

worth of royalties in that place, and in saying this I feel that I am within the mark. Then, in respect to the timber, I would say that the average of what I saw would be about 3ft. in diameter. There would be from two to three logs out of every tree—lengths to be cut in accordance with orders, and as short as 12ft. lengths here and there. I average it at two to three logs. That is as far as I saw. I have not been all over the country.

19. *The Chairman.*] Is it a large area?—Yes; very large.

*Mr. Mills:* The Commissioner of Crown Lands estimated it at 40,000 acres.

20. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] What do you think about the new railway?—I would continue the present railway right into the Rai Valley.

21. Do you expect the sawmill proprietors or the State to make the railway?—Well, that all depends on the way in which you go about it.

22. *The Chairman.*] Is there no way of disposing of that timber by auction, as is done in Auckland?—I do not think you could do that, because of the individual cost in getting it out. If the Government said, "There is the land, and we will offer you facilities for getting the timber out," so that people could get it to the towns, half a dozen sawmills would be working in the bush in no time.

23. *Mr. Hogg.*] If that land is to be opened out by a tramway, would the Government construct a new one?—I think it would be almost impossible to go out of this line already constructed without tremendous expense. This one occupies the only available route in the valley. They have had to make cuttings, and if you wanted to build another line you would have to go further into the hills. There are also some very deep fillings.

*Mr. Mills:* I might say that when the private company started they had different Engineers across from the Government, and they had the line laid out with the view that they might sell it as part of the main line to go on to Nelson, and so they spent much more money on the line than would otherwise have been done. [To Mr. Cadman.] Do you think the removing of the timber will increase the value of the land.

*Hon. Mr. Cadman:* Without a doubt. £1 or £1 10s. per acre goes on the land immediately you take off the timber. More than that, with the sawmills you will take off all the big logs.

24. *Mr. Hogg.*] Is a large quantity of the land fit for small farms?—I am not an expert in that line, but I think that all the land is fit for settlement. I am not aware, however, whether it is suitable land for small or large farms. It is good land for settlement.

Mr. BUICK examined.

I wish the Committee to understand in the first place that, so far as being a judge of sawmilling timber country, I am not as expert as Mr. Cadman. After the timber has left the sawmill I profess to know something about it. I have been through the country in question, and, so far as my judgment went, there is a considerable amount of timber in that country suitable for sawmilling purposes, and it would be a great pity to dispose of it in any other way but through the sawmill. There would be also a considerable area of land fit for settlement without sawmills. That could be settled at once, without destroying a large quantity of valuable timber. If this were done immediately, I think it might assist the district to some extent. At the present time their rating-power is limited, and they have no money for the maintenance of their roads. With more settlers, that difficulty might be got over without injuring the sawmilling timber. It would be a great shame to burn this timber. The question is how best to utilise the timber; and, so far as I have seen, there is no other way of utilising it but by the sawmills. Then comes the difficulty of how to get the timber to the market. It might be possible to get the timber over to Croiselle's Harbour. I do not know much about that point, but I think the Committee ought to be satisfied on it before they come to any determination. It will solve the question of whether the tramway is the only outlet or not. It is also, to some extent, a question that interests Marlborough as a whole—principally Wairau. We have no timber there, except a little white-pine. The rimu, black-pine, and totara are practically all cut out, and when we want timber we have to get it from this island (North Island). One of the builders at Blenheim has been getting timber from Mr. Brownlee. He gets that timber at 10s. 6d. per 100ft., taking everything the mill likes to send him. That, I think, is about the same price as we can get it from this island. Considering the question of land-settlement, there is no doubt that, if the Land for Settlements Bill passes, properties will be acquired in the Awatere, and, that being so, there will be a much larger demand for timber. The question we have to consider is, whether it will be better to get the timber from Havelock or purchase it from the North Island. If we can get it from Havelock it will be much better than getting it from this island, for then both districts will be benefited by the interchange of products, which will not otherwise take place. I would just like to say that my idea about the whole question is this: First, we have to consider whether there is any real necessity to start operating on this sawmilling timber at once; whether the desire for settlement in that district cannot be satisfied without injuring the sawmilling timber by utilising land not heavily timbered; or whether the land to be acquired in other parts of Marlborough would be sufficient to meet the whole demand. If it is necessary to operate on this timber at once, then we have to consider whether there is any necessity to buy this tramway. In that district there is a great deal of objection to the buying of the tramway. Why, I know not. Of course, if there is no other way of getting the timber out but by the tramway, then, I suppose, it will have to be bought. It is one of those questions that has to be considered very carefully indeed, because, rightly or wrongly, in transactions of this kind, people are inclined to say that it is a job whether it is or not. I would impress upon the Committee the necessity of thoroughly considering the question of the purchase of the tramway before they make up their minds. If the tramway can be utilised for railway purposes, I think it would not be a bad transaction. If it cannot be so utilised, then I think it an undesirable transaction at present. Referring to the outlet by way of Croiselle's Harbour, if that phase of the question is considered