

21. *Dr. Cockayne.*] Referring to the so-called "beech," which consists of a number of different species; have you any estimate of these species, as to how many of them are available in connection with any particular timber, or are they all lumped together as one "beech" only?—As far as I know they are all lumped, and no distinction is made.

22. Therefore the figures are of no value as to the commercial possibilities of our forests in that respect?—They would not be of much use.

23. *The Chairman.*] You have had a certain experience of the Westland Land District?—Yes, two years and a half.

24. Would you say that the amount of timber in that district for commercial use greatly exceeded what there is in this district?—I do not know very much about the southern part of Westland, but I think there must be a good deal more timber there than here.

25. In the 1909 return I was rather struck with the statement that the quantity in Nelson was approximately as 4 to 5 as against Westland. Do you think that is correct?—I think there must be more timber in Westland.

FREDERICK GILES GIBBS sworn and examined. (No. 32.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a Master of Arts and connected with Nelson College?—Yes. I have resided in this district since 1876.

2. Have you any remarks to make as to the matter we are inquiring into?—I have rambled through the forests practically all round this bay, and on the west coast to a certain extent, in the neighbourhood of Karamea, and on the high ranges round Blind Bay, and I am pretty familiar with the country for a distance back from the seaboard.

3. Is that forest-clad land?—Yes, 'up to an elevation of a little over 4,000 ft. The bush consists of the various species of beech.

4. Have you specially observed the result of forest-destruction as regards the denudation of the soil?—Yes. Denudation has been very apparent in many places. Where the steeper hillsides have been denuded of forest, within a few years afterwards a great deal of the soil has gradually slipped from the hillsides and left the country comparatively bare.

5. Has it had any effect on the streams that used to flow from those areas?—I cannot say that I have noticed a diminution in the streams, and without measurements it would be difficult to give any definite statement on the subject.

6. Are you acquainted with any scenic reserves?—Yes.

7. Generally speaking, are they in good order and free from weeds?—Most of the scenic resorts are well covered with bush, so that the blackberry and other weeds have gained very little hold.

8. Are there any forests in this district you can recommend as reservations for the preservation of the natural vegetation?—Yes; for some time past a number of us have been making efforts to secure the reservation of a block of 1,200 acres which is wedged in between two other reserves, but which if cut out would constitute a great source of danger from fire. Both lie at the back of the range behind Nelson, to the eastern side, but a difficulty has occurred owing to the land being included in the national-endowment lands. There seems to be some legal difficulty over the matter, but we have represented it to Wellington several times.

9. *Mr. Thompson* (Commissioner of Crown Lands): May I say, Mr. Chairman, that the piece referred to is national-endowment land, but under the amending Land Act of 1912 there is power to exchange it, and we are going to exchange it for 1,200 acres in the new block we are opening up. That will meet the case. It is desirable to make it a reserve, and I have recommended accordingly.

10. *The Chairman.*] Do you wish to add anything, Mr. Gibbs?—Yesterday I mentioned to Mr. Thompson another matter he immediately fell in with: that the reserves made at Lakes Rotiti and Rotoroa should be extended to take in their watersheds, to save the danger from fire. We have brought under the notice of the Minister the necessity of making a reserve of the upper part of the Cobb Valley, one of the tributaries of the Takaka Valley. It is one of the most beautiful valleys around Nelson, and should certainly be preserved. A small piece of freehold in the bottom of the valley might be left undisturbed, as it serves to assist to keep open the tracks to the forest. I also suggest the Kiwi Valley, a branch of the Wangapeka, should be reserved.

11. During your rambles did you notice that the deer were doing any harm to the forest?—It is the opinion of many in Nelson that the deer are becoming numerous, and that they are doing a great deal of harm and threatening the bush with extermination. Personally, I think their fears are often exaggerated, because, although the deer must, of course, do damage and eat a great deal of vegetation, during the thirty years I have been wandering about I cannot say, excepting perhaps in a few localities, that I have noticed very much difference with regard to the thickness of the bush. There are some places where deer are plentiful, and where the forest is becoming more park-like and free from undergrowth. If they become much more numerous no doubt that position would extend. At present I do not think the deer are plentiful enough in the district to threaten the bush seriously with extermination, although I know that experts in bush matters hold the contrary opinion.

12. Have you noticed whether, in addition to eating the young shrubs, they also eat the bark of the trees?—They have been very destructive in many orchards about Nelson. Last year I saw an orchard at Moutere where two or three deer had done a lot of damage to about 500 trees, up one row and down another. That was an orchard many acres in extent.