

106. *Mr. Flatman.*] Have you been through this bush, Mr. Adams?—I have been through it nearly to the head of the Opouri.

107. What kind of timber is predominant all through?—I think red-pine would be the most plentiful.

108. Is it totara?—I think totara would not be the best—say, per acre, rimu, 5,000; white-pine, 2,700; matai, 1,700; totara, only 100, superficial feet per acre.

109. *Mr. Lang.*] That is very light?—Yes; the matai is ten times more plentiful, the rimu fifty times more plentiful, and white-pine about thirty times more plentiful. The rimu is the prevailing timber. That has been carefully gone over.

#### THURSDAY, 4TH AUGUST, 1898.

Mr. GRAHAM, M.H.R., in introducing a deputation of some half dozen gentlemen from Nelson and district, who were desirous of expressing their views regarding the preservation of the Ronga and Opouri Valleys as a national forest reserve, said:—

Being interested in the petition before you for consideration, I communicated with my friends in Nelson, with the result that I have now here six gentlemen who represent the people of Nelson in this matter; and they have come over especially for the purpose of meeting the Committee here this morning—some of them at great inconvenience leaving their own private business. As they are desirous of returning as soon as possible, they will make their statement as concise as possible, and will be prepared to answer the Committee any questions they may care to put. Some of these gentlemen particularly are personally acquainted with these valleys, and will be able to give us more information about them than the Committee has yet heard. Some are here on general grounds, to prevent, if they can, what they think would be a great disaster to the country if these valleys were destroyed.

Mr. TRASK, Mayor of Nelson, made a statement, and was examined.

*Mr. Trask:* We are delegated by the citizens of Nelson and the people living in the district and province to represent in this matter not only the four thousand petitioners, but also those who remain in the province—something like fifteen thousand people. I should like it to be understood that we have not come here in any way in an antagonistic spirit towards those persons where these beautiful valleys are situated—that is, the Province of Marlborough. I should like also to say we are not here in any way to attempt to injure the industry of Havelock, or of any person who is inclined to cut this timber down for public purposes: far from it. We are simply here to represent the people of New Zealand as a whole, and to endeavour if possible to preserve a portion of your land in such a manner that it will be beneficial in after years, not only to the Provinces of Nelson and Marlborough, but to the whole of New Zealand. We come here at great personal disadvantage to ourselves, because we feel in our own mind that after being requested by the people of Nelson it was our duty to come whether it was at a disadvantage to ourselves or not. We have the matter greatly at heart; and we feel that now is the time to come and visit you, so that two of the most beautiful valleys in the South Island should not be destroyed. The question is this: Is it advisable to allow the petitioners from the Marlborough province or Havelock to purchase the timber in these valleys, cut it down to give employment, say, for a hundred or a hundred and fifty men, and without pecuniarily benefiting those who are interested in having this timber cut down? The people in Nelson—or the majority, at all events—and a large number of people in the Province of Marlborough, are very much against these valleys being destroyed, because if destroyed they never can be replaced. Therefore, if the Committee recommends to the Government or the House, whichever it may be, that these valleys should be retained as they are they will be conferring an everlasting boon on the present generation and on those who come after them. We are simply come as delegates to plead for posterity. If these two valleys are reserved for ever and ever it will be a national park for those who are living at the present time and for the generations yet to come. That is our only desire—to preserve these two valleys from destruction if possible. We do not consider the pecuniary amount that would be gained by Government will in any way compensate any person against the compensation that the people of New Zealand will have in possessing these valleys as an everlasting inheritance. The kernel of the question is this: If these valleys are cut down for timber we shall, in our opinion, be destroying one of the brightest gems in the South Island—a gem that we shall never be able to get back again—the beauty of those two valleys and the scenery that is presented to any one who may go that way. I am taking the matter all round. I do think and hope, on behalf of the petitioners and the people we represent, that you will well consider the matter before you put your report before the Government.

1. *Mr. Mills* (to witness).] Have you ever been in the valleys?—Only as far as the mouth of the valleys. I have never been in them.

2. Do you know what effect the cutting-up of these valleys would have on the timber industry in Marlborough?—No more than that it will keep about a hundred and fifty men in employment there for about four years. That is the only way I can answer that question.

3. Do you know what quantity of timbered land there is still in the Nelson Province?—No, I do not.

4. Would you be surprised if the department told you there were 1,700,000 acres of timber in the Nelson Province now?—I should not be surprised to hear there was a certain amount of timber, but I do not think it is much good.

5. Would you be surprised to know that 40,000 acres is the outside area of good timbered land in Marlborough?—No, I would not. That is one reason why I think this timber should be reserved, because it is getting so scarce.