

76. What would be the effect if the timber was allowed to be disposed of—that is, on these lands?—Well, that would not do. They are carting timber now about twenty miles—that is, from Reefton to the Big River.

77. Is the timber an essential in working these mining-lands?—They could not do without it.

78. Then, the conserving of the timber would be conducive to the miners?—It is necessary to them.

79. Is there much land, or any land, there that could be granted for settlement?—No, only along the flats where the railway-line is going. The other land is no good for settlement—it is all rock.

80. The only lands suitable for settlement are the flats?—Well, say, a mile from the railway.

81. The rest are all rocks?—All rocks except a little along the river-beds.

82. Would it be conducive to mining, or against the mining interest, to allow the flat land to be alienated—would it be wise to dispose of that flat land?—Probably it would not, because we do not know whether there is any gold there. It has never been prospected. There are some portions of the flats fit for agriculture, but at a large expense to clear it. It might turn out eventually to be auriferous, and, therefore, it would be advisable to reserve that as well.

83. Does the timber grow on the flat lands?—The timber is principally on the flat lands.

84. Do you consider that the timber is required for mining purposes?—Yes.

85. You think the whole of this timber is required for mining, looking a reasonable distance ahead, and at present requirements?—Well, I think it would be.

86. You stated at the commencement of your evidence that there are some of those flats where the gold has been traced into them. Is that so?—Yes.

87. You also said that in working the higher ground the *débris* goes down into the flats?—Yes.

88. Well, if the flats were alienated the owners would stop all this?—Yes. They have at one place—Boatman's Creek—and the miners cannot work the creek.

89. The flat lands have been sold there?—Yes.

90. And the owners are stopping the workings?—Yes. The miners cannot work, because they probably may encroach upon the freehold.

91. You do not think it would be a wise thing to alienate these flats?—No; not all of them.

92. As an investor going to purchase, what would you consider the value of the land?—Where the timber is of value I should put on the timber about £1 an acre, and when cleared the land would probably be worth about 15s. to £1 an acre.

93. What would it cost to clear per acre?—In some parts it would cost hundreds of pounds—from £100 to £200; in other cases from £50 to £60. That is, for stumping.

94. To fell the bush, burn it off, and lay down in grass, what per acre?—I cannot say; there has been very little done in my district. It is only done by farmers—those who clear a little now and again.

95. Is there much settlement going on in the district?—Not very much.

96. Would there be a very great deal of settlement supposing the whole of the land was open for selection—say free trade?—There have been a number of applications put in, and I know several who intended to work on it if they could have got the land granted at that time; but they would not have been a great number.

97. How many acres would the applications cover, roughly?—A few have been before me—probably about twenty applications.

98. What is the average acreage of the applications you have seen?—The few that came through me—probably about twenty—would cover 500 or 600 acres.

99. Do you know anything about Callaghan's district?—No.

100. Do you know anything about the Ahaura district?—Very little.

101. You have only been there a very short time?—That is all.

102. *Mr. Wilson.*] You said in your remarks that it would be impossible to make a mistake in the survey. Do you mean with regard to the trigonometrical blocks or the boundaries of any individual block?—The boundaries of blocks as laid out and described.

103. Then you think the Survey Office is infallible?—No, I do not think it is infallible. Of course there would be a certain amount of error.

104. Is it not possible to make a mistake in one or two small blocks in roughly plotting on the blocks?—I do not know how they took them out.

105. Is it possible to make a mistake?—I suppose it would be possible, but it could be checked.

106. Suppose it has been said that an error has been made by a competent surveyor, would you not say it was possible to make a mistake?—Of course, it might be.

107. You say that these maps sent down to you were marked differently by the experts in the district, and you gave several names. What is Mr. Irving by employment?—He is a sharebroker and mining agent, and deals in mines principally.

108. Is he a practical geologist or miner?—A practical miner.

109. What is Mr. Trennery?—He is just the same. He is not a sharebroker, but an expert in mining.

110. In what sense?—He understands quartz-mining, which is the principal in the district. I do not know whether he understands alluvial.

111. And Mr. Bell?—I do not know much of him. He is up in the Hampden district.

112. Is he an expert in mining?—I could not say.

113. What is Mr. Collings?—A sharebroker.

114. With what experience?—He is experienced in alluvial workings.

115. You cannot say definitely that they are expert miners?—I presume they are expert miners. They have been there for many years.