

have gone up from 33 to 50 per cent. Material has easily increased from 100 to 200 per cent. We think the Government should do something to assist the industry. Most of the gold-mining at present on the West Coast is what is termed low-grade ore, and therefore it makes it the harder to get along with. There is barely enough to keep the pot boiling, and often not that. I suggest that a subsidy might be given, and a reduction of freight, taxes, and rent. The value of West Coast gold is £4 1s. We get net from the banks £3 18s. to £3 18s. 3d.

*To Mr. Luke:* The output of the mines has decreased. The labour problem is a difficulty, and partly accounts for the decrease. The same condition of things is seen in quartz-mining.

*To Mr. Craigie:* Explosives have doubled in price, and are 50 per cent. less in power. We want the full value of the gold, remission of taxes, and less royalty on the land. These matters would be of some help. We would like a subsidy as well. There are nine hundred men employed in the industry on the Coast.

*To Mr. Veitch:* A few new mines have started in the last two years at Reefton. Gold-mining is languishing. Our real difficulty is that everything we buy is going up in price, but the price of gold is fixed by law.

*To Mr. Hudson:* If we receive £4 1s. and if the rent is reduced to some extent a subsidy would be necessary, at any rate, in some cases.

WILLIAM PARFITT, Grocer, examined.

In connection with gold I wish to say that we think it is an Empire concern, and not merely a West Coast concern. We think the Imperial Government should be asked to subsidize it. At present our gold-mines are running at a loss. About twelve years ago I was interested in a dredge on the No Town Creek. It took 12 oz. or 13 oz. per week to run it, and now it costs from 21 oz. to 23 oz. Some of the mines will have to close down. If you could see your way to help it would mean work for a number of returned soldiers. In our gold-bearing districts we have large areas of land which, at a value of £3 15s. per ounce, would hardly pay individual miners to go out prospecting, but with the increased price it would pay them.

*To Mr. Hornsby:* I am not aware that the British Government has turned down a proposal to increase the value of gold.

JOHN WELLINGTON CALLWELL, Company Secretary, examined.

There can be no two opinions as to the policy of providing by the most economic means a permanent supply of home-grown timber for the Dominion. There are different opinions, however, as to how this is to be attained. It is understood that in some official quarters the view is held that the natural bush of New Zealand can be dealt with as cultivated forests are treated in other countries: that mature trees can be taken out from time to time, leaving the others to grow, and that the forest will so be an inexhaustible asset. This idea seems to be based on a lack of appreciation of the difference between mixed bushes such as exist in New Zealand and the artificially grown forests of Europe. In the latter there are some hundreds of trees per acre, frequently all of one kind; while in even a good rimu bush there may be only fifteen to twenty trees per acre, with no smaller rimu coming on, and the interspersed trees of other kinds are useless. Whatever theories may be advanced in support of the proposal to "cultivate" rimu bush, and whatever justification they may have in other parts of the world, the experience on the West Coast is that once the millable timber is taken out there is no serviceable renewal of valuable timbers, and that their place is taken by small useless growths. The economic way to handle the cut-out bush appears to be to use such land for settlement purposes as soon as possible; but there is a very large proportion of the rimu country which under present conditions cannot efficiently be converted into grass land. It is well worth while to inquire whether such country cannot be profitably converted into permanent artificial forest, planted with such foreign timbers as are found suitable to the soil and climate. Even supposing that it were possible to promote the renewal of cut-out rimu bush, the results which could be obtained would in no way compare with the quantity of timber per acre to be secured from a similar area artificially planted. Page 109 of "Forestry in New Zealand," prepared by the Department of Lands, 1909, states that in Britain the average quantity of timber produced per acre from five species on a fifty-year rotation is 32,000 ft. Seeing that the five species included oak and other comparatively slow-growing trees, it may be fairly assumed that with a good proportion of *Pinus radiata* the result to be obtained in the more favourable climate of New Zealand would be double that above mentioned, or, say, 60,000 ft. per acre. It is evident that artificial planting on the above figures would give results some hundreds per cent. better than could possibly be realized from any system of renewal of native bush. The cost of protection of the native bush, which would spread over many years, whereas the quick-growing timber would smother all extraneous growth after the first few years, would alone balance the cost of establishing the artificial forest; added to which is the slow growth of the rimu, and the quite problematical results to be obtained, while in the case of planted trees the out-turn may be calculated with some certainty. It must be admitted that in the past successive Governments have not done all that was possible in the direction of tree-planting, and that if this national work had been carried on as it should have been for the last thirty years there would be no risk of the supply of native timber giving out before the artificial plantations come into profit. It is respectfully suggested to the Commission that it should represent to the proper authorities the urgent necessity for largely extending the scope of the present planting operations. The expenditure on establishing artificial plantation from 1896 to 1918 was £270,881, and the area planted 32,358 acres. For the year ending 31st March, 1918, the expenditure was £28,276, including £3,249 for purchase of lands, and the area planted