

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Arthur William de Brito Savile, Earl of Liverpool, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency on the 22nd May, 1914, to report upon the several matters mentioned in the attached Commission, have the honour to report to Your Excellency as follows:—

The Commission assembled at Hokitika on Friday, the 29th May, 1914, that day and the following being occupied in the general consideration of matters affecting the scope of the Commission. As public interests were very largely involved it was deemed advisable that the proceedings, when taking evidence, should be open to the public, and this course was followed throughout. Sittings were held at all places where it was considered likely that sufficient evidence to justify this course would be forthcoming, and at these sittings evidence was taken on oath; but as it was desired to afford all persons interested an opportunity of placing their views before the Commission it was decided to accept the written statements of persons who could not appear at any of the sittings. The sworn evidence, together with the written statements received, are attached hereto.

Every effort was made to visit all localities where it was thought that information of value to the Commission could be acquired. Appended are particulars of the localities visited for the purpose of taking evidence: Hokitika, 1st and 2nd June; Ross, 3rd June; Kumara, 4th June; Greymouth, 5th June; Barrytown, 6th June; Ahaura, 8th June; Reefton, 11th June; Inangahua Junction, 12th June; Westport, 12th and 13th June; Karamea, 15th June; Wanganui (Karamea), 16th June; Murchison, 17th June; Collingwood, 19th June; Takaka, 20th June; Motueka, 22nd June; Nelson, 23rd June; Havelock, 26th June; Picton, 27th June; Wellington, 30th June. The evidence of ninety-two witnesses was taken at these sittings.

Localities visited: Kanieri, Kokatahi, Koiterangi, Ruatapu, Ross, Ho Ho, Stafford, Kumara, Cameron's, Barrytown, Blackwater, Ahaura Plains, Ruru, Bell Hill, Ngahere, Nelson Creek, Moonlight, Blackball, No Town, Reefton, Inangahua Junction, Seddonville, Karamea, Murchison, Collingwood, Rockville, Takaka, Motueka, Deep Creek, Canvastown, Havelock, Blenheim, and Picton.

A plan showing the routes travelled by the Commission is attached.

Upon the several matters into which we were directed to inquire we have the honour to report as follows:—

As to—

- (1.) *Whether the past administration of timber areas under the provisions of the Mining Act and the regulations thereunder has been in the best interests of the State.*
- (2.) *Whether the existing control of the same by the Mining Warden should be abolished, and whether the Land Board of the district should alone deal with all applications for the sale of timber.*
- (3.) *Whether it is desirable to continue the existing classification of timber areas as (a) Warden's timber areas, and (b) Land Board's timber areas.*

Taking together the first three questions, as all of these have reference to the existing methods provided for dealing with the forest lands of the Crown within mining districts in the Land Districts of Nelson, Westland, and Marlborough, we are of opinion—

- (1.) That the past administration of timber areas under the provisions of the Mining Act and the regulations thereunder has not been in the best interests of the State.