

10. *Mr. Adams.*] Do you know anything about the scenic reserves in this district?—I have travelled between here and Collingwood, and very much regretted to see the way in which the beautiful bush there has been slashed about and burnt. It ought to be preserved on each side of the road. The land there can never be cultivated, being very stony, and only fit for grazing cattle, or sheep perhaps. There is still some bush left, and it is a very fine bit of scenery. The same remark applies to the Buller Gorge, which in some places is fast becoming a mass of blackened stumps. Some of the land there is lease in perpetuity, but a good deal is freehold. It is not high-priced land, being steep and rocky. There is a large hill of marble there. The outcrop is a mile in width, and runs for miles across the mountains, and the land is fit for nothing but to run a few sheep on. In 100 acres you would only get 10 acres of grass.

11. *Mr. Clarke.*] Have you issued no timber licenses for four years?—None that I can remember.

12. Does that mean there has been no mining-work carried on during that time?—Oh, no; but the mines that are working are established mines, having their timber-cutting licenses before I came here. There are one or two mills working at Collingwood, nominally mining mills, but I think they send out timber. The ordinary miner is entitled to cut timber on Crown lands for his own purpose, and the old-established companies have their rights along with their mining-rights.

13. Do their mining-rights give them the right to cut timber and sell it for market purposes?—Nominally, they do not; but in practice they do that.

14. Are they within their rights in selling it?—I think so. I do not think there would be anything to restrict them, or any ground for forfeiture. Stricter regulations might be drawn up if the Warden is to have the right to grant timber in that way. The Mining Regulations were primarily drawn up to deal with mining-timber only, but in practice I know they do sell.

14A. Practically speaking, then, they are abusing their rights by taking advantage of a technicality?—I would not say they have abused their rights, or that their rights would be liable to forfeiture for selling the timber for other than mining purposes.

15. Should the regulations be made stricter for the purpose of allowing miners to have timber for their own purposes, or for other purposes?—Only for mining purposes, which was the original intention.

16. Would it not be possible for a man to apply for a timber-cutting license under these conditions when he had no hope of obtaining any good mining result?—He could nominally apply for it for mining purposes, and could cut and sell timber, although there was no possibility of starting a mine.

17. Is not that evasion?—I am not prepared to commit myself at present to saying whether a man who does that is committing a breach or not; but the matter requires looking into.

18. Then the matter should not be under a dual control?—I am quite satisfied about that; but I do think that timber for mining purposes should be under the control of the Warden, because all the mining ought to be under his supervision.

19. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other matter you wish to allude to?—There is a question as to the granting of rights outside a mining district that may come within your province. My opinion is that the Warden should have the right to grant all rights, either for mining for gold or timber rights, whether inside or outside the mining district; but with regard to mining-rights applied for outside the mining district, no grant should be made by the Warden until he receives a report from the Commissioner of Crown Lands. I am quite sure this system would be satisfactory to the Commissioners, who do not like dealing with mining-rights, and it is within the province of the Warden. But the Commissioner's interests would be sufficiently safeguarded if no grants were made outside the mining district, either for timber-cutting or mining, without first getting a report from the Commissioner.

20. Would it not be better to say that the question of timber shall be left in the hands of the Lands Department, the miller not to be allowed to cut timber without the license being endorsed by yourself?—I would have no objection to that; but, seeing that the Warden is solely concerned with mining, it might be better to consider that question from a mining point of view. I have known Commissioners of Crown Lands who have been rather antagonistic to mining, and I do not blame them, as I have seen fine Crown lands washed away by mining operations.

21. There is a provision in the law at present that certain areas in mining districts should be set aside as Warden's areas, the administration of the timber being left in the hands of the Commissioner of Crown Lands. That is the case in the Auckland District. If this provision were in force in Nelson and Westland would it meet the case?—Yes, anything of that sort. I do not quite agree with taking the control of large areas of timber, particularly in sawmilling country, out of the hands of the Commissioner. If there is a restricted area of timber and there is a large mining industry, it is advisable that the Warden should have power to recommend a reservation for mining purposes, the one industry fostering the other.

22. You are probably aware of the provision in the Mining Act enabling a holder of a miner's right to peg out a tent-site, 24 by 48, without any reference to the Warden or Commissioner. Men sometimes take out one of these miner's rights and squat on Crown lands while they possibly have not any connection at all with mining?—Yes, a man can do that.

23. Do you not think at this stage in the history of mining such a right is no longer required giving a man the opportunity of occupying Crown land without any reference to Warden or Commissioner?—There are difficulties about the matter. I think it should be stopped except for *bona fide* mining. You could get over it that way, or by making registration compulsory, not charging any fee perhaps. Under the present circumstances a man can get a grant of an acre of land and can hold it for forty-two years, for 5s. a year, with a right of renewal.

24. *Mr. Clarke.*] Without any prospect of getting gold?—It does not matter whether he is mining or not; as long as he is in a mining district he can get it. In the early days it was necessary to grant a certain amount of freedom, but now that the mining industry is on a more settled basis these rights should be limited to mining only.