

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable William Lee, Baron Plunket, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Excellency on the 9th day of March, 1909, to inquire into the several matters and things mentioned and referred to in the commission, copy of which is attached, have the honour to report to Your Excellency as follows:—

Owing to the volume of evidence adduced before us, and to the fact that the taking of evidence only closed on the evening of Thursday, the 27th May, it was found impossible to properly consider and analyse the same to enable the report to be prepared and submitted by the date fixed in the commission—viz., the 31st May—and we were therefore reluctantly compelled to ask for an extension of time within which to present the report. This was sanctioned, and the period of the commission extended, first to the 10th June, and subsequently to the 30th June. The instruments so extending the commission are attached hereto.

We first assembled at Invercargill on the 24th day of March, and held our first meeting on the 25th. As the subjects of our inquiry were of so much public interest, it was decided to admit the public and Press to all meetings of the Commission, taking, where necessary, matters of a confidential nature in committee, and the dates of the meetings were duly advertised in the local newspapers beforehand. Although the scope of the commission only permitted evidence being taken at Auckland, Taihape, Wellington, Greymouth, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill, it was nevertheless deemed advisable to visit and inspect the sawmills and forests in the principal milling districts of the Dominion. Though the limited time at our disposal prevented any lengthy inspection of the condition of the sawmilling industry in those localities, yet valuable information was gathered as to the conditions under which the trees are felled, taken from the bush to the mill, sawn into marketable timber, and eventually placed on the market. Every effort was made to see all phases of the industry, and through the willing co-operation of the sawmillers in every district, and the efforts of all interested in the industry to afford necessary information, we were enabled to form a fairly full and correct idea of the present position.

In pursuance of this object, the Commission visited twenty-three sawmills in the Southland, Westland, Taihape, Waimarino, Northern Wairoa, Auckland, and Wellington districts, and also inspected wood-preservative works at Rangataua, creosote-works at Invercargill, the State nurseries and plantations at Hanmer, Rotocrua, Whakarewarewa, and Waiotapu, carriage-building works, and a number of other woodworking factories.

The travelling done by the Commission amounted to 3,125 miles, and occupied fifteen days; whilst it took nine and a half days to inspect the sawmills, &c., and twenty-eight days to hear evidence.

One hundred and fifty-four witnesses were examined on oath, their respective occupations being,—

Sawmillers	...	...	...	...	...	36
Builders	...	...	...	...	...	20
Timber-merchants	...	...	...	...	...	18
Workers' representatives	...	...	...	...	...	11
Architects	...	...	...	...	...	10
Furniture-makers	...	...	...	...	...	5
Engineers	...	...	...	...	...	4
Bush contractors	...	...	...	...	...	3