

years' time the other opinion has way there is the timber, and it would be more valuable than it is now.

44. Do you not think there should be set on foot some system of conservation to resist fire and other destroying agencies?—Yes, I think so strongly, and I believe the public will thoroughly support me.

45. How is this working in the forest being carried on—extravagantly, or with waste, or what?—I am afraid, very wastefully with the best timber. The sawmill goes through the bush, cuts the forest giants down, the trees with their tops crush many other trees, and they are being destroyed constantly. I have lived in that country, and I know the result, and I am certain, unless it is isolated in the way that I am describing, it will be totally gone.

46. You think if the establishment of a national park were not carried out it would be a wasteful proceeding if this forest were dealt with as a part of the forest has already been dealt with?—Well, the sawmiller deals with the timber as he pleases. Then comes the settler, who sets fire to the remaining bush, and away it goes—for 20,000 acres perhaps. No man can say this is not a wasteful, miserable fashion of dealing with this estate.

*Mr. Mills* (to *Hon. Mr. Rolleston*): This land is all freehold.

*Hon. Mr. Rolleston*: Yes, but that does not make it any better.

*Mr. Fell* (continuing): It is worse by far from the settlers' point of view after the sawmill has gone through it first. The economical way of clearing is to clear it all underneath, and then it is felled and burnt. If the sawmiller goes through first he clears out the big trees, and there is left the mass of undergrowth and entanglement of scrub; a great amount of work has to be done, and the burn is not so good. If this land is to be a national park it must be untouched, because once the sawmill goes through, the whole of the timber is as good as destroyed.

47. *Mr. Wason*.] You mention you are running your head against Mr. Brownlee?—I am afraid it is so.

48. In what way?—Well, he has established a tramway through freehold land, and, as I understand, this tramway has cost a considerable sum of money, and he has had the hope of some kind or another that he had the whole of these Ronga and Opouri Valleys at his mercy. No one else can build a sawmill profitably but Mr. Brownlee, because of his monopoly of the tramway, which has command of the whole timber area. And he has no doubt counted on keeping the access to this timber. The position as I understood it to be stated by Mr. Mills is this: that unless this land is thrown open for timber sawmilling purposes, all this industry must come to an end. There is nobody else, however, but Mr. Brownlee can undertake it, unless the Government buys the tramway.

49. But what I understand is, Mr. Brownlee has constructed the tramway at his own risk, going through freehold land, and without any assurance on the part of the Land Board that he would have a right to the timber?—That is right.

50. That is what I am referring to.—He has no right.

51. Do you know anything about the condition of the tramway? Is it in good condition?—Oh yes, as a tramway it is a well-constructed tramway. I do not know how far it would be suitable; I am told it would be somewhat too narrow for a Government railway-line. But it is not a mere hastily constructed tramway.

52. Does the coach road go alongside it?—Yes, for a long distance.

53. What is its width?—I could not say, but it is a good road—one of the show roads of New Zealand.

54. If the Government were to purchase it would there be any obstruction to their putting a railway? For instance, would they be able to put a railroad along the tramway?—No, I think not.

55. Is it likely, in your opinion, that the coach road would be sufficient for some time to come?—Yes. Of course we are urgently desirous that there should be a railway connection with Marlborough.

56. And would that necessitate the purchasing of the tramway?—Well, the tramway would certainly be useful.

57. As a matter of right I mean?—Certainly it is the route you would have to go by, whether exactly going by it I do not know.

58. But in a general way?—Oh yes, undoubtedly.

59. Have you any idea that there is any scarcity of timber in the Provinces of Nelson or Marlborough?—Well, Nelson has been a timber district, and Marlborough on the whole a pastoral district. There has been very little sawmilling in what may be termed Marlborough proper, but the valleys adjoining have been heavily timbered. You will find a large part of the timber that goes to Christchurch comes from Takaka and Collingwood.

60. Will you tell us what is your opinion about this land? There are two suggestions: one that the timber should be cut, and the other that there should be set apart land less valuable for the Nelson and Marlborough people without interfering with the timber?—There is not any quantity in Nelson, because a large quantity of our land is locked up on account of the Midland Railway.

61. But is the land in the Marlborough or in the Nelson district owned in large enough extent to satisfy those desiring it?—Oh, yes, I should think there will be enough to satisfy demands.

62. *Mr. Mills*.] Do you know what number of scenic reserves of Marlborough lands have been reserved during the past few years?—Oh yes, but they have been quite inaccessible to human beings, either by boat or otherwise. I have no doubt the reserves have been made in a proper way, but none of them can meet the requirements of the people. This, however, is a useful reserve and can be beautified extremely.

63. Do you consider this 2,000 acres or 3,000 acres of land on Brown River is accessible?—