2,653 acres. No doubt it will be said that labour conditions have hampered the work, but in view of its national importance it is urged that the annual area planted should be multiplied by five, even if other public works have to be neglected. As to the general question of forest-conservation, it is submitted that no good purpose can be served by retaining the native bush for the use of future generations. The future can be best served by using the present natural bush to the best advantage, and as early as possible replacing it with farms where the land is suitable and with planted forest where the land is inferior. The findings of successive Commissions—the Timber Commission, the Forestry Commission, and last of all the Board of Trade inquiry—all tend to support this view, for each of them recommend no interference that would hinder the fullest development of the sawmilling industry. It is also submitted that inquiry should be made by a practical man actually engaged in planting as to the suitability of the West Coast for planting operations, and as to the respective merits of artificial planting as compared with the theory of renewing the natural forest as put forward by certain experts. In favour of the West Coast it may be mentioned that the worked-out bush land here is generally of very low value, whereas I understand land is being used for planting in Canterbury worth £5 per acre for grazing purposes. This district is free from rabbits, from drought, and from serious frosts, and the cost of fire-prevention would be a small fraction of the cost in Canterbury: In conclusion, if any change is contemplated in the control of sawmilling areas, it is desired to represent to the Commission most respectfully but most emphatically that no change should be made unless upon the advice of thoroughly practical men with a first-hand knowledge of West Coast bush. In support of my last statement I refer the Committee to the Report of the Royal Commission on Forestry in New Zealand in 1913, page 37. Let me add that the return from rimu forests in their native state averages about 14,000 ft. per acre. An estimate of how long the native bush is likely to last is contained in the State Forests report for 1918. I should also like to refer to the use that might and should be made of worked-out land—land after being milled. It is a prey to the blackberry at present—one of the worst weeds on the Coast; and I suggest that something should be done to encourage sawmillers to occupy and improve that land, though it might not be for their own benefit. They might prepare it to be taken up later on. In respect to the exhaustion of native timbers, I think there is every prospect that the quantity being used in New Zealand and the quantity being exported to Australia will decrease instead of increase, as we may look for importations of Oregon into New Zealand and of Baltic into Australia.

To Mr. Sidey: When Mr. Hutchins recommends that it is more important for us to regenerate our native forests than to plant exotic trees I do not agree with him. I think he is speaking without local experience. Our forests will not renew themselves in a natural way. I am not speaking particularly of rimu. I am not an expert in forestry, and can only speak of my practical experience. Anything I say should not be taken to apply to kauri. It might, and it might not. White-pine forests would not regenerate themselves within a time for any practical purpose. The birch grows faster, but it is not much use when you have it. I think a rimu-tree would be of no practical use under a hundred years. I have read portions of Mr. Hutchins's report. I suggest that any person who is going to handle West Coast bush should be a man with West Coast knowledge. If an expert is imported from outside I should be sorry to put him in charge of the West Coast district until he had had five years' experience of it.

To Mr. Craigie: I have trees of *Pinus insignis* 2½ ft. in diameter which have been grown from seed in twenty years. On the same place you can see a rimu which has grown very little in that period. It has not put on 3 in. of girth.

To Mr. Luke: To assist settlement I suggest that the residence conditions attached to Government leases should be either modified considerably or withdrawn altogether, and that the improvement conditions should be altered in a way that will allow people to take up land and improve it. As far as I know the lands on the Coast are being opened up as fast as the sawmiller can get through with them.

REEFTON.

THURSDAY, 6TH MARCH, 1919.

D. ZIMAN examined.

I have been deputed to give evidence on the mining industry, the one on which this district is solely dependent. Quartz-mining here should be very profitable; the reefs and the gold are persistently living down to great depths. My syndicate has during the war sunk a shaft to a depth of 1,360 ft., and found at 1,350 ft. down no less than four gold-bearing reefs. I expected to find one only—the Blackwater reef—which the Blackwater Company is mining for more than half a mile in length. The gold in the reefs is quite as good as the gold found in the upper levels of the Blackwater Mine. In the deepest mine in New Zealand (the Wealth of Nations Mine) the gold in places is quite as rich as ever it was in the upper levels. From the Big River mine, some 1,760 ft. down, I have seen the richest quartz I ever saw. The natural facilities for deep mining in the Reefton district are, to my knowledge, the best in the world. We have practically no water to contend with, yet there is in some of the mines enough moisture to keep the dust down, and where there is ventilation the air is very good, and when using the water as supplied to the mines the dust can easily be kept down. The mines even at great depth are not by any means hot. With all these natural facilities and resources, and with practically unlimited supply of coal and water-power, the mining industry here is now at its lowest possible ebb, and on the decline. If it is not remedied it will in time become extinct. Till a few years ago, when the mine-owners could work the poor ores—say, 8 dwt. stone—and meet expenses, the honest miner,