

That Brown River is a picturesque gully absolutely inaccessible to any human being who has not the feet of a cat. It is a beautiful reserve for those who can manage to get at it.

64. Do you know it is nearly two miles from the bottom of the hill down to the main road. When you get into the Brown you go down it for a mile and a half on a level?—So far as that includes flat land it is a very good thing.

65. It is an important reserve from the Marlborough point of view; and for those who do not know what has been done it would be well to enlighten them?—It is of no earthly use—a reserve of 2,000 or 3,000 acres.

66. You are an expert boatman. Do not you consider the Sounds accessible?—Yes, I do; but very out of the way.

Mr. J. H. Cock, of Nelson, made a statement and was examined.

*Mr. Cock:* I am one of the deputation here simply on public grounds. If I consulted my personal interests they would be in opening up this sawmilling district. But I tried to look at a higher consideration than that, and to bear in mind that there is a higher expediency and a higher justice in preserving this fine block. We must remember that for some reason or other not known to ourselves the land has been reserved up to the present time. I am told it was reserved through a petition which Messrs. Brownlee were very instrumental in circulating, requesting Government some ten years ago to preserve these blocks for settlement. I have personally known people who applied for blocks of land for their sons from out of it, but they were told it was reserved. The land has been preserved until this present critical point, and until there is only this last reserve, as I call this, in these two fastnesses. It is extensive, it is of good timber, and it is accessible; and that is why we want it to be preserved. Certainly in these last few years the feeling in regard to the country has been changed, and a sentiment has arisen about these places. We have seen picnic parties encamping about there on every holiday, and it is owing to the growing feeling in that direction that we must have at least a few spots in New Zealand reserved, and in places accessible to the people. The final cutting-out of this timber is a very serious matter. It has been impressed upon us of late years very vividly, not because of the sawmills, but because we have lost block after block of timber by its exposure to sawmilling and fire. There is nothing much to be added to what has been said by Mr. Trask and Mr. Fell. Upon the general and higher sentimental ground largely we seek to preserve this block. I might also mention to the Committee that Messrs. Brownlee have been cutting vigorously for twenty-five years in this district. Their line has been projected greatly into the bush, and probably each line of extension has paid for itself. It is admitted by competent men that there are no other portions of bush of equal character in our district. This gives it a public and general interest. The tram-line is, according to my experience, a better built tramway than usual. It carries light locomotive traffic and things of that sort, and, no doubt, may some day become a link in communication between Blenheim and that valley, and between Blenheim and other places. It would have its value so far as its works and cuttings and embankments were concerned even in a larger scheme. But that does not touch upon the issue which we have come upon. That is to reserve for such purposes as we have set forth and for the shelter of the district this block of land. I have a very strong enthusiasm over the matter, which is shared by a large number of the thinking public in our district. We come here with a very enthusiastic backing in the shape of public meetings and the signature of 4,000 adults to our petition. As it is a matter of serious consideration, we think these voices should be heard—and heard with effect.

67. *Mr. Mills.*] Have you visited these valleys?—I have been at the Croiselles and the other end; I have never been through either valley.

68. Have you any knowledge about the extent of land which will be closed up?—Only on information. I am told about 12,000 or 14,000 acres of the better class of timbered land, leaving out the hillsides and spurs.

69. Are there any other parts of the Pelorus district, according to your knowledge, accessible for getting timber?—I think there is timber in the Wakamarina.

70. You have not been there?—Yes I have—several times.

71. But it is not near?—You have to go from six to seven miles by a branch line.

72. What effect, if this reserve is closed, will it have on the timber industry of Marlborough?—I consider they will go on cutting timber for years. I think there is an inevitable rise of timber coming on, and that with the growing scarcity, timber will continue to be cut. There will be a rise in timber and a rise in the block that has been reserved.

73. Are you aware that so far as the Marlborough people are concerned it is not a question of not creating a reserve, but whether we cannot lay off other suitable blocks to preserve the fauna and flora of the country, and still go on with the sawmilling industry?—Yes, I have no doubt that is the view taken by the sawmilling people.

74. That is the opinion of the Marlborough community. Have you ever been in the Pelorus Valley up above the bridge?—About half a mile up the river.

75. Can you tell us anything about the timber?—No, I could not say much.

76. Would you be surprised if there were equally large and valuable timber up the Pelorus Valley but not so thick?—That is out of the area. We do not object to its being cut. It is almost as accessible as coming up the Opouri and Rai for your sawmilling industry.

77. But is not it as accessible for tourists as the others?—No, because we have a waterway for the Opouri and Ronga.

78. Do you know the height of both saddles between these two places?—I cannot tell you; I think they are low saddles. I was there with Mr. Seymour, who took the levels. Mr. Seymour's level was 800 ft. for the one over the Croiselles, and for the one going from the Opouri to Harvest Bay in Tennyson Inlet is 1,300 ft.