

bility of this land is only twenty bushels per acre of oats, it will give a total of 42,345 sacks of oats for a crop. Now, last year only 5,885 sacks of oats came down the Tinwald line, which clearly shows that at present this line is of little or no value to the people up there.

223. May it not show that the district is not cultivated at present?—It would not pay expenses, on account of having to cart it so far. Then, we have 13,874 acres fit for wheat, divided as follows: 7,212 acres, estimated yield, 20 bushels per acre; 4,552 acres, 25 bushels; 1,091 acres, 30 bushels; 667 acres, 35 bushels; 352 acres, 40 bushels: total, 13,874 acres; average yield, 23½ bushels per acre, making a total of 328,195 bushels of wheat. Last year only 8,723 sacks of wheat came down the line. Now, considering that there are 13,874 acres fit for wheat in the neighbourhood, it should be some inducement to the Government to extend the line, because there is no doubt that all this land which is carrying sheep would be put under crop, and yield a larger revenue to this line. Besides this area, there are 5,171 acres which, from a farmer's point of view, would have to be "worked" to get anything out of: it should be broken up and allowed to lie for a couple of years or so to sweeten. This has been done by a farmer up there named Toner, with the result that he threshed out thirty-three bushels of wheat to the acre. I have, however, only estimated twenty bushels per acre for this 5,171 acres, which gives us another 103,420 bushels. Adding this to the 328,195 bushels before mentioned, we have a grand total of 107,903½ sacks of wheat and 42,345 sacks of oats. I am sorry to say that some gentlemen who promised to come and give evidence have not been able to do so; but, as you have taken such full evidence at Mount Somers, I did not press them to come down. I should like to put in this statement formally; it can be sworn to, if necessary, as nearly correct. [Statement put in; see Appendix G.] I will also put in a map which I have had prepared, and which shows the sections referred to in the statement. [Map put in.]

224. Can you give me any information as to the stone in the district?—There is a stone quarry on the north branch of the Ashburton, which could be made accessible by a tramway.

225. What access is there to it now?—It is at present accessible by a cart-road. We worked the quarry for some time, but we found that the expense of cartage was so great that stone from Oamaru could be delivered at Ashburton at a cheaper rate than we could deliver it.

226. What quality is the stone?—It is very good, and has been spoken of very highly by some of the architects in Christchurch.

227. Is there much of it?—There is a very large quantity. If the railway were extended it would be an inducement to us to lay a tramway, but it would not pay if we had to cart it.

228. What kind of stone is it?—It is limestone. I may say that we tried the experiment of burning lime, which was very successful; but at present this part of the country and Christchurch are supplied from Otago.

229. Are you acquainted with that part of the country?—Pretty well.

230. Have you ever seen the coal seams which are reported to exist there?—No, but I have burned the coal.

231. Where did it come from?—I cannot say exactly; it may have been from Stour Creek.

232. *The Mayor.*] Are you aware of the reason why the present line, as completed, is of so little use to the people of Mount Somers and Alford Forest?—Yes; a great many of the farmers living above the Forks prefer to cart their produce to Ashburton rather than to cross the river and make use of the Tinwald line. A man up there who has upwards of six hundred acres of wheat has asked us to advertise for tenders to cart it to Ashburton instead of to the terminus at Anama or Cavendish, although it is a distance of only some six miles to the station, while it is sixteen miles to the Ashburton Township.

232A. *The Commissioner.*] How do you account for that?—Because they have to go up hill and round across the river by the traffic bridge, whereas it is down hill to Ashburton; but if the line were extended as we suggest there is no doubt that all this grain would come down that way.

233. If the line were made to Bowyer's Stream, would not those who had produce have still to cross Taylor's Creek?—Yes, but there are two bridges up there, which were built by the County Council.

234. What river do they object to cross?—The South Branch.

235. There is a bridge over the South Branch?—Yes, but they have to go up hill and then come down again..

236. Can you tell me the difference of height between the proposed terminus at Bowyer's Stream and the ridge at Mount Somers on the left bank of the South Branch? [The witness was unable to answer the question, but Mr. Baxter, the County Engineer, who was referred to, stated that the terminus at Bowyer's Stream was about 120ft. lower than the junction of the roads at Mount Somers Township.]

237. Do you not think that when the line was made to the new terminus indicated on the map a considerable number of persons would still find those objections to prevail which you have just stated were expressed by one person?—No doubt. I should not like to say that all the people will bring their grain this way, but I am sure that the largest number of people living about the neighbourhood in question and producing grain would bring their produce to the proposed station.

238. You are perhaps aware that it is somewhat up-hill from the southern part of the district you have indicated to the proposed station?—Yes.

Mr. JOSEPH IVESS, M.H.R., examined.

239. *The Commissioner.*] You are able to give some information on this question?—I have collected some particulars from the Railway Department here with regard to the quantity of coals received at the Ashburton Railway-station during the past twelve months, and I find that the number of tons was 4,700. This is for the Ashburton Station only, but the quantity would be largely supplemented if Tinwald, Winslow, and the adjacent stations were included, all of which would be served by opening up the coal mine at Mount Somers. I have also ascertained from the Railway