

for forty-two years, the land is often held for unreasonable periods and barred from settlement.

4. In some cases the Warden's Courts are held in small decayed mining townships where the Clerk of the Court may be the local constable; such constables are liable to frequent transfer, with the result that the collection of timber royalties has in some cases been allowed to get into arrears, and then, through millers becoming insolvent, large sums have been lost to the Crown. Instances of this have been brought under our notice.

5. Mr. J. S. Evans, S.M. and Warden for Nelson, in his evidence before your Commission, gave his opinion that the sawmilling industry could be better administered by the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Land Boards.

The only argument that we have heard advanced against the change has been that the Warden's Court is held at more frequent intervals than the Land Board meetings, thus enabling millers to transact business with less delay; but this reason cannot be maintained when it is seen that in Auckland, the largest land district in the Dominion, and with some of the sawmills two hundred miles away from the city, the timber is administered by the Land Board with satisfaction to both the sawmillers and the public. Two interesting letters on this question received by your Commission from sawmillers in Westland are printed in Appendix C.

Among the advantages of having the jurisdiction under the Commissioners of Crown Lands and Land Boards the following may be noted: (1.) The Commissioner has the necessary staff to supervise the economical and efficient cutting of the bush. (2.) He can enforce conditions that the timber should be cut within a reasonable time and the way be prepared for settlement before the second growth and noxious weeds take possession of the ground.

We are of opinion that Regulation 105 of the regulations under the Mining Act, 1908, should be revoked, with the possible exception of the clause relating to the use of firewood for domestic purposes, and even this should only be allowed to be taken in places to be prescribed by the Commissioner. Immense damage has been done in the past to the Crown forest by the indiscriminate cutting of timber by the miners, and we fail to see any reason why this one industry should be subsidized at the expense of the State more than any other.

In regard to the payment of halves of timber royalties to local bodies, while we hold that the principle is sound in cases where the roads are used by the millers in carting their timber, still in some districts not 20 per cent. of the timber ever goes on the roads at all. The sawmillers make their own tramways to the railways, and thence it is sent direct to the ship's side. In these cases we consider an amendment of the law is required, and that the half-royalties should only be paid on timber which is conveyed by road. As the law at present stands some districts get large subsidies without any corresponding liabilities, and other districts get nothing.

As we are recommending further extensive planting, we consider that the revenue derived from the timber industry might with benefit be applied to the purpose of providing the necessary funds.

(3.) *The Beech Forest.*

There are very considerable areas of beech forest, both at high and low levels, which are at present but little used for their timber, though this is of considerable value for certain purposes, and will doubtless be more prized as the general timber-supply decreases. Further, these forests are the only ones amongst those indigenous to New Zealand which may regenerate rapidly enough to warrant their permanent retention. At present, as seen from evidence before your Commission, beech timber is steadily coming into use, especially silver-beech (*Fagus Menziesii*), which makes excellent furniture, for which purpose it is being increasingly used in Australia. So long ago as 1899, Mr. T. Kirk, in his admirable "Forest Flora," p. 176, wrote of this timber as excellent for the manufacture of ordinary furniture, and stated that, "When french-