

PART I.
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Reports, 1874 :
Otago.

What should be the charge per acre must be decided from year to year. As a guide, we find that private bush proprietors now obtain £3 per acre in well-situated localities, and we know of one acre where £40 has been paid.

For licensed sawyers and wood-cutters, we believe it would be of advantage to apply the same principle of giving fixity of area and position, but only to extend for one year. Thus, after it has been ascertained what acreage one man can clear and prepare for market, of the description of stuff he wishes to appropriate or sell, the portion of bush should be measured off by him, and defined by certain marks—on the principle of the gold field licenses—to which he should be confined, the fees being paid in advance.

We find, on inquiry, that a wood-cutter can cut and prepare 128 cubic feet of stacked timber, or 86 cubic feet in the solid, per diem. Now, as an acre of heavy bush has been shown to contain about 24,000 cubic feet in the solid per acre, this would give him 278 working days in the year; hence, he should not have more than an acre assigned, or say 200 feet square. This area might be assumed to be the standard for one man, and portions or multiples of it might be granted as required by the settlers. If divided, the frontage should be halved or quartered.

By this means it is anticipated that the licensed and unlicensed areas would soon be known to the public officers, and the unappropriated be thus more easily protected.

We may mention that limited areas of forest have been taken up under lease to replant, but we cannot report satisfactorily on the working of the same by the results that have up to this time been apparent.

Several applications have also been made to plant under the terms of the 169th clause of "The Otago Waste Land Act, 1872," but the Board has not yet been able to grant any, nor do we think that much or anything will eventuate from the limited powers given by the Legislature to the Board by the above clause.

While, from the evidence we have collected, we do not see any stringent necessity for planting operations with the view of replacing the natural forests, yet we are clearly of opinion that the work must be some time hence initiated. When this has to be done, it is clear that the work must be executed by the Board, with greater powers attached to it than it at present possesses; while we believe that much extension of useful trees will arise on private lands, owing to the bonus per acre now paid; yet this will not be the case on public lands unless under the conduct and supervision of competent foresters; and, as intimated before, we are of opinion that no obstruction should be put in the way of sawyers and wood-cutters; yet, when they are done, the areas under license to them should at once be either marked off for small settlers, or replanted at the public expense; and though this expense may be a large sum per acre, yet the advantage of the full-grown artificial plantations would be that every single tree could be turned into prepared stuff, not one-nineteenth only, as is the case with the natural growth.

J. THOMSON, Chairman.

JOHN REID,

HENRY CLERK, } Commissioners.

Dunedin, February, 1874.

Mr. PEARSON to the Hon. the SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—

Crown Lands Office, Invercargill, 18th May, 1874.

I have the honor to enclose copy of my report to His Honor the Superintendent, on the subject of preventing "the wasteful destruction of the forests of the Colony," together with two reports from the Inspector of Forests, Southland, as per margin. I may mention that I think it would be advisable to charge a higher fee or royalty for cutting the more valuable descriptions of timber (native), such as totara and black pine, than is presently charged under the Southland timber regulations, which is uniform.

I have, &c.,

WALTER H. PEARSON,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Hon. the Secretary for Crown Lands,
Wellington.

REPORT on the Motion adopted by the House of Representatives during the recent Session of Parliament, viz., "That the Government should invite the various Provincial Governments to consider how best to prevent the wasteful destruction of the forests of the Colony, and to supply statistics and recommendations for the consideration of Parliament."

The first question is, what may be considered "wasteful destruction of the forests of the Colony."

The timber regulations presently in force in Southland proper, provide for four descriptions of license to cut timber on Crown land:—

1. Settler's license, at 40s. per annum, to cut for the improvement of land in his occupation.
2. Hand sawyer's and wood-cutter's license, at £5 per annum.
3. Special license to cut logs of length, for wharves, bridges, &c., at 5s. each log or tree.
4. License of area to steam saw-mills, estimated at ten acres for each declared horse power, with a reserve for four years' cutting, inclusive of the first year's, at a fee of 3d. for every 100 superficial feet of timber cut during the term of the license.