

26. Have you noticed whether they are ring-barking the trees?—Certain classes of trees they do—the “five-finger” and karaka.

27. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Is the Buller Gorge reserved as a national park?—Part of it.

28. Are there notices put up explaining that no fires are permitted?—There were some put up on two or three different occasions, but all were pulled down.

29. Are there any notices there now?—Not that I am aware of. The last one was pulled down six weeks ago.

30. Would it be any use putting up notices now about burning, &c., in different places other than in the actual parks themselves? It would be a very good idea. Also as to shooting the protected birds.

31. *Mr. Murdoch.*] When a miller obtains an area for cutting, do you measure all the milling-timber on that block?—Yes, from 12 in. up.

32. You do not go lower?—Not below that, what we call millable timber. All the millable trees are marked and branded.

ALFRED JOHN WHITEHORN sworn and examined. (No. 34.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Government Ranger for the Nelson Land District. My district goes down nearly as far as the Inangahua district, from Reefton to Berlin, and as far as the mouth of the Maruia. I have been a Ranger since November, 1911, and prior to that date I was a chainman on the Government Survey staff and the Geological Survey. I have also had several years' experience as a farmer. I am the general inspector of the leaseholds and timber-cutting. I look after the sawmill and coal-outputs, the cutting of sleepers, &c.

2. What is the system here when a miller applies for an area of land?—The matter has never come before me, all the mills having been granted areas before my time.

3. What check is exercised over the output of timber to see the Crown receives its proper amount of royalty?—I go through their books and get the waybills from them.

4. Are the books kept well?—Apparently they are correct as far as I can see. Taking the big mills, I have never seen the butts of their books; they come to me as a lump sum. I inspect the books of Parata's mill.

5. Can you check their returns?—Only from the railway.

6. When do the millers supply these returns?—They make their payments every six months. I have sent in one return—last December—for the mills since being in Reefton. There are no mills cutting on Crown lands.

7. Supposing the miller has the right to cut off freehold land, and there is an area of Crown land in the vicinity on which he also has the right to cut, is there any method of checking what comes off the freehold, and also what comes off the Crown land?—That is the difficulty. My predecessor asked the Warden to stipulate that the miller should cut off only one area at a time.

8. Have you had any practice in the actual measurement of standing timber?—I can do it, but I have not had much experience.

9. How do you get the superficial contents?—I work on a formula I have in the office.

10. Do you think it would be advisable in all cases when inspecting the miller's books to also check by the railway measurement?—I would like a further check, and it would be better after seeing the miller's butts to also go through the railway-carriage notes.

11. Do you consider the dual control by the Warden and the Commissioner of Lands satisfactory?—I do not.

12. What would you suggest in its place?—To have one control only. The Warden might have to adjudicate on a case he had already acted on.

13. When a miller applies to a Warden for a timber-area does the latter refer it to the Commissioner to ascertain whether it is Crown land and open for milling?—Not as far as I know. One man has applied for a 50-acre block, and I have written to the Commissioner asking whether it was open for sawmilling purposes.

14. Are you supplied with maps showing what is Crown land and what land has been alienated?—We are supplied with the ordinary lithographs. They are hardly up to date, but I can tell from them which is Crown land. The boundaries might only be pencilled in and the actual survey not marked on the map.

15. What is the procedure as to the cutting of sleepers?—Most of the sleeper-cutters already have their twelve months' licenses, and only one man has got one since I have been at Reefton. He got it through the Warden's Court.

16. Does it apply to any specified area?—No. The fee is 5s., and it is a license to cut anywhere. It is issued under the regulations of the Land Act.

17. Then the Warden does not work under those regulations?—Yes, the Grey Warden, because he signed the license I referred to. The holder lives at Inangahua Junction.

18. After the man has got this rover's license does he pay royalty on the sleepers?—Yes, and it is collected when he brings them in. It amounts to 3d. per sleeper.

19. Supposing a sleeper-cutter came in with a quantity of sleepers to sell to the Railway Department, do they make him produce his license?—They are supposed to, according to the regulations.

20. What is your opinion with regard to the wisdom of allowing sleeper-cutters to roam all over the country cutting sleepers?—The policy does not work well in the interests of the Government, and there should be a better method adopted. I have no control over the cutting now. They might be given a license to cut in particular localities.

21. Have you formed an opinion as to the quantity of timber in your part of the district?—No. Any estimate I might form would be only approximate. I believe a return was sent in twelve months ago of the milling-timber, but it would be a very rough guess.