

19. *Dr. Findlay.*] The most of this information has been obtained by you from Mr. Slee?—It has.

20. Did he give you any statement in writing, or is the list simply a recollection of what he told you?—I noted on my list from his prices.

21. I understand you to say that some forty-nine sections have been sold?—Yes.

22. How many remain unsold?—Seventy-four, I think.

23. Do you know that these sections have been in the market for many years?—Of course, they have.

24. And I suppose it is fair to assume that the sections which have been bought are probably the best sections of the whole number?—No doubt they are selected.

25. Then, you would not infer that the remaining sections would bring as much as those that have been sold?—They have been valued rather less. I do not think they will bring as much.

26. Do I understand you to say that if the company endeavoured to push the sale of these sections within the next year—if they had only a year in which to sell them—do you think the prices you fix would be obtained?—I think they would within twelve months.

27. They would be bought to hold?—Yes.

28. Not to be built on?—Either to build or to speculate with.

29. That is your best opinion: that if they had to be sold within a year—of course, I am giving you the assumption that they are sold to the best advantage in the year—you think they would bring what you have put before the Commission?—Yes.

30. *The Chairman.*] How does the value of sections in this town now compare with the value three or four years ago?—I think they must be increasing slightly in value in the last three or four years.

31. Were these sections ever submitted to public auction?—I am not positively certain, but I assume they must have been.

32. You stated the company sold forty-nine sections?—Yes.

33. Do you know what these sections sold for within the last two or three years?—Yes.

34. Is there any reason for valuing these sections less now than what you did a few years ago?—Yes; because they are in a worse situation in regard to the town, and there are also a good many wet sections which require filling before they can be utilised.

35. *Mr. Bell.*] Your district extends to Inangahua?—Yes.

36. The Midland Railway reservation has been upon all the lands in that district?—Yes.

37. You have a plan, I think, showing the mining reserves?—Yes.

38. You know the land in the district?—I do.

39. You know the Inangahua Valley?—Yes.

40. Part of it is reserved for mining?—Yes.

41. I ask you to confine your attention to the part not so reserved which has been in the Midland reservation, now withdrawn: assume that the railway will stop at Reefton, and will not be carried on to Inangahua, will there be a considerable increase of settlement in the Inangahua Valley?—I should think so. There is very little land available, excepting the Inangahua Valley, that the railway would tap at Reefton.

42. So that, in your opinion, traffic on the railway would be advantaged by settlement in the Inangahua Valley and by the opening-up of other lands?—Yes.

43. Now, excluding the mining reserves, how much land is there in the Inangahua Valley fit for agricultural purposes?—Roughly, I have been looking over the area, and I think about 20,000 acres will be available for agricultural purposes.

44. *Mr. Fraser.*] Do you mean grazing?—I mean ploughable land.

45. *Mr. Bell.*] And, in your opinion, the produce of those 20,000 acres would find its way to Greymouth from Reefton?—Well, the railway would be the outlet for it.

46. I think you have not been asked to make a calculation as to what that would add to the traffic?—I have not.

47. *Dr. Findlay.*] You think about 20,000 acres would be available for agricultural purposes?—Yes; that includes lands that have been actually sold. The 20,000 acres is all the available agricultural land in the valley.

48. *Mr. McKerrow.*] Do you mean land still open for settlement?—No; I mean that is a calculation, roughly, of the available agricultural land that exists in the valley.

49. *Dr. Findlay.*] What area is now occupied?—I am not prepared to say, but I should think probably 7,000 or 8,000 acres.

50. That means about 12,000 or 13,000 are still available?—Yes.

51. Mr. Bell asked you what area, excluding the mining reserves, is in the valley, and you said 20,000 acres?—Yes.

52. And that includes land already settled?—Yes.

53. I want to know, for a purpose, what additional area available for agricultural purposes was in the mining reserve?—We had it at about 5,000 acres. It was merely guesswork.

54. Would there be any further area in addition to this 20,000 acres available for settlement, not ploughable?—Oh, yes, a great deal of the hilly country is suitable for grazing.

55. Now that the Midland Railway reservation is broken up, do you apprehend there will be any settlement?—There will be, no doubt, in the future.

56. What area do you think—of course, it is only an approximation—may be sheep-farmed?—Well, I cannot say without scaling it on the maps. There is a very great deal of good limestone country between the Inangahua and the Buller which would make very good grazing country.

57. What, in a rough way, would the area be?—I should think there would be 40,000 or 50,000 acres if you take the hills as far as the timber goes.

58. And the products of these grazing-farms would no doubt find their way over the railway from Reefton to Greymouth?—Yes, part of it would, I believe; the other portion might go to Westport.