

HENRY GEORGE ELL, M.P., sworn and examined. (No. 18.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand you wish to tender some evidence in regard to afforestation matters?—Yes. With regard to the great use timber is put for local purposes, I might say I was informed by one manufacturer yesterday that he required at least 300,000 ft. per annum of native timbers. Another informed me that his firm's requirements for timber for casing was about 500,000 ft. per annum. One manager of a factory in Nelson informed me he wanted 500,000 ft. per annum, and another said he required from 250,000 ft. to 300,000 ft. per annum. As to the existing forests and how long they will last, you have that information, but I wish to emphasize the need for more tree-planting throughout this Dominion. The present policy of the Department of limiting their operations to certain districts is entirely wrong. In Taranaki there are no State forests beyond the natural ones, which are being rapidly cut out; there are none in Hawke's Bay, Wellington, or Canterbury. Hanmer is beyond Canterbury. In Marlborough there are none. At Dumgree some planting is going on. The mistake, in my judgment, in connection with the present policy is that the Canterbury people, for instance, will have to bear the cost of the transit of the timber from Hanmer. To get that timber out economically it will be necessary to run a railway into the plantation; otherwise the cost of haulage would make the timber too dear for profitable use. If the people of the districts I have mentioned have not timber-supplies handy they will certainly suffer. There should be State forests in every provincial district, and there is plenty of poor land available for the purpose.

2. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Could you indicate where the localities are?—There is plenty in the immediate neighbourhood of Wellington—precipitous, hilly, broken country. I could not say whether it is Crown land or private. The Government are planting on very poor land in other places.

3. *The Chairman.*] But it is not of a precipitous nature?—I am not in a position to discuss that phase of the question. The timbermen find it profitable to cut timber in precipitous country, and go to a great expense in doing so. I would not advise planting in country where there is only a soil-depth of from 6 in. to 18 in., but where there is plenty of soil even on precipitous country the trees will grow.

4. *Mr. Adams.*] What do you think of the proposal to plant the reserve held by the Waimakariri Protective Board?—That country is suitable, and ought to be planted, being so near a large industrial centre. In Taranaki in a few years' time thousands of farmers will have to go far afield to get even their posts or firewood.

5. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] They can grow timber for posts?—I know that, but they are not doing so, unfortunately.

6. *The Chairman.*] Would you advocate that the settlers should be offered special encouragement to plant shelter-belts?—Yes; provided the right kinds of trees were planted on the advice of a Government expert, I would exempt them from some taxation.

7. *Mr. Clarke.*] Do you think that would be a wise policy in view of the fact that another man might buy the settler out and cut the plantation down?—I see your contention.

8. Would it not be better to allow the settler to purchase the trees at cost price for his own purposes, but, as far as timber-producing for commercial purposes is concerned, to keep the matter under State control, and in large areas rather than in small shelter-belts?—I desire to see both systems adopted. Of course, before the State would allow exemption in regard to land-tax or local rates, certain covenants should be provided that the trees should be allowed to grow to maturity.

9. *Dr. Cockayne.*] The land would be sold subject to the plantation remaining intact?—Yes.

10. *The Chairman.*] Have you heard of any damage being done to the native forests by wandering herds of deer?—I have protested on more than one occasion against the deer being allowed to roam freely all over the country. They should be restricted to certain areas.

11. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Do you think such an area as the Waimakariri National Park should be used as a deer-park?—I do not. The national interest should not be sacrificed to one particular sport.

12. *The Chairman.*] Are there any other matters you wish to mention?—With regard to the question of encouraging on scientific lines the planting of trees, I consider that the planting in Canterbury, excepting in the case of Mr. Adams, a member of this Commission, has been carried on on haphazard lines, with nobody to instruct the farmers as to the best kinds of trees to plant, or to direct the operations of the local bodies.

13. Has not Mr. Robinson, the Superintending Nurseryman, been available?—Yes; but that is not sufficient. When the Hon. Mr. McNab was in office I suggested that in every land district an expert forester should be associated with its staff, to advise the local bodies and farmers, and the agricultural and pastoral associations, on tree-planting, and so help to create a stronger public opinion thereon. Many of the Road Boards and County Councils have waste river-bed lands under their control, and waste lands on roadsides, and expert advice would lead to the planting of such land.

14. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Are you aware that throughout the Empire, with the exception of India, scientific forestry is almost a new science, and it would be a most difficult matter to obtain a number of men with the necessary attainments? Do you think, therefore, one of the recommendations of this Commission should be in the direction of the training of young men as scientific foresters?—I do.

15. Do you think that as we have good University colleges we could train these men in our own country?—I do, and the system should be established without delay.

16. *Mr. Murdoch.*] Your last suggestion, as to placing competent foresters in each land district, appeals to me—it is badly wanted—but until the highly trained men referred to are available, do you not think we have men in the Dominion now who are sufficiently competent to carry