

13. And it is practically impossible for orchardists to fence against them?—Yes, without going to considerable expense.

14. If the deer were allowed to become very much more numerous, would there be still greater danger of the young flora being eaten, and so exposing the forest to the risk of fire?—Yes, if they became much more numerous. They would also change the composition of the forest, and would extinguish certain species before they eat others.

15. *Dr. Cockayne.*] As to the high mountain-tops, in Canterbury they are used for sheep-grazing: are the tops of the high western mountains in Nelson also used for sheep-grazing?—Yes; on the ranges between Takaka and Collingwood there are a number of sheep depastured—above the bush-line—and they do very well indeed there. I do not think sheep are depastured to the westward of the Takaka Valley. Cattle are turned out on the Goodin Downs and on the Mount Arthur plateau.

16. In the beech forests did you notice whether the trees are diseased or healthy?—They seem to differ very much according to the locality. On our eastern ranges it is the general experience that the birch forests are very greatly diseased. It is difficult to find sound birch-trees of any size. Last week my attention was called to the fact that down the Buller nearly all the birch-trees felled recently in the McGowan Valley are perfectly sound. A surveyor told me that the birch on the high elevations was all perfectly sound, whereas on the eastern range of Nelson the contrary is the rule.

17. In view of the fact that certain species are likely to be of proved commercial value in the future, do you think an economic and scientific examination of the beech forests with regard to their regenerating-powers should be undertaken?—That would seem to be obvious, and would be of very great importance.

RICHARD EDWARD HARRIS sworn and examined. (No. 33.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Crown Lands Ranger for the Nelson District.

2. Is it part of your duty to overlook the timber-areas?—Yes.

3. Is the timber administered by the Warden or the Commissioner of Crown Lands?—Some by the Warden and some by the Commissioner.

4. How many mills are there in operation?—Twenty-three or twenty-four.

5. How many of them come under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Crown Lands?—Two.

6. When a miller wishes to acquire an area of land for milling, how does he proceed?—He generally gives me instructions to measure the timber on it.

7. Is the area surveyed first?—Yes. They have been all old sections in State forests in years gone by.

8. Have you any difficulty in picking out those old boundaries?—No.

9. What is your method for measuring timber?—I generally measure the circumference of a tree, and get the height as nearly as possible, and then work out the contents by the formula. I use the Hopper's measurement.

10. Does the miller pay on the estimated quantity?—Yes.

11. Is it sold by auction or public tender?—By auction generally.

12. Do you find the millers are satisfied with the Department's estimates?—They are well satisfied so far, and there have been no complaints.

13. Do you consider that a more satisfactory method of dealing with timber than allowing a sawmiller to go through the bush and pay on the output that comes from his mill of the actual sound timber?—Oh, yes! We get all the revenue, and they get all the timber out of the bush. There is no waste.

14. In regard to the areas which come under the Warden: what method is adopted there?—The applicant erects his sawmill, cuts the timber out and ships it away and sells it. There is no one to supervise it.

15. Do they pay royalty?—I could not tell you, as I have nothing to do with it. The Receiver of Gold Revenue collects the revenue.

16. When he collects the revenue does he hand it over to the Receiver of Land Revenue?—I do not know anything about it, as we have no instructions to check these matters at all.

17. Has the Receiver of Gold Revenue any method of checking the amounts?—None at all.

18. He has no Ranger?—No.

19. Therefore the millers can do what they like without any check?—There is no check on them, and they can do what they like.

20. Do you find that the bush on the scenic reserves is fairly well preserved, or is it becoming infested with noxious weeds?—No. The only damage to the reserves is from fire, as the adjoining owners of land light fires, which spread to the reserves. All down the Buller people go along and put a match into the bush and burn acres of it, and do the same thing over again next year further on.

21. Can you suggest any means by which this can be prevented?—No. We have got the Engineer of Roads to instruct the surfacemen to keep a lookout for these people.

22. Has any case of the kind been sheeted home and proceedings instituted for damage?—Yes, one—between Westport and Inangahua Junction. It occurred eight or nine years ago. The guilty party was fined £3.

23. Do you find the deer becoming very numerous in this district?—Yes.

24. Will they be a menace to the orchards if allowed to go on increasing?—No doubt they will be.

25. Are they doing any damage to the native bush?—They have eaten the underscrub.