

8. *Mr. Wason.*] In the report from Mr. Barron it says that the whole of this bush might be cut down in seven years or less: would you impress upon the Committee that is a desirable thing to happen?—No, I should not like to see it cut down in seven years; at the same time I disagree with his estimate as to the time it would take to cut this bush away. I do not think there is any probability of so many sawmills going on to the place and cutting all the bush in twenty years.

9. Would you suggest that any steps should be taken for restricting the speedy destruction of all these forests; if seven years is sufficient it becomes a very serious consideration?—I do not think for a moment there is any probability of so many sawmills going into such an extensive bush of that class and cutting away that quantity in the short space of seven years; it would simply overload the market.

*Mr. Gilfedder:* That would depend on supply and demand.

10. *Mr. Wason.*] How many mills?—It would take five large mills over twenty years to cut this timber.

11. *Mr. Flatman.*] Would there be six big mills in the seven years?—Yes; and in less time if necessary.

12. *Mr. J. W. Thomson.*] How many are there at present?—Only one working from that locality; Mr. Brownlee is working from his freehold at present.

13. *Mr. Wason.*] Even suppose there was a demand, would you not propose that there should be some restriction on destroying timber on forest land and putting it into the hands of a monopoly?—I do not think it would be to the interest of either sawmilling or settlement to cut it all down in less than twenty years.

14. But would you put some restriction upon cutting it?—I would certainly advise that the whole of this block should not be cut within the limited period mentioned by Mr. Barron.

15. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] It rests with the Land Board at present?

*Mr. Wason:* Not if it were to proceed at a moderate rate per year.

*Hon. Mr. Rolleston:* As I read the Act it gives Boards power to deal with it exactly as they like.

*Mr. Mills:* It does not come under the Land Board's jurisdiction until it is removed from under this forest reserve, as the block is under the Forest Conservation Act.

*Hon. Mr. Rolleston:* But if your petition is granted it will come under the Land Board to give effect to it.

*The Chairman:* Once it comes into use for the sawmillers it comes under demand and supply, for the sawmillers will cut it down as soon as they can.

*Mr. Mills:* Probably the Committee will take the whole of these petitions together. I thought at first you might deal with the petition for a national park; the counter-petitions, and the other one re purchasing tramway, would require more consideration.

16. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood Mr. Mills to say that there were certain reserves intended to be made in different parts of the district. I should like to ask what is the total area?—Altogether? I could not give that information. I have a letter here which is attached to these plans pointing out that a number of them are as yet unsurveyed. The place where Captain Cook landed—that is, Ship Cove, in Queen Charlotte Sound—and other places, are reserved for historic reasons. In other places there are lands reserved in areas of 50, 100, and over 2,000 acres in one block.

17. *Mr. Wason.*] You are speaking entirely in favour of the tramways?—Yes; of the Government purchasing it.

18. And not of the national park?—No. If that petition were granted it will close 20,000 acres of valuable bush land. It would shut out all our timber industry in a very little time. That is a very serious matter.

19. Are you speaking for your own petition, as against Mr. Fell's?—Yes. The first petition presented for opening these valleys must be opposed to Mr. Fell's. I have always been in favour of reserving blocks of a rational size. But these lands should be open to all who want it for sawmilling. My son wanted some of it to settle on after the sawmilling timber had been removed, but he could not get any of it; so he had to go elsewhere, like many other young men.

20. *Mr. Hogg.*] There is a great deal of land fit for settlement about there?—Yes; many thousands of acres of land, and about dead-level. The hillside is good from 1,000 ft. up to 1,500 ft.

21. Has it been surveyed?—No; only about 3,000 acres for one of the special settlements, in the mouth of the Opori. When the Minister visited the district and saw the timber, he decided not to grant it as a special settlement.

22. Your idea is to have a tramway in this forest, so that the timber can be utilised?—Yes. I am speaking as one who has had a good deal to do with sawmilling, having had a large sawmill myself, and always lived in a district where it was carried on. If I owned the Government land in that district it would be my interest as a private individual to buy the tramway to take my timber out to the best advantage.

23. *The Chairman.*] Is the whole of this forest land to which you propose to extend the tramway belonging to the Crown, or is any of it owned privately?—Yes; I think the cleared farmland commences about three miles from the end of the present tramway, and is all in the Rai Valley.

24. Then, the valuable timber you spoke of is three miles from the present tramway?—Yes, what belongs to the Crown commences that distance from the tramway.

25. So that the first three miles would be for private owners?—Yes. Settlement has gone into a part of this land; on the right side of the river it would be about three miles to meet the Crown lands.

26. *Mr. Flatman.*] Is the present tramway laid on private property or on the road?—Nearly all private property; here and there it touches the road, but most of the land has been acquired from private owners.

27. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Could not the Government make it on their own land?—No.