

3. Prior to that time where were you?—In Hawke's Bay, as Commissioner of Crown Lands and Chief Surveyor.

4. During the period of your control in Nelson you have, of course, had access to the official papers?—Yes.

5. Have you examined them with reference to the applications for land during the last fifteen years?—Yes.

6. Have you made yourself acquainted with the nature of the land within your district?—Yes, generally so.

7. Then you would be able to inform the Committee of the area of land suitable for settlement within the district—that is, approximately?—As to the whole district I could hardly speak definitely, nor any one else.

8. In the blue reserve?—No; we have not even topographical surveys of some of that.

9. Are you acquainted with some of the land in that reserve suitable for settlement?—Yes.

10. Will you be able to give the acreage of that?—Yes.

11. And, further, the applications in respect to land in the blue reserve made during the last fifteen years in the Nelson District?—Yes, as at present constituted.

12. Will you give the Committee the details with regard to those applications?—Am I to understand that you wish me to state what I consider to be the amount of settlement which would have taken place between Nelson and Greymouth in the blue reserve?

13. Yes, and the loss to the colony through the absence of that settlement, and any other matter that you have taken into consideration?—When I first got the notice to make this estimate, together with my officers, I examined the maps of the survey districts affected, and from my own personal knowledge, and information supplied to me by others, I think that, so far as that part of the country is concerned, parts of it are very good for settlement. I have travelled through it. We came to the conclusion that there would have been something over nine hundred selections, with an estimated area of 200,000 acres.

14. During the fifteen years?—I may say I have taken fourteen years—that is from the time the contract was transferred. I will now give the general independent information which we have obtained. We went through the applications to the Midland Railway Company, which were forwarded to the Land Board, which up to May, 1893, numbered 337. The Land Board also received applications for licenses for temporary occupation—that is, yearly occupation licenses of areas under 500 acres—numbering 551. It also received 121 applications for temporary licenses of hill-tops, and areas larger than 500 acres, which makes a total of 1,009 applications. I may add here that there were a good many more applications than these; some were duplicated, but these I took care to delete before making the estimate. Of the 121 hill-top applications, I consider that many should not be counted, because they were simply for tops of ranges, for which 1d. an acre is paid for grazing sheep on them in the summer. So I deduct 71, and also allow 10 per cent. for possible overlaps: that makes 840, as against the 900 which we estimated in the first instance.

Your estimate without going through the applications was 900, and when you went through the applications themselves you made these deductions, and carefully eliminated duplication, you found that your estimate was nearly correct?—Yes. I was asked to wire my reply, and 900 was telegraphed to the Surveyor-General, and it was not until the following day that I could go into the details. A great number of applications were made by letter and personally by persons in other parts of the colony. Lately one was received from Australia, and another from a person from India. From 1886 to 1893, out of these 900 applications, 550 were applied for during the first seven years; 337 were made to the Midland Railway Company, and 265 to the Land Board, but fifty-two have been allowed for possible overlaps and other causes. I look upon this also as supporting the estimate I made. North of the blue area there is about a million acres of unalienated land, and within it there are about three million acres. During the past six years, in the northern part we have averaged fifty-five new selections annually, with an average of 188 acres each, notwithstanding that this part of the district has been drawn upon for the last fifty years. Nine hundred applications in 200,000 acres is equivalent to sixty-five selectors annually, averaging 220 acres.

16. I want you to state to the Committee what is the nature of the land which is available for settlement. You have not, I believe, taken into consideration the open lands through which the route of the railway is taken—the land not covered by bush?—I have been dealing with the bush land. With one exception, that is near "Gordon's Nob," it is all bush land.

17. You have not taken into consideration the open land?—No; not poor country like Spooner's Range.

18. What districts have you had applications for, and what do you estimate you would have had applications for if the land had been opened?—From Belgrove right through to Greymouth.

19. Can you not mention any special valleys? There are, for instance, the Tadmor and Sherry Valleys: what area do you estimate would have been taken up in that part of the district?—There are about 30,000 acres there, which no doubt would have been taken up.

20. Are there any other valleys or level plains?—No, the land is not level, but it is not mountainous—it is rolling country; and the applications are scattered right through the 160 miles. I have maps showing the applications.

21. Are those the applications to which you are referring?—Yes.

*Mr. Bell:* I do not know whether the Committee would wish to have the map before it.

*Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon:* I think we should have a map of each district with the colours, and then you could mark where the applications are.

22. *Mr. Bell* (to witness).] Could you get that?—I could do it so as to give a general idea.

23. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Are the Tadmor and these other valleys included in the estimate?—Yes.

24. *Mr. Bell.*] I understand that in taking the land available for settlement, and the number of applications made, it is not estimated that the open land would be applied for at all. Is that so?