

286. Where could it take this produce to?—You know, probably as well as I do, that Reefton supplies a great many of these places on the Buller River.

287. The reason, I think, is that the road from Westport is impassable in winter. Is that not so?—There is all the more reason that the people should get their supplies by railway.

288. Have you ever been around here—[place indicated on the map]?—No.

289. That is, you have not been from Cape Foulwind around this way [indicated on map]?—No.

290. You know that this is a vast dividing range [indicated on map]?—I see the Barrier Range.

291. And from here to the coast is inaccessible?—It is pretty rough-going.

292. Has anybody ever gone through?—Yes.

293. But there is no road across the range?—No.

294. The only road entrance is down the Buller Gorge to Westport and around by the beach?—Yes.

295. There is a beach road, and the road from Charleston goes off here [indicated on map]?—Yes.

296. As to these selections before these reserves were proclaimed. You did not put in any selections here at all [indicated on map]?—No; but I believe there were some applications for settlement.

297. Under section 33?—Yes.

297A. But you never attempted to make any selections on the West Coast except at Brunner? Yes; we had applied for Block 85, of 3,000 acres.

298. When did you apply for that?—I think about 1889.

299. You do not suggest that was agricultural land, do you?—It was not a valuable property, but we expected to get good prices for it. It is limestone country.

300. Was it suggested that there might be coal on the land?—No. I know there was no coal there.

301. That was refused for selection?—Yes.

302. Are you aware there was mining there?—On the beach there is.

303. There has been mining there for thirty years. Is that not so?—Along the beach.

304. That was made a mining reserve?—Yes.

305. You did not apply for that land?—Yes; we got two blocks along Lake Brunner.

306. Have you sold them?—We have sold some parts of the block, and shall probably sell it all when we get it settled.

307. You think that land will be settled around Lake Brunner?—Yes.

308. You have seen what has happened in most West Coast districts when the bush was cut down?—Yes.

309. Does it grow grass?—Yes, in places.

310. Is it not a fact that three-fourths of it grows rushes?—That is an exaggeration. If you neglect to keep the land in proper culture, then of course you will get rushes.

311. You cannot burn some parts?—It is difficult to burn.

312. I mean the other parts of the district?—The further north you go the less rainfall you get.

313. Even here in the Inangahua, and here, and here [map referred to], is it not a fact that the people who have cut down and burned the bush and sown grass have, in three-fourths of it, only got rushes?—That is an exaggeration.

314. I have left out the Grey Valley because a great deal of it was open land before settlement. Is it not a fact that you get rushes instead of grass?—You get rushes combined with grass occasionally.

315. Are you aware that people who have taken up land and cultivated it up the Teremakau, after years of labour have had to give it up because the rushes got the better of them?—It may be in cases where they have had sour bush, because birch poisons the ground; but in many of the mining camps I have been in I have seen vegetables and all sorts of fruits growing.

316. How is the West Coast supplied with vegetables?—A lot of the people grow them themselves.

317. Is it not a fact that the West Coast, after it has been opened for thirty years, has to depend on other parts of the colony for grain, vegetables, and food-supplies generally?—I do not wonder at that, because settlement has been stopped.

318. Before your railway contract was made the land was open for sale for anybody to buy?—Yes.

319. And it was not bought?—No.

320. Long before the railway was thought of the population of the West Coast was four or five times more than it is now?—Yes, but the people were too busily engaged in gold-mining, and were not doing anything in the way of settlement. In later years the gold-mining industry was a dying one, and they began to turn their attention to getting lands for settlement, and there are more demands now to get on the lands than before these reserves were proclaimed. The fact is that the best-known goldfields are worked out, and that the land is being taken up now for these people to get a livelihood. And, naturally, unless more discoveries are made mining will die away.

321. Are you any judge of agricultural land yourself?—I have learned a little since I came out here. I have had to examine a great deal of it.

322. How long have you been living on the West Coast?—I have been, on and off since 1889, pretty steadily over it.

323. How long have you lived at a time there?—Three or four months.

324. You do not really mean to put yourself up as an expert on cultivation?—I am a man of some observation, I hope, and I note what I do see, and can compare it.