clause should be inserted in the lease when the area is granted.

7. You think timber-trees ought to be planted in such areas?—Yes.

8. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Have you seen any foreign trees which have been planted in old bush which has been partially cut?—I have seen some imported trees so planted. The *macrocarpa* will grow splendidly in any bush. On the Orepuki Diggings areas of scrub were cut, the big trees left, and the land was sown in grass.

9. Would such an area if cleared entirely of native timber grow grass?—Yes.

10. *Mr. Clarke.*] Your idea is that planting should take place in this district in order to ensure in the future a permanent supply of timber?—Yes.

11. What about the financial point of view? Has there not been a considerable increase in the cost of timber as the result of sawmilling being removed to a farther distance afield?—There has been a considerable rise, as much as three times. It is not accounted for by the increase in the cost of labour, as sawmillers fourteen years ago were getting almost the same wages as now.

12. *Mr. Adams.*] Do you know the present state of the sashes you referred to made from *macrocarpa*?—No. They were made twelve years ago.

13. *The Chairman.*] How much do you pay on the railway per 100 ft. from Bluff to Invercargill?—Rate and a half on imported timber. The price of Oregon has risen 7s. 6d. a hundred feet in Southland during the last three months.