

Mr. McKerrow.
29th Aug., 1877.

164. It is about ten miles from Livingstone to Kyeburn?—Fourteen miles. It would be the difficult part.

165. Would you think that fourteen miles would cost more than these twenty-four?—I will not say. I am not accustomed to estimating for works.

166. *The Chairman.*] Which of the two lines opens the most country for settlement?—Of course, the Strath Taieri.

167. *Mr. Carrington.*] With reference to the line opening 1,200,000 acres, of which 40,000 acres would be agricultural land, I wish to know if you have got a name for that line from end to end?—It is very well named—the Strath Taieri line to the interior.

168. *The Chairman.*] Beyond Cromwell, do you know the country; how far towards the West Coast?—Up to the forest of the Makarora.

169. Would that open up a large area of land?—It would. There is 1,065,000 acres from Cromwell to Makarora Bush.

170. Supposing the railway be carried so far as Cromwell at present, would that be beneficial, and calculated to assist in opening the country beyond Cromwell that you have described?—Certainly.

171. It is the natural outlet for all the country in that valley?—Yes.

172. *Mr. Macandrew.*] And from Cromwell to Lake Wanaka it is almost dead level?—It rises in forty miles about 300 feet.

173. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us the elevation at the head of Lake Wanaka?—The lake itself is put down at 1,089 feet. That is a mistake. It is only 920. The land at the head of the lake is only a few feet more.

174. What is the elevation of Cromwell?—700 feet.

175. There are no hills to go through—no cuttings, no bridges?—Yes; a bridge would be required where you cross the Clutha once.

176. Not near Cromwell?—Yes; you must cross the river near Campbell's Station, Wanaka.

177. Then, there would only be one bridge of any formidable dimensions?—Yes.

178. Can you tell us the elevation of Haast Pass?—1,700 feet.

179. That is the highest point between Dunedin and the West Coast by that route?—Yes; it is the only true pass in the Middle Island; the rest are going up and over spurs. There is no end of timber at the other side of the pass. From Lake Wanaka to the West Coast it is dense timber. It is important you should know that the Strath Taieri route passes through lignite deposits which are extensive. They are adjacent to it all along. But for that lignite, the diggers would very likely have had to give in long ago.

THURSDAY, 30TH AUGUST, 1877.

Mr. JOHN ROBERTS examined.

Mr. J. Roberts.
30th Aug., 1877.

180. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Your name is John Roberts?—Yes.

181. You reside in Dunedin?—I am a merchant in Dunedin, and am engaged in business as run-holder in Strath Taieri.

182. What extent of land would be opened up by a line of railway to Naseby and Clyde?—A line to Naseby and Clyde would open up about 1,000,000 of pastoral and agricultural land.

183. What would be the value of the land?—The value of the land would be increased perhaps from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per acre. The price of agricultural land would be enhanced from £1 to £1 10s. per acre beyond present upset price.

184. Do you think a public company could be formed to construct this line of railway?—From evidence I have gathered in Dunedin there would be no difficulty in getting a company to construct a line, if given a pre-emptive right over 300,000 acres at 20s. per acre.

185. Do you know the country through which it is proposed to carry a railroad?—I know all the Province of Otago.

186. Which of the proposed lines of railroad do you consider, from your knowledge of the country, would open up the most agricultural land?—Knowing the whole country in Otago, and that the coast line is opened up, the line up the Taieri is the only line that would open up the whole interior. The Clutha line extended would go mainly through a gorge with no extent of available Crown lands; whereas the Taieri line would open all the big plains—Strath Taieri, Maniototo and Serpentine, Ida Valley, Manuherikia. The interior line *via* Strath Taieri would not pass through more than from six to ten miles of private lands.

187. What inducement would a company require to carry out a line of railway?—5 per cent. guarantee would be sufficient to induce a company to take the matter up. The cost of construction to be estimated by the Government Engineer.

188. Would such company be prepared to relinquish the line to the Government when so required on their being recouped the actual cost of construction?—It seems rather a one-sided arrangement when the guaranteed interest is low to ask companies to give up their property for cost of construction. I think arbitration would be fairer.

189. Would a company undertake the construction of the line, subject to the tariff charges being fixed by the Government?—I have no doubt a company would take the line up. The fares might be regulated by Government. A company could be formed in a month upon the basis of a 5 per cent. guarantee.

190. Then, I understand you to say that, from your own knowledge of the disposition of capitalists, there would be no difficulty in forming a company to undertake this work, if necessary?—Yes; I have taken much interest in the matter in Dunedin.

191. By the proposed District Railways Bill, which I presume you have not seen, the Government would guarantee 7 per cent.?—If Government gave a 7 per cent. guarantee, the limit for the purchase of the line might be fixed at 10 per cent. over the cost, and I think such limitation would be fair. I have not seen the District Railways Bill, but as it is defined by the Chairman—a 7 per cent. guarantee, and 10 per cent. upon cost of construction when repurchased—the Bill would be very favourable.