

79. Have you considered that this area if reserved would seriously injure the timber industry of Marlborough, and therefore be a serious injury to a great number of people who reside there?—I do not think it would be so serious as perhaps you think. Settlement has already taken place on the blocks cut up. The industry of Marlborough is a limited industry in Havelock. It is a very small portion of the industry in Marlborough, which is mainly farming and pastoral. I think it is a very temporary matter.

80. Do you know that the Wairau and even Picton draw their timber supplies from this district?—I understand not from your district, but from another district—viz., Omahuta.

81. Would you be surprised to know that there are six big wagons constantly bringing timber to the Wairau and Havelock and taking back an interchange?—That is very likely.

82. *Mr. J. W. Thomson.*] You say this is a reserve?—Yes.

83. For what purpose was it reserved?—No purpose, except perhaps that it was reserved for sawmilling upon a petition sent in about thirteen or fourteen years ago.

84. You said Mr. Brownlee tried to get it?—Certainly, I think he had a large interest in the petition.

85. Very largely, Mr. Brownlee?—Yes. The interests of others were added, but the influence of Brownlee was paramount.

86. *Mr. Mills.*] I have a copy of the petition, and I can assure you it was not Mr. Brownlee.

DR. CLEGHORN, of Blenheim, stated,—

I have no information to give except as to the feelings in Blenheim on the matter—and they are very nearly neutral. The people recognise that reserves so far away from Blenheim are not more important to them than to the rest of the colony. They all seem to consider it a good thing, but not of very much importance to themselves, very much in the same way as the sawmill in the matter of Blenheim itself is of no importance to Blenheim. Brownlee's are so far away that so far as the trade goes there it is a matter of very small importance. The people there feel that the time has gone by for them to get a local forest reserve, and that this is a mere colonial question that does not interest them very much. That is all I can tell you.

MR. H. BAIGENT made a statement, and was examined.

*Mr. Baigent:* I come here with considerable diffidence, from the fact that the gentleman most affected by the position—Mr. Brownlee—is in the same line of business as myself. I am a saw-miller, and I hope from my taking part in the matter I may not be accused of interested motives. I have no such feeling. I respect Mr. Brownlee very much, and I assure you the Nelson public have no desire to affect Mr. Brownlee's interest in any adverse way. We were given to understand that there was a very large area of bush in the Wakamarina available. However, the action we take would be simply turning him for his supply to another portion of bush without much injuring him. I was asked to come here because it was considered that as an old mill-hand—my father built the first sawmill in the Province of Nelson, in 1846, and I have continued the trade myself since—I have lived to see useful forests levelled and cleared away; and I deeply regret that the Government did not in the early days preserve more tracts of bush land. There is now not a considerable block left anywhere in the neighbourhood of Nelson. Everywhere I have seen around the bush has been mutilated. In some places the timber is quite inaccessible to the sawmills, and the result is they chop it down and burn it. There have been millions of feet of timber destroyed there simply because it was not accessible to the sawmillers. In the Takaka Valley all the large portions of bush have been destroyed, as also in Motueka, Dove-dale, and the whole district. I do not know one large portion of bush which would compare in the slightest degree with the block recommended. This block is best from every point of view, being accessible from two directions. There is not any other block anywhere in the Nelson Province more suitable than the Opouri and Ronga Valleys. I know some reserves in the Waimea. There is one reserve that is comprised of birch hills that are very poor and very stunted. I happen to know it personally, because I have a quantity of land adjoining it. The property is really exceedingly poor. I might illustrate this from the fact that in my father's day he owned property in front, and we had some difficulty in selling it, and it was ultimately sold on deferred-payment lease. One section was under 2s. an acre. The fires have destroyed a very large area of this hilly bush. The fire seems to run along the bush ridges—in fact, I have known one fire travel eighteen miles and pass through great portions of reserves. For reservation there is no scenic beauty about it whatever, nor is there food for bird life. There is only one other—up the Motueka Valley in the high mountains—but that will not be useful for some time to come. The Maungatapu is another reserve, but that is reserved for the waterworks.

87. *Mr. Mills.*] Have you been through this bush?—I have not been up the Ronga or the Opouri.

88. Do not you think, as the first effort towards the protection of timber throughout New Zealand, it would be a good thing to raise tithes on it all over New Zealand?—In the Collingwood district at the present time they are giving away the timber. Mr. Allen, of Collingwood, said he had given away 30 acres of rata timber recently.

89. But as a practical sawmiller do not you think that apart from that it would tend to preserve the timber if the Government were to put a tithe on it? I am speaking of the colony generally. Do not you think it would be the first effort to preserve the timber if the Government placed more value on it?—Certainly, I think it would.

90. What do you consider a fair average for heavily timbered land per acre? I do not think I can answer that question. As a rule, you will find perhaps two or three acres heavily timbered, and perhaps 20 acres lightly timbered.

91. But what would you consider the average of this very heavily timbered land?—I could not tell without going specially to see it.