

23. Would not the proposition from a commercial point of view depend largely on the price you get the land at?—The Lands Department would be the best people to decide where the land should be selected.

24. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Do you think it right that a sawmiller should sell you yellow-birch, a comparatively worthless timber, under the name of "red-birch," which is a fairly good timber?—The difference would not be understood by the man who was buying the timber.

25. *Mr. Adams.*] Do you know the difference between the different birches?—We have only the one we call the red-birch on the market here.

26. *Dr. Cockayne.*] When you get a consignment of totally different timber under the name of "red-birch" from Nelson, or the North Island, what do you call it?—We would call it "beech" here.

27. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Supposing you get it from the mills seasoned, will it twist or warp again?—It must be watched and turned.

ERNEST HERBERT WILMOT sworn and examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you been long acquainted with this district, Mr. Wilmot?—I am the Commissioner of Crown Lands here, and have held that position for about four years, but I have been generally acquainted with Otago for close on forty years.

2. What areas in this district do you consider suitable for afforestation purposes—land that is fairly cheap?—The Superintendent of the nursery at Tapanui has spoken to me several times about this matter, and I have consulted the Ranger also; but we have found it very difficult to find any areas in Otago that are suitable, and that we could recommend.

3. I understand there are large areas of Crown land in Otago Central?—Yes, large areas held under pastoral lease.

4. Are there resumption clauses in the leases, or would you require to wait until the end of the lease before the lands would be available?—Most of those runs are held under Class A, and not resumable in the ordinary way; but, of course, you can resume under other clauses of the Act.

5. I suppose the leases expire at different times?—Yes.

6. Are there any expiring shortly?—We looked through the leases expiring up to 1918 not long ago, and we would not select any lands from those that seemed very suitable. If you go in for cheap land you will often find that only parts of it are suitable for tree-planting, which tells very badly against the value of the plantations.

7. Do you consider that Otago is well supplied with scenic and climatic reserves?—I think so, as regards purely scenic reserves.

8. As regards scenic reserves, it has been stated that settlers complain that in some districts these reserves are becoming breeding-grounds for noxious weeds and animals, and in other cases the land they occupied was suitable for agriculture and thus they were blocking settlement?—I do not think that applies much to Otago.

9. Have any such complaints reached you?—I do not think it applies to this district.

10. *Mr. Adams.*] Are any of the runs falling in before 1918?—They come in every year. A fairly large run, the Galloway, comes in in 1916.

11. *The Chairman.*] I have just received a telegram from Mr. Statham, M.P., suggesting that the bush in the Waipori Reserve should be preserved. Do you know anything about that matter?—I think there is a large reserve there already.

12. The timber question does not bulk very largely in your district, I think?—All there is is down by the Catlin's and at the Rankleburn, and also on the west coast at Martin's Bay, which is not exploited yet.

13. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Does the timber at Wanaka come into your district?—Just a little at Makarora Valley, which is partly in our district, the other part being in Canterbury.

14. *The Chairman.*] Does the Ranger value the timber when a miller applies for an area?—Up to the present most of the timber has been paid for as cut, on the returns from the mill.

15. How are these returns verified?—The books are open for the Ranger's inspection at any time, and at Catlin's most of it comes out by rail.

16. Does the miller have to make any statutory declaration as to the amount of timber he cuts?—We have never required it of him that I know of.

17. Is any of the timber bought on a royalty basis as it stands?—I started that system as soon as I came here. It is a most satisfactory system.

18. How is that timber estimated?—It is valued by the surveyor who makes the survey, excepting in the case of small patches, when the Ranger will value it.

19. Is the surveyor an officer of the Department, or a private surveyor?—A private one employed by the miller, and paid by him.

20. Is there not a danger in that case of the surveyor being biased in favour of the miller who employs and pays him?—I do not think so. We would not allow a man to act who we did not consider was fairly competent and a straight man. In Southland, where I had considerable experience in both Departments, the millers had great confidence in the surveyors employed there. I have not had much experience in Otago of the matter, not more than two areas having been surveyed since I came here.

21. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] You would not accept his statement if you had no confidence in the surveyor?—No. If the miller wished to appoint a man I had no confidence in, knowing he knew nothing about the value of timber, I would suggest he should get another man.