

7. How much is there of the Gorge Road Bush belonging to Mr. Massey?—I think Mr. Massey holds practically all that is left.

8. Does he hold some freehold?—Yes.

9. How much bush is in that freehold?—I am afraid I cannot tell you the exact quantity of freehold. I think he holds about 600 acres.

10. That is in addition to the 5,000 acres?—Yes.

11. Where is that in the neighbourhood of?—Bush Siding and Gorge Road.

12. Has a new mill been put up in the district?—Yes, at Bush Siding.

13. How much does he hold in the Longwood Forest and elsewhere than at Gorge Road?—1,732 acres.

14. That is included in the 5,000 acres?—Yes.

15. Do the present regulations enable large areas to be absorbed like that?—I do not think there is any regulation in the State Forests Act with regard to the quantity that a man may hold.

16. Is it difficult to obtain bush in Southland now?—No, I think not; in Wallace you can obtain bush. During the last three years at Tuatapere the Southland Sawmilling Company took up 521 acres. The Land Department in Invercargill are unwilling to give statistics. William Guthrie has taken up 200 acres licensed area and 1,300 acres reserve, and Hamilton and Co. 684 acres; that makes 2,700 acres altogether that have been taken up during the last three years in the neighbourhood of Tuatapere.

17. Is that near a railway?—Some of it is within from one to two miles of Tuatapere; other parts within four miles.

18. Is there much bush in Southland near a railway other than the place you speak of?—There is a considerable quantity on the western slopes of the Longwood. All that country is bush, and when the contemplated railway from Tuatapere to the Orawia is down, this bush will be tapped and no doubt worked—some thousands of acres.

19. Is that held?—The Merivale Estate just takes in the fringe of the bush; behind that is the State forest.

20. Do you object to the settlers taking stakes out of the bush at Seaward Downs?—No; some two years ago Mr. Massey expressly granted permission to take fencing-timber.

21. Does he allow them to chop trees for that?—Yes, to take it for fencing-timber.

22. You are quite sure of that?—I have heard complaints that they are doing more than that—that they are cutting and sending it away to market.

23. They are doing that?—So I have been told.

24. You will not vouch for that?—No, I do not know for certain.

25. What check is there on it?—The Government rangers are supposed to be looking after it.

26. Do you not know that the farmers in Seaward Downs complained that they are not allowed to take stakes out of that bush?—I know for certain that Mr. Massey gave written authorization to the Commissioner of Crown Lands to permit the settlers to take fencing-timber out of his bush.

27. And allow them to cut trees for that purpose?—I believe that they were enabled to cut trees for that purpose.

28. If they said that that was not a fact, would you deny it?—I should prefer to see the document. It is a written document given by Mr. Massey to the Commissioner of Crown Lands at Invercargill.

29. *Mr. Forbes.* Can they buy stakes and posts for their fencing apart from your sources of supply?—Yes; there is a large area in Seaward Bush where there are a number of small totara-trees that would not pay the sawmillers to cut, and a number of people make a living in that way—in fact we buy from these suppliers ourselves, perhaps some three or four truck-loads a month.

30. What have the settlers to pay for totara fencing-posts?—We can buy at about £2 a hundred—that is 4 by 3—£2 per hundred stakes.

31. And the posts?—Well, strainers 7 in. in diameter and about 7 ft. long we pay 3s. each for.

32. That seems to be a high price for an area bush post—3s?—I do not know. There is a lot of work in cutting them and sledging them out to the sidings. It seems a high price.

33. *Mr. Guthrie.* Does the company you are connected with make a business of selling posts?—Yes, we buy them from these men who obtain licenses from the Government to split the posts. We buy them from them very often.

34. And yet you allow the settlers to go inside the bush and cut their own posts?—Yes.

35. There is no denying that fact?—Oh no, we allow them to do so. Where these settlers are cutting these posts it may be three or four miles away from the railway, and it is much more convenient to split the posts themselves and sledge to their homesteads than buy them, rail them to a siding, and then cart them four or five miles home from the siding.

36. You only allow the settlers to go into the cut-out bush?—No, we allow them to go into the virgin bush. These cut-out areas have reverted to the Crown and the Crown issues the usual licenses.

37. You have nothing to do with it?—No.

38. If they have an absolute right to go into the virgin bush it seems strange that they purchase from you?—We do not supply local farmers. Where this supply of posts is sent to is very often South Canterbury and Otago.

39. I am alluding to local supplies?—Gore is about the nearest district we supply, and we send the split stakes to farmers about Winton, Waipaki, and Clinton.

40. You asserted that the local settlers have unrestricted rights to go and cut in the virgin bush—that is, you have documents to this effect. Have these settlers the right to go into the virgin bush and cut the bush without restriction? You do not mark trees?—No; we do not mark them. I think they have the right to fell trees.

41. Is it not a fact that they have only the right to cut the tops?—No.