

61. You say that immediately behind there is an extent of terrace-land of some eighteen miles before you come to the ranges?—There is a wide valley about eighteen miles broad between the main range of mountains and the Grey River.

62. Do I understand you to say there is a block of eighteen miles wide fairly open and available for settlement?—Of low hills or flats, but all covered with forest.

63. *Mr. Tanner.*] Is that the entire width to the river?—The valley on the other side of the Grey River is much narrower.

64. *Mr. Mills.*] But you think there is a block of eighteen miles wide behind the alienated lands which you would consider generally suitable for settlement?—In a longer or shorter time it would be suitable—that is, if the question of gold-mining did not prevent it.

65. The evidence we have heard from a previous witness is that not more than a third of the land would have any value for settlement?—I differ from him: I have given a very low value. To explain it more clearly, I would say all that land has got a value—if it were only a shilling an acre it has a value—and will have a considerable value in twenty or thirty years, except the rocky gorges. Roughly speaking, I do not think there is an acre of that land which has not got some value; and it would have a greater value as time goes on. As the lower pieces became settled they would increase the value of the higher ones adjoining. Probably the worst of it, from one cause or other, if there were no gold-mining, and you could deal with it in the most business-like manner, would all fetch up to my minimum of 10s. in the course of twenty to thirty years or so.

66. Does this strip of from eighteen to twenty miles wide practically include the yellow area [on the map], or does it go beyond?—The yellow is the actually made mining reserves, and is about four miles wide; the red is the proposed mining reserves, and is from four to eight miles wide.

67. Then, in your opinion, the yellow area and the proposed extension of reserves through the red area—the whole of this land, would be more or less suitable for settlement within the next eighteen or twenty years?—I think, setting aside for the purpose of argument the question of gold-mining, that the whole of that land could be settled within the next twenty to thirty years.

68. Is it good soil? We have evidence that all the country in the red area is rocky country, and that there cannot be any settlement upon it?—I have not been all over the country, but I have been a good deal about this part of it. My opinion is that the whole of this country could be eventually settled at a price, if not prevented by gold-mining.

69. You say that the main ranges are not embraced in this red area. Do I understand you still to say that they are not?—In some places these spurs approach it, but they are not included in it.

70. The whole area consists of terraces?—No; low hills and spurs, and flatter terraces.

71. Then, all the country, you might fairly say, would be suitable for settlement?—Yes.

72. With soil?—Yes, with soil: not necessarily the best soil in New Zealand. It grows a large crop of timber, and I have yet to learn that it will not produce anything else.

73. Do you say that this red area is a timber-country?—You mean suitable for forest purposes?

74. We have evidence that it is not a forest-country.—It is rocky here and there. There are crags, of course; but, generally speaking, the whole of it is covered with forest. To the eye it appears so: but whether you call it forest or scrub is a matter of opinion.

75. It is apparently a timber country?—It is all covered with forest.

76. I asked this question of a previous witness, with the view of arriving at some idea of the importance of the surface of this country either for mining or for settlement, or for both?—I was under the impression when these witnesses gave their evidence that they either overestimated the width of the red block, or underestimated the width of the Grey Valley.

77. You say the red area, ten or twelve miles altogether, does not encroach on the rough country?—The preceding witnesses were competent men. I only give my opinion in the same way as they gave their opinions.

78. The previous witnesses say that even of the yellow area, most probably only about a third of the land is of any value for timber or settlement?—I have already told you that I think the whole of it—if you had no other difficulties to contend with—would be under settlement in time; it is only suitable for grazing purposes now, putting cattle on it first, and afterwards, perhaps, sheep.

79. Would you say that two-thirds, or three-fourths, or what proportion of it might be valuable for settlement?—Distinctly I should say two-thirds, and that within a fair limit of time.

80. You think at least two-thirds of it would be valuable for settlement within a fair limit of time?—Yes; I have no doubt of it—setting the gold-mining question aside. There is, however, a part of it in respect to which I should qualify the statement I have made: that is, up to the blocks above the Inangahua River—the Spencer Range, I think it is called. I was speaking of the Grey Valley up to Reefton. The other portion was not in my mind at the time—I was thinking of the lower part. The upper part contains a group of mountains not at all suitable for settlement. The upper blocks are of a different character from what I have described. What I meant was from the Inangahua River downwards to Lake Brunner.

81. You have said that, so far as you have had experience, settlement had followed the clearing of timber—that is, the timber having been cleared, settlement followed?—You can hardly take it so broadly. The time is so short that it has as yet happened only in one case. In that instance where the sawmiller had cut the timber other people wanted to buy the land from us.

82. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] May I ask where that piece was?—It is on some freehold that the company bought near Kokiri, on the Greymouth and Christchurch line.

83. *Mr. Wilson.*] The license was issued for 200 acres I think?—Yes, and some 30 to 50 acres are cut out, and several people want 10-acre and 15-acre blocks.

84. That is the only experience the company has had of this kind?—Yes, as yet.

85. *The Chairman.*] From your position in the company I suppose you took an active part in negotiating No. 2 contract?—I did.