

406. But, once the bush is fallen and all in grass, it is reasonable to suppose that the same migration will go on in the future?—When the families are too full, it will.

407. *The Chairman.*] In these 30,000 acres, have you got any applications for sawmilling areas?—No.

408. Is it bush land?—It is entirely bush land.

409. Do you think that as soon as the land is opened for settlement the timber will be milled?—No; I think it will be held until the railway gets to it.

410. I understand, however, that it is timber suitable for milling?—Yes.

411. And if it is milled, say, within the next ten or twelve years, will most of the timber pass over the section of railway between Belgrove and Norris's Gully?—It will all go that way except what is used locally.

412. Do you know if a larger proportion of the population is leaving this particular district than is leaving any other portion of the Nelson District?—Of course, I am only judging now from hearsay. I should say people have been leaving generally all over the district—not more from here than anywhere else.

413. You know the Town of Westport?—Yes.

414. Are you familiar with the sections held by the Midland Railway Company there?—No.

415. Can you give us any idea as to their value?—No.

416. Does your department value land in Westport for land-tax purposes?—No.

417. Have you anything to do with local rating valuations?—No.

418. Who is the assessor there for the Lands Department?—Our own District Surveyor, Mr. Snodgrass.

THOMAS HUMPHRIES recalled and further examined.

419. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Humphries, will you now give us the information in answer to the questions we asked you this morning?—Yes. As to the amount of present settlement served by the railway, in the Motupiko Valley there are 7,000 acres in forty separate holdings; in the Tadmor, Whangapeka, and Sherry, 35,000 acres in seventy holdings; and in Stanley Brook and Motueka Valley, 18,000 acres in thirty holdings: in all 60,000 acres; 140 holdings. The average may be thought rather large, but it is due to seven holdings ranging from 2,000 acres up to 4,500 acres.

420. *Mr. McKerrow.*] Are those the only large ones?—There are some from 1,000 acres up to 2,000 acres. The seven embrace 20,000 acres.

THOMAS ROBERTS re-examined on oath.

421. *The Chairman.*] You were in charge of the Belgrove-Motupiko Section of the Midland Railway immediately after Mr. Maguire started his contract?—Yes.

422. Can you tell us whether the formation of the station-yard at Belgrove was done by Maguire or by the Government?—The larger part of it was done by Maguire and included in the contract, but there was a good deal of addition done by the Government.

423. Of course, we understand that the permanent-way and buildings were done by the Government?—Yes.

424. Will you please tell us from the plans the mileages—where the company commenced and where it finished?—The company commenced at 21 miles 36 chains on the company's plans, and they finished at 27 miles 67 chains.

425. When you were in charge when the work was carried on by the Government, did you pay the men?—Yes.

426. Did you pay them from an imprest account?—For the first two years cheques were sent down fortnightly from Wellington, and since the beginning of 1899 they were paid from imprest account.

427. On this return there is an amount of £268 19s. which the Government claim to have spent on repegging the line, because the company would not give them the original plans: do you know anything about that?—I do not know anything about that. I know the line was repegged.

428. Did you do it?—No; Mr. Holmes.

429. There is a ballast-pit shown on that plan: we will want the length of the rails going to that pit?—I can give that approximately.

430. You were in charge when the line was made beyond 27 m. 65 ch.: did you get a portion of your ballast from this pit?—No.

431. Are you aware whether the Railway Department took ballast out of this pit?—No; they have been taking it from the pit on the other side (at Motupiko). The Government did not get any ballast from this pit at all, and the pit is closed now.

432. There is another item, "Clearing water-tables, 21·30 to 25·50": do you know anything about that?—Yes; they had all to be cleared.

433. Then, there is the item "Retarring flume at tunnel, £52 2s. 11d.": do you know anything about that? Do you consider that necessary expenditure?—Quite.

434. And it is reasonably fair expenditure to charge to the company?—Yes.

435. This was done during the time you had charge?—Yes; and it was absolutely necessary.

436. There is another item here, "Protective works in connection with fluming at tunnel, £91": do you consider that was necessary expenditure?—Quite.

437. Can you tell us how many sleepers to the mile were used on that line—I mean exclusive of points- and crossing-sleepers?—I think there were about 2,050 on this railway.

438. There are extra sleepers put in on bridges, &c.: would that 2,050 include those?—No, they would be extra.

439. If you had the plans of the permanent-way you could give us an accurate idea of the number of sleepers?—Yes.