

314. Is the class of land taken for the line of similar value to the rest of the 5,800 acres?—No, it is a little better, being in the gully. The remaining portion of the 5,800 acres is mostly hilly, but some of the sides of the hill where the steep cuttings are were sold. I will explain: In the case of the first land taken for the railway, the Crown did not charge the company for the land, and the area was excluded in Ellis's lease; but later, extra land was required on account of slight deviation from original survey, and Ellis's interest in the 27 acres was purchased for £45.

315. Who purchased it?—The company.

316. The company paid Mr. Ellis £45 to cancel his lease of those 27 acres?—Yes.

317. How long have you been Commissioner of Crown Lands in this district?—Four years.

318. How long have you been a Commissioner of Crown Lands in the colony?—Sixteen years.

319. You know the country extending from the terminus of the present railway?—Very well.

320. My question is this: Assuming that the railway stops at Norris's Gully and goes no further, there has been, has there not, a certain amount of traffic from that district carried to the railway consequent upon the tunnel through Spooner's Range?—Certainly.

321. In your opinion, is it probable that that traffic will be increased?—I think so; certainly.

322. Consequent upon the Midland area being released a large quantity of land has been thrown open, has it not?—Not yet thrown open generally; but under certain sections of the Act of last session persons who had applied to the Midland Railway Company for land and were in occupation of it, and other parties who had applied to the Land Board for occupation licenses and were in occupation of them, had prior rights to the general applicant. These parties, or a large number of them, have applied to us, and up to the present we have surveyed and granted about 6,000 acres at Motupiko and Tadmor.

323. Will you give me an estimate of the total additional area which you think is available and will be served by this railway, assuming that it stops just short of where it is now?—I think, including these 6,000 acres, from 30,000 to 35,000 acres.

324. Of what character is it—first-, second-, or third-class land?—It is all second-class land.

325. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider that the population of the districts up to Murchison or Fern Flat, or of Greymouth or Westport, will be served by this section of railway, or will it be an advantage to the people from Greymouth or Westport?—It will be a slight advantage to the travelling public, but I do not apprehend that the traffic on the railway-line will be greatly increased from those places.

326. *Mr. Bell.*] Will the area of land which includes Murchison and Fern Flat be served by this railway, in your opinion?—It will, to a degree.

327. To what degree?—Every mile of railway that goes in that direction must benefit to a certain extent, but with such a long length of road ahead a mile or two of railway does not affect it very much.

328. *The Chairman.*] Are you aware whether these people and their goods are carried over this section, and whether they get the fares cheaper now than before this section was built?—They pay less for coach-fares, and the drays taking the goods, I believe, now start from Motupiko.

329. *Mr. Bell.*] And, I presume, charge less, through starting from Motupiko?—I should say so, because the distance is ten miles less than it was before from Belgrove.

330. You say that the 30,000 acres of which you have spoken will be served by the railway: what does that area comprise?—It comprises the 6,000 acres I have already referred to, that settlers have taken up under the Act of last year; and we are now surveying a further 4,000 acres for applicants who have similar rights. Then, we are surveying another 5,000 to 6,000 acres, and there will be 10,000 acres, which is already surveyed, open for selection in about a month's time.

331. I was asking rather for the locality of this area?—It is principally in the Tadmor and the bush land in the Motupiko, and there is some more in the Sherry, in addition to the 25,000 acres. There is another block in the Sherry Valley which has been very favourably reported on by the surveyor I sent to inspect it. It will possibly run to 8,000 acres more.

332. And that brings it up to the 33,000 acres?—Yes.

333. How many settlers do you anticipate you will have upon these 33,000 acres?—I think it will be divided up into about 150 holdings, but possibly twenty or thirty will be extensions of the present holdings.

334. *The Chairman.*] That will apply to the 6,000 acres already granted?—Yes.

335. *Mr. Bell.*] In addition to the 30,000 acres, do you expect to have any land let as small grazing-runs?—Yes; there is some 10,000 acres of inferior land which we contemplate throwing open as small grazing-runs.

336. *The Chairman.*] Is that let to any one at present for grazing purposes?—About 3,000 acres is let on yearly occupation licenses.

337. *Mr. Bell.*] How many additional settlers do you anticipate you will have by reason of these grazing-runs? Do you expect the settlers in the valley will take them up, or will you get new settlers?—I reckon there will be only five small grazing-runs for the 10,000 acres. They will be rather large on account of the poorness of the country. It is expected that two or three will be taken up by local men.

338. You have spoken of the 30,000 acres as being all second-class land?—Yes.

339. Do you anticipate there will be any agriculture on it?—No, not much. There will be a certain amount up the Tadmor, almost to the head of the valley, when the small flats are cleared and stumped; but it will be some time to come before there is much agriculture.

340. Then, there would be some additional passengers, but very little machinery, from that point of view?—Yes.