

206. *The Chairman.*] Would such claims be barred by the statute of limitations?—Yes, in law; but we have a Public Petitions Committee.

207. *Mr. Fraser.*] Has the Crown accepted the responsibility of the liabilities of the company in respect to these land-claims?—The Crown has declined the responsibility; but I have no doubt the claimants will petition Parliament, and will probably get paid. They have been told they must lay their claims before Parliament.

208. *Mr. Hudson.*] Can you give us the mileages of this railway—where it commenced and where it ends, as laid down in clause 1 of the Commission?—I think it would be better to ask that question of Mr. Roberts. It commenced at 21 miles 36 chains, and ends at Norris's Gully Bridge. The mileage which I have here is 27 miles 72 chains, but, inasmuch as there has been a deviation, very possibly that is not quite exact. These are the construction mileages I am quoting from, not the working-railway mileages.

209. We want to know the exact point up to where the company completed the work?—Mr. Roberts is the only one who can give that.

210. *The Chairman.*] Are you in a position to tell us the details of the amount spent on this section?—The return gives it.

211. You said the company had received £30,000 by way of land-grants, and according to the figures here I cannot find £60,000 expended: can you show that to me?—There would be some other amounts not included in that account. For example, the Government allowed the company to charge a reasonable percentage for engineering and supervision, and that was added on.

212. Where shall we be able to get the details of that?—The company's officials are the only persons who can supply that.

NORMAN HOWARD MAXWELL DALSTON further examined on oath.

213. *The Chairman.*] You are manager of the Midland Railway Company?—Yes.

214. You have in your hand the original contract signed by Allen Maguire and his sureties for the Belgrove-Motupiko Section of the Midland Railway?—Yes.

215. Will you kindly read the amounts under the various headings?—They are: Grading, £10,818 1s. 8d.; tunnels, £30,606 4s.; bridges and culverts, £3,925 3s.; fencing, £1,052; miscellaneous, £275: total, £46,676 8s. 8d.

216. Do you put in the schedule showing how those various items are made up?—Yes; I will have it prepared to-night. [Exhibit No. 41.]

217. The contract commences at certain chainages on the company's plans: are you aware whether the contract has been on that chainage?—The tender was for the construction-works from 21 miles 35·79 chains to 26 miles 70 chains complete.

EDWIN GEORGE WILSON examined on oath.

218. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am Stationmaster in charge of the Nelson Section of the New Zealand railways.

219. Residing at Nelson?—Yes.

220. *Mr. Hudson.*] When did you assume charge?—In May last year—about nine months ago.

221. That was prior to the Proclamation?—Yes.

222. Can you give evidence as to the condition of the rolling-stock and line at the time of the vesting of the railway in the Governor—I am talking about the railway between Belgrove and Norris's Gully? What was the condition of the line, rolling-stock, and buildings?—The rolling-stock was in fair working-order. The wagons required painting and light repair. The tarpaulins—ten in number—were in bad order. The buildings, being comparatively new, were in good order.

223. Were there any buildings at all?—The Motupiko Station.

224. You must confine yourself to the Belgrove-Norris's Gully portion of the line, and not to the Motupiko portion?—There is a platelayer's hut at the tunnel. It is a poor building, not of great value, and it was in fair order.

225. *Mr. Graham.*] Can you give us any idea of the value of the cottage?—I am not prepared to give an estimate as to the value.

226. How do you know it was not of much value?—I judge by the appearance. It is of corrugated iron, and is not weatherboarded. I also judge by the reports given to me by the men who have lived there.

227. *The Chairman.*] Of course, you have stated you cannot give us any estimate of the value?—No. There is a ganger's house at Belgrove, and also a Stationmaster's house at Belgrove. That was built by the Public Works Department.

228. *Mr. Hudson.*] What was the condition of these buildings?—Both were in very fair order.

229. *Mr. Graham.*] You have no idea of the value of the ganger's house?—No.

230. *Mr. Hudson.*] Does that complete all the buildings on the Belgrove-Norris's Gully Section?—Yes.

231. The Stationmaster's house was a new house?—Yes.

232. In what order was the running-line?—In very fair order. It required a lot of ballast.

233. Has that ballasting been made up since?—No.

234. It is in the same condition now as it was in June last?—Yes.

235. *Mr. Fraser.*] That ballast is still required?—Yes.

236. *Mr. Hudson.*] With regard to the traffic on the line, what is the nature of the traffic on that piece of railway?—The passenger traffic is medium.

237. What do you mean by medium?—It is not considerable. It is small compared with the Nelson-Belgrove Section of the railway.

238. What other class of traffic have you got?—Wool in the wool season; a little firewood comes down, and general goods and machinery go up country. Those are the principal items.