

146. *Mr. Stringer.*] It did not affect them from a value point of view?—No, not some of them, because they are of special value. I mean by old freeholds the Totara Flat. I do not know of any others.

147. Hon. E. BLAKE.] You mean, supposing there were no lands alienated except Totara Flat?—No lands except those that are used in the smallest possible way.

148. *Mr. Stringer.*] There were alluvial flats along the Grey Valley long before the line was constructed?—Yes. The Totara Flat, and down towards Ahaura. There was a certain amount of land.

149. Were not the alluvial flats alienated by the Crown before the line was constructed?—There was a narrow strip, but not nearly all the alluvial flats there.

150. You say some of the alluvial flats had never been taken up, although they were open for years for selection. Is it not a fact that it was depreciated in value by the construction of the railway?—There is the Totara Flat which had a monopoly of the Reefton oaten-hay trade, and some people urged that there was a decrease in the value on this. There was a considerable increase in value in some of the other lands, judging from the price we were asked to pay for them.

151. Hon. E. BLAKE.] Totara Flat had a monopoly which it ceased to enjoy?—It was open to question what was the effect of it.

152. *Mr. Stringer.*] Did you form any opinion as a land agent of the cost per acre to clear the mining reserves in the Grey Valley?—Few people know. Some have spent £100 and have not cleared it, and others have cleared it at thirty shillings an acre; and really there is such an enormous margin that it depends just how a man goes about it, and its exact quality.

153. You, as a land agent, could form some opinion as to what it could be reasonably cleared for?—The heavily-timbered land should only be cleared by first using the timber. After you had cleared the heavy stuff off you clear it off for thirty shillings an acre.

154. You have to get a sawmill established?—Which should pay for itself.

155. And then you have to clear the sawmill stuff. What would that cost?—If it is only scrub it costs eighteen shillings an acre to thirty shillings, if the heavy stuff is taken away.

156. What is the cost of clearing the timber lands in cases where the timber is not suitable for a sawmill?—Well, from £2 to £3 an acre. It is rather a rough estimate, because cases have so seldom arisen, and prices are so different to what they are up in the North Island.

157. You cannot burn, except in very special seasons, on the West Coast?—It is more difficult to burn.

158. The timber in the neighbourhood of Lake Brunner is very much more valuable than the timber on the reserves?—I do not think that the timber at Lake Brunner is; some of it is generally the best—that is, it grows more to the acre, but there is not a very marked difference between the others.

159. There is a great quantity of timber?—Yes.

160. It would take a great number of years to work it out?—Yes. I think if that trade grows—as it is likely to do—it will not take very many years. Twenty years would make a very large hole in it.

160A. Has the timber trade improved lately?—It has increased from nothing to what it is now. They sent to Canterbury about 5,000,000ft. last year.

161. As a matter of fact, has it not fallen off during the last twelve months?—It has rather improved during the last twelve months.

162. Is it not probable that saw-milling operations for some years to come will be confined to the vicinity of Lake Brunner?—No, because the Hokitika line is in competition with it.

163. I am speaking of the company's line—the vicinity of Lake Brunner?—Unless there is a further start I should think those mills would be sufficient to supply what is required.

164. *Mr. Cooper.*] You say, in answer to Mr. Stringer, that you took reports Home with you?—Yes.

165. Which you submitted to the parties you were negotiating with?—Yes.

166. Had you reports, also, sent to you while you were at Home?—I do not think so, except supplementary.

167. Did you not have Mr. Blair's report?—Oh, yes. I had forgotten that.

168. Is that the report which was submitted to the company?—Yes, that is it. [Report put in, dated 7th April, 1886. Exhibit No. 88.]

169. I believe you are not an engineer?—No.

170. You took no active part, and have no expert knowledge as to the cost of the line?—My knowledge was the cost supplied by me to the Government: and knowledge of the cost, when I speak of the Reefton line, was the knowledge of any officer of the company.

171. You said, speaking from memory, that the company were prevented from financing in 1891, and I understood you to mean that the mining reserves were then threatened?—There had been discussions about them.

172. Do I understand you to mean that the proposals to make the mining reserves had any effect in 1891 on the company's finance?—I think what I said was that there was a general indefiniteness of the position, among other difficulties.

173. What did you mean by your previous answer to Mr. Stringer?—As far as I understood Mr. Stringer's question I mentioned the "clause 33" difficulties. When he mentioned the mining reserves I said that they were under discussion, but that they or any particular thing was the cause of it I could not say.

174. I understand you to say that the whole thing together was the operating cause of it?—Yes. It was the general indefiniteness.

175. Hon. E. BLAKE.] You said that you always said that you could not estimate the traffic of the Nelson part of the line?—Yes.