

week some settlers came to me and said that the young men had left because they could not get land, and they had been waiting for years to get some.

41. If the railway was made from Nelson to Reefton, would there be an increase in the value of the land, and an increase in settlement?—Yes; there would be.

42. The estimates you have given us are estimates founded on the non-existence of the railway. Supposing the railway existed, what, in your opinion, would be the effect on settlement?—I think it would have enhanced settlement. I do not know that up to the present time very much more land would have been taken up than I have indicated in the country I speak of, but it certainly would have got producing-powers much quicker, for, instead of taking fourteen years to get this district into grass so as to run sheep on it, that would likely be done in ten years with the railway through it.

43. Do you think there would be townships?—I do not think there would be many townships.

44. Not between Nelson and Westport and Nelson?—I do not think so.

45. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Were all these applications not granted on account of the blue patch?—That is so; 216 have been granted for yearly occupation without any allowance for improvements, and some of them have been let at 1d. an acre—these are the larger ones—and some have been let simply for the purpose of keeping down the rabbits; and about half a dozen have been let under section 219 of the Land Act at a peppercorn rent, over a piece of country which was burnt about two years ago, and the settlers were very anxious to save it by grassing it at once, because if it is not so grassed it goes into fern. The Governor granted these leases.

46. *Mr. Graham.*] Are you aware that many of the settlers left because they could not get the land?—I heard that it was so from people in the district.

47. *Dr. Findlay.*] Do you know where these people have gone to?—I do not.

48. Have they left the colony?—I know nothing about them.

49. If they left Nelson, is it a fair inference that they went to another part of the colony and got land there? Can you contradict that?—I cannot contradict it.

50. You dealt with an area of some 200,000 acres?—Yes.

51. What proportion of that 200,000 acres has been occupied, one way or another, during the fourteen years?—I can only tell you roughly, but I should say about 30,000 acres I could give it to you more in detail, and I am only guessing at it now. It is a comparatively small amount.

52. I want you to tell the Committee to what extent the Crown was able to deal with these lands independently of the Railway Company. First of all, under the Land Act there is a right to give a temporary license of a section?—Under 116 of the Land Act.

53. We are quite clear that the Crown can give a temporary license over any part of this land. What right has the licensee under the license?—Pastoral.

54. The license can be for one year?—Yes.

55. Any prohibition against renewals?—No.

56. So that it might be renewed from year to year by the same licensee?—Yes.

57. As a matter of fact, have not pastoral holders done so, and occupied the land for a number of years?—Yes.

58. And during that time they have depastured the areas licensed to them?—Some have; and some have simply paid the nominal sum in order to get hold of the land.

59. There was, then, no insuperable objection to a licensee getting this land for pastoral purposes over the 200,000 acres?—It would not be wise for a man to take it up. It is bush land we are dealing with, and there are not many people who would run the risk of felling the bush to put sheep on the land under these circumstances.

60. You mentioned section 219 of the Land Act, and said that some have taken portions of the land under that section. What right does that give the tenant?—No right at all.

61. What tenure?—Three years.

62. Do you claim that any large portion of this 200,000 acres is agricultural?—No.

63. In general terms it is not agricultural land at all?—Only a small portion of it.

64. Then its best use is for pastoral purposes?—Yes.

65. There seems to have been no legal objection to the land being taken up on a three-years right under section 219?—Yes; but they do not apply for it in that way.

66. Your estimate is that 30,000 acres of land have been taken up under sections 116 and 219?—Yes.

67. Do you know any objection to this land being dealt with under these sections from one year to another and placing the proceeds in a suspense account until the claims of the company were ascertained?—I know of no legal objection.

68. Do you know, as a matter of fact, whether during your time proposals were made by the company that the land should be so dealt with and the proceeds placed in a suspense account?—Not in my day.

69. At any rate, if that scheme had been put forth, these difficulties with regard to barring settlement would have passed away. Now, passing to your estimate of the land, could you tell me what the B1 value of these 200,000 acres is?—I could only get it generally by taking the valuation of the applications.

70. You estimated the prairie value of the land before this painting blue at £90,000, I understand?—Not before the painting blue: its value now.

71. At what would you value the land in 1886?—I could not say. I was not here.

72. You have seen the land, and probably can give as accurate a reply as you have given on other matters. At what would you put the present worth of those £90,000?—I could not say.

73. Are you of opinion that the land would be worth more in 1886 than it is now?—With the prospect of the railway being made, it would be.