

46. Of your own experience?—Yes.
47. You have cleared land?—I have cleared land up north, and have let contracts for clearing.
48. In the North Island?—Yes.
49. Have you ever cleared, or had cleared for you, any land in the Grey Valley?—No.
50. Then, you have had no experience of that?—I know what the value of clearing land is.
51. You say that it is the same kind of bush and land as the North Island land?—The same class of bush.
52. And the same kind of land?—Something the same class of land.
53. You seriously mean that?—The same kind of land, and it would cost about the same to clear it, as in the North Island.
54. Hon. E. BLAKE.] Would you say the same kind of bush and the same kind of land, or do you say something the same kind?—Something the same kind.
55. Mr. Stringer.] How long did you say you had lived in the Grey?—About ten years.
56. Mr. Cooper.] Taking Block 81: you say a good deal of that land would be worth a considerable sum—£1 an acre, I think, you said?—I would like to buy a lot of it for £1 an acre.
57. What gives it that value, in your opinion?—Such valuable silver-pine bush.
58. Have you been there for the purpose of inspecting the value of the bush, as well as the nature of the land for gold-mining purposes?—Yes.
59. Are there any sawmills on that block?—Yes, Feary has a sawmill on that block.
60. Do you know when that sawmill was erected on that block?—I think about three years ago.
61. Since the railway has been there?—Yes.
62. Are there any other mills?—Feary has another mill adjoining, but it is on a freehold section.
63. There is one sawmill owned by Feary on the block, and another sawmill adjoining?—Yes.
64. Are they cutting timber on that block?—Yes, cutting silver-pine timber from it now. I saw several thousand feet of timber being cut there.
65. When was that?—Last September.
66. Do you know for what purpose they are cutting that timber?—For railway-sleepers.
67. They are shipping it?—Yes.
68. Do you know from what port they ship it?—Greymouth.
69. Do you know of any one else who is cutting timber on that block?—Yes; Mortenson and party, and another party.
70. We will deal with Mortenson first. What are they cutting?—Silver-pine sleepers.
71. You know this of your own knowledge?—Yes; I saw them cutting.
72. What are they doing with their sleepers?—They are shipping them from Greymouth.
73. Can you give us any estimate of the number of acres that have been denuded of timber by Feary Brothers on 81?—It might be between 100 and 200 acres.
74. Did you form any estimate of the number of sleepers that could be taken per acre?—Yes.
75. What estimate?—About 280 sleepers per acre they were cutting; but they were destroying a lot more bush.
76. Hon. E. BLAKE.] You say 280 sleepers per acre were being cut by Feary Brothers?—Yes; by Mortenson.
77. Mr. Cooper.] Supposing you owned a freehold, and you gave the right of cutting sleepers to any one, what royalty would you expect fairly from that bush?—If I owned a bush, I would not let it; the timber is too valuable. They are the best railway sleepers, I suppose, in the world—silver-pine—and there is not a very large quantity on the West Coast.
78. You think that the timber should be conserved at present?—Yes; it is very valuable timber.
79. Do I understand that, by cutting the bush in this way, there is a great deal destroyed, as well as taken for sleepers?—Yes; sleepers must be a certain size to be delivered to the Government by contract, and if they are a shade small, they are condemned and left behind, and if there is the least knot in them they are condemned.
80. Hon. E. BLAKE.] They are inspected by a Government inspector on the ground?—Yes, even if they are the eighth of an inch small they are condemned; it is very hard to square them the exact size. They are not sawn; they are squared.
81. Mr. Cooper.] There is a considerable loss in that respect?—Yes; a terrible waste.
82. I believe you visited Feary Brothers' sawmill, I think you said in September?—Yes.
83. Can you state what logs you saw there, at the sawmill on the block?—I saw, I think, about 5,000ft. lying at the mill, cut timber.
84. All silver-pine?—Yes.
85. Is there any one else cutting timber on Block 81?—There is another party of Swedes, near Mortenson's.
86. Were they cutting silver-pine sleepers?—Yes.
87. For export?—Yes.
88. What other timber is there upon that block besides the silver-pine?—Close to the hills there is a very valuable bush of red-pine.
89. Red-pine is what we call rimu?—Yes.
90. White-pine is kahikatea?—Yes.
91. What is silver-pine?—They call it swampy-pine.
- 91A. Is that a kahikatea?—No.
92. Is there any other class of timber there?—Birch.
93. Is that of value?—Yes.
94. So that your estimate of the value of Block 81 at per acre is based upon the timber which is upon it?—Yes; I inspected the part along the hills, closer to the hills than where the silver-pine is, and I am sure you would get 20,000ft. of timber to the acre on it.