

6. How would you suggest Marlborough getting their supplies of timber if this industry were closed? What would they have to depend upon?—I suppose they would have to send to other parts of New Zealand to get timber.

7. What reserves for scenery purposes or national parks have been made in the Nelson District?—There are two reserves, of about 2,000 acres, roughly speaking. They are the Waterworks, and the top end of the Maitai Valley. That is all I know myself.

8. *Mr. J. W. Thomson.*] You spoke as if these forests could be reserved for all time, I think, as a national park?—Yes.

9. Do not you think they might be burnt—that fire might get into them and destroy them?—I have been informed that should these valleys get on fire it must be wilfully caused. They cannot be burnt by fires coming from parts surrounding these valleys. Of course, any one wilfully going to set a fire in the bush might get it destroyed; otherwise, in my opinion, it would never be destroyed.

10. I have understood that the timber industry is a very important industry in Marlborough. Do you not think if these forests were to be shut up it would do a great deal of harm to the industry of Marlborough?—It would do harm, as I have just stated to Mr. Mills, for about four years. The question is, Should we do what the Marlborough people want—destroy two valleys, which would be an everlasting disaster to the colony generally?

11. We have had before us that there are a great many scenery reserves. Are you aware of that?—No, I am not.

12. *Hon. W. Rolleston.*] Do you know about the proposals being made for taking over the tramway?—I have heard that there are proposals; in fact, Mr. Mills told me himself in conversation.

13. I do not wish to pursue the question unless you could tell me how it would affect the disposal of this forest?—I was rather disinclined to refer to the owner of the line, if possible, because we are not here to damage any one in particular.

14. *Mr. Flatman.*] I think I understood you to say it would be detrimental to the trade of Marlborough for about four years?—That is what I should imagine.

15. You mean the wood would be cut in four years?—I have been given to understand that it would be all cut down in about four years, and the men employed would have to seek for labour elsewhere.

16. Perhaps you do not know that we have evidence here to the effect that it would last one mill for twenty-five years?—I should not be surprised to hear anything that has been put before the Committee. That is one reason why I prefer not to go too intimately into the matter. I prefer not to injure any one by referring to their proposals.

17. *Mr. Wason.*] About these hundred and fifty men being employed for four years: That is not presuming for a moment that the work could be carried out simply by one mill—it would mean several started?—I dare say a number of mills would be started, but they would probably be started by the same firm.

18. Possibly a hundred and fifty men now?—I have been told, on good authority, that it would not employ more than a hundred to a hundred and fifty men for four years.

19. That is, if the Marlborough petition is granted?—Yes; that is if Erskine's petition is granted.

20. Have you any idea of the value of the soil in these valleys for settlement purposes after the timber is destroyed?—Yes; I think it would be very good soil—in fact, the soil is very good on what has been already cleared in the Pelorus Valley and the Rai Valley. As to the other districts, I have been given to understand that the flat for cultivation is very little good compared with what is lying on the hillside.

21. *The Chairman* (to witness): You had better confine yourself to your own knowledge.

22. *Mr. Wason* (continuing): Of course, people outside Nelson and Marlborough are inclined to look on them as one province. Do you know of your own knowledge if there is much land to be purchased in Nelson and Marlborough?—Oh, yes, there is, but that has been locked up by the railway-lines.

23. Do you think if the Government pursue their policy as to Marlborough in regard to reserves there will be no land for settlement after some years?—Yes; that is my firm opinion.

24. Do you know what effect it would be likely to have on the climate of the district generally—the destruction of these forests?—It would have a very great effect. I have lived in Nelson for thirty-seven years, and have seen that the more bush there was destroyed the less rain there would be for the farmers in regard to their crops.

*Mr. Trask* explained a matter that Mr. Wason had asked about, in reference to there being sufficient room for a railway without interfering with Mr. Brownlee's tramway, by saying, "There is room on the main road. Mr. Brownlee's tramway is on the left-hand side going to Havelock, and the main road is on the Havelock side."

Mr. C. Y. FELL, of Nelson, made a statement and was examined.

*Mr. Fell:* After the very disastrous bush-fires of last year there was a feeling in my district that some steps should be taken to conserve beautiful portions of the bush remaining. As president of the Nelson Scenery Preservation Society I was asked by several influential people to call a meeting and consider the matter. The meeting was called and was largely attended; the position of these two valleys was again brought up and thoroughly discussed, and it was generally felt desirable by those present to take over for preservation some block of bush in these valleys. A committee was formed, and a petition circulated. The whole thing has been done in an absolutely voluntary manner; and the committee as it stands before this Committee is an absolutely voluntary one. We had a belief that we should be assisted by the people of Marlborough, and we sent people over there to see them about it. The *Marlborough Daily Times*, on the 25th February, 1898, says,