

1898.
NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

REPORTS ON THE PETITIONS OF W. T. ERSKINE AND OTHERS, C. Y. FELL AND OTHERS, AND E. PURSER AND OTHERS, RELATIVE TO THE THROWING-OPEN OF THE RAI AND ADJACENT VALLEYS IN THE INTERESTS OF SAWMILLING AND SETTLEMENT; TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDICES.

Reports brought up on 1st September, 1898, and ordered to be printed.

REPORTS.

No. 214, 1897.—PETITION of W. T. ERSKINE and Others, Havelock, Marlborough.

THE petitioners pray that Government will purchase the Rai Valley Tramway, and open up the Ronga and Opouri Valleys for sawmilling and settlement purposes.

I am directed to report that, having heard the evidence of a number of witnesses in support of the petition, the Committee are unable to recommend the Government to purchase the tramway in question from Messrs. Brownlee and Co. A copy of the evidence is attached.

1st September, 1898.

Nos. 5 and 135.—PETITIONS of C. Y. FELL and Others, Nelson; and W. POLLARD and Others, Awatere.

THE petitioners pray that the valleys of the Rai, Ronga, and Opouri may be conserved as a national park, and the timber therein preserved for all time.

No. 19.—PETITION of E. PURSER and Others.

A COUNTER-PETITION to the foregoing, wherein petitioners pray that the lands in question may be opened for sawmilling and settlement purposes.

I am directed to report that the Committee are of opinion that the Government should carefully consider the best means of conserving the valuable forest lands in the valleys of the Rai, Ronga, and Opouri. A copy of the evidence is attached.

1st September, 1898.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 19TH JULY, 1898.—(Mr. R. THOMPSON, Chairman.)

Mr. C. H. MILLS, M.H.R., made a statement and was examined.

Mr. C. H. Mills: As this petition is of so much importance, and so wide-reaching in its effect, I wish to bring some witnesses before the Committee who can give the members reliable information in reference to the several petitions now before them. At the same time I would point out that on the 29th September, 1895, a report which appears in the Parliamentary Paper I.—1 contains the decision of that Committee—the report of the Public Petitions A to L Committee on the petition of the Pelorus Road Board and others in the County of Marlborough. There is a good deal of evidence attached to that and printed in the same paper. The report was as follows: “I am directed to report that, in the opinion of this Committee, the bush on the Crown lands in Marlborough is of such importance that the Committee recommends the Government to make further inquiries, so as to ascertain in what manner they can be worked in the interest of sawmilling and settlement to the best advantage of the district and colony.” On the 17th of October a report was brought