

still serve the purpose of taking the other timber out that becomes accessible to it. Of course, there is a lot of other timber belonging to the Crown besides this in the Wakamarino and Pelorus Valleys, which will be utilised later on.

52. *Mr. Gilfedder.*] Is there any settlement along the tramway now?—Yes.

53. *Mr. Flatman.*] I would ask you to suggest how you would deal with private owners of this tramway?—I would endeavour to purchase the line. When I mentioned to the Chairman that the tramway would have to go three miles, I should have said that there is a block of 600 acres at Blick's Estate. They would have to pay haulage on their timber just the same, therefore it would not be useless; there is private land that it would benefit, but it would raise the price of Crown lands from £1 to £3 per acre, through providing facilities for those who are so anxious to locate on the land when the milling timber is removed.

Mr. JOHN DUNCAN examined.

54. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A settler.

55. Residing in the district referred to in this inquiry?—Yes.

56. Will you please give the Committee what information you can, in the most condensed form possible, relating to the subject under consideration?—I do not know that I can add very much to the information given by Mr. Mills. I am not aware that I can do more, or very little more, than indorse what he has done for you.

57. Have you recognised for a long time that this matter should have been dealt with by the Government?—I am the Chairman of the Road Board; it affects the Board in the matter of rates. The timber industry in Marlborough does not present the same proportions that it had formerly. Some fifteen or twenty years ago it was of fairly large proportions. The annual output at that time was from twelve to fifteen million feet. As the bushes were worked out the mills, for want of accessible timber, had to leave Marlborough, and the timber industry at present is represented principally by Mr. Brownlee. I think the estimated quantity of timber in the Rai Valley in several reports, notably Mr. Wheatman's, Commissioner of Crown Lands, before the Committee is a reasonable estimate. I have long experience of timber land and sawmilling. The natural port for shipment is Havelock. Some twenty years ago my father had a desire to erect a sawmill at the Croixelles had it been possible to obtain access to the timber in the Rai Valley over the saddle—that is, between the Croixelles and this valley—but he came to the conclusion that it was unworkable. He erected his mill in one of the bays in the Sound instead. I think it is only right that the Government should make this place available for sawmills. It is owing to the neglect of the Government that the sawmilling industry has dwindled down to the small proportion that exists at present. I fully indorse the statement in the petition that the Government should have opened up and made this land available by means of a tramway. I have no interest in the tramway; it occupies, in my opinion, the best line between the ports and the timber lands. I am prepared to support the establishment of a national park in Marlborough. I think the national-park petitioners are being fairly met by the Marlborough Land Board. I understand this Board proposes to set aside reserves at Brom River and in the Upper Pelorus. These places, in my opinion, are very suitable for the purpose.

58. *Mr. J. W. Thomson.*] You said the timber was worked out near terminus of the present tramway?—I did not wish to convey that impression, but to state that in many places where mills had been formerly they have been worked out.

59. Then there have been other mills there?—Not in the Rai Valley; there were twelve or fifteen about the Sounds and other valleys.

60. Then, in order to get at the milling timber now it would be necessary to extend the line?—Yes.

61. How far would it be necessary to extend the line in order to strike the line of sawmilling timber?—Three or four miles.

62. Would the extension go through private lands?—The first extension would probably; the existing line impinges on the main road in some places, in other places it goes through private lands.

63. Then, before the timbered lands could be opened up you would require four miles of additional tram?—I think, probably, about that.

64. *Mr. Gilfedder.*] You think it impracticable to take it by Croixelles Bay?—Yes; there is a dividing range of 800 ft., and the valley trends down from the ridge, so that to attempt working from Croixelles would be pulling up hill. In the event of this line being taken over by the Government it would also act as a railway constantly running to the block.

65. Would that bring the bush to the head of the line?—The demand was increasing. Much of the output was sent to the Canterbury District.

66. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Would the land, when the timber is off it, be suitable for settlement? have you been informed how the Government will treat it when the timber is off?—I think it should be taken up by the sawmillers.

67. In what sizes?—I think from 800 to 1,000 acres.

68. How many mills would be brought into co-operation?—Much would depend on the sizes of the mills. Some years ago it was considered a fair output if they cut a million and a half feet of timber; but Mr. Brownlee's mill is now cutting four millions and a half.

69. *Mr. Gilfedder.* That is 14,000 ft. a day.

70. *Mr. Hogg.*] You say this could only be divided into pieces of 800 or 1,000 acres: do you think that would be the best subdivision?—Certainly not less for sawmilling areas.

71. Would that land be useful for dairy-farms?—After removal of the timber by sawmillers it would be suitable for dairy-farms; indeed, I think that would be the best way of dealing with it.

72. Are there any difficulties in regard to the extension of the tramway?—None now; there were heavy cuttings.