

122. Would not the railway confer the same benefit as the making of the port?—I think not to the same extent. In the first instance the railway would cost four times the amount of the harbour works.

123. I do not know anything about the particular case, but, from what you have shown us upon these plans, I should think the cost of the work would be nearly three times the amount you have stated?—I think it is a pretty correct estimate.

124. *Mr. Joyce.*] Would a railway assist your timber trade?—Yes, undoubtedly. It would lead to increased consumption, and give a better outlet, as Greymouth would form a second port of export. The benefit in the respect would be mutual, because the railway would also give Greymouth a second port of export for her coal.

125. Has it occurred to you that the railway charges would be such as to make the timber so expensive that it could not be exported?—No doubt the thing is cut very fine, but at present the timber trade has not a sufficient outlet. There is another thing to be considered: We should have increased facilities for saw-milling in the shape of cheap coal.

126. *Sir R. Douglas.*] You are aware the great cost of timber is the cost of handling?—Yes.

127. And if you once got it in the truck, away it would go to port?—Yes. I think it of the first importance to have our port at Hokitika made good. I do not mean to say that a railway should not be made. I think there should be a railway. It would be of the utmost value to both Greymouth and Hokitika, for it is a curious fact that, while we are blocked in winter, Greymouth is, at times, blocked in summer. Besides, there is no doubt that the lines will ultimately be connected across the hills with the settled districts on the East Coast. The two markets will be mutually valuable; therefore it is essential that the railway system of the colony should be extended to Hokitika. As to the harbour works at Hokitika, I have this additional to say: Suppose they cost £50,000, at 6 per cent. that would render the revenue liable to an annual charge of £3,000. The harbour dues now come to about £2,000 a year, and, with the increase of trade incidental to increased facilities and accommodation, I have no doubt that £3,000 would be reached, so that the interest would be entirely recouped. I may say we do not look to make improvements such as will allow of large vessels coming in at present.

128. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] Has any professional estimate been made of the cost of the harbour works?—No; I merely stated roughly the prevalent opinion as to the cost.

129. When the competitive designs come in, will you be in possession of an estimate?—Certainly; there will be an estimate with each design.

130. Are the persons preparing designs limited to any amount?—It was stated that the funds at the disposal of the Board would be something under £50,000.

131. I understand the object of the Board is to keep the bar open continuously, with the average depth of water there is now on it?—Yes.

132. It is not to make the harbour large enough to admit large ships?—No.

133. Is it a mere temporary work, or is it a work that will last for all time?—We look to make it a permanent work.

134. Would the port of the Grey, with the improvements made and being made, in your opinion, be sufficient to properly maintain the existing condition of things in that part of the country, and, with regard to the future, conduce to its proper opening up and development and settlement, without the Hokitika Harbour at all?—Certainly not. I think it would lead to the depopulation of the southern part of the district.

135. Is there at present a large population south of Hokitika; if so, is it likely to still increase?—Yes.

136. And is not the country south dependent upon Hokitika for supplies?—It is. I may say active steps are being taken to get road connection through the whole district, in order to give facilities for the examination and prospecting of the country south of Hokitika.

137. The country south of Hokitika—Ross, Jackson's Bay, and those places—is supposed to be rich in minerals and precious metals?—Yes. Recent discoveries have pointed in that direction. There have been several discoveries lately which point to the southern country being much more important than it has been supposed to be. The silver mines at Rangitoto have been largely gone into, and considerable expense has already been gone to by the Government so as to make them available. In the event of their turning out a success, I believe there will be a large population settled there, and some very important industries established; and also further south there are many prospects of discoveries which will support a large population. In the neighbourhood of the Paringa River there has been discovered antimony, galena, and copper; and a fair prospect of coal has been obtained. In that direction, too, lithographic stone has been discovered, and steps are being taken to insure its being worked either by local capital or by a large company to be formed at Home.

138. Lithographic stone is scarce, I believe?—So far as we know the whole of the present supply comes from the Solenhofen Quarries in Bavaria, and there is a practical monopoly of those quarries. I have also been told by a gentleman, who ought to know very well, that these quarries are to a certain extent giving out; at any rate, that it is difficult to get the required supplies therefrom.

139. I suppose the demand is unlimited?—It is increasing very rapidly. There is at present a large consumption throughout the world, and the stone is daily being used for new purposes.

140. And has it been ascertained that this stone can be obtained?—Yes. Stone has been brought up and tested, and by some declared to be superior to the stone obtained in Germany. The deposits are larger in quantity, and pretty easy of access.

141. *The Chairman.*] Has a company been formed to work these quarries?—Yes.

142. Do you know for a fact whether efforts have been made to form a large company in London, and that some of the local shareholders have gone Home for that purpose?—Yes. When the company was formed here, it was proposed to make arrangements by which the quarries should be worked in a large way. Steps are now being taken to that end.

143. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] Taking these things into consideration, that the present population