

97. Are the oats for the district imported to or grown in the district?—Most are imported, but the farmers in the Inangahua Valley grow their own.

98. Suppose all these hills to be down in grass, is it your opinion that they would be simply additions to the present holdings on the 7,000 or 8,000 acres?—I think there would be a number more settlers, because usually settlers on the West Coast have not the means to clear the hills. I think we would get another class of settlers to take up large areas of these hills.

99. Would there be suitable homesteads exterior to the 7,000 or 8,000 acres already occupied for working these hills?—They would get a portion of the flats to work with the hills.

100. Some of these flats are still vacant?—Yes.

101. In what size of holding could the hills be profitably worked?—For ordinary grazing—runs it would require 2,000 acres.

102. So that the 40,000 or 50,000 acres gives about twenty or twenty-five settlers more?—Yes.

103. *Mr. Fraser.*] You made a remark just now, in reply to Mr. Bell, that you could not conceive much produce from the Inangahua Valley would come here when it had Greymouth to go to: does that mean that Greymouth is a better market than Westport?—Any produce at present is used in Reefton. I do not think they send any produce to Greymouth; but Greymouth is considered a better market for stock than Westport.

104. *Mr. Hudson.*] You say that there is available about 20,000 acres of arable land in the Inangahua Valley, of which about 8,000 acres have been taken up, leaving 12,000 acres still to be settled?—Yes.

105. In what areas would that 12,000 acres be divided—in other words, how many settlers could be provided for?—The holdings would be from 50 acres to 300 acres.

106. *The Chairman.*] How much of the Midland Railway reserve is included in your land district?—There was 67,000 acres of mining reserve made in this district, and, of course, the whole coast up to Kongahu Point. I have been estimating that there are about 500,000 acres of Midland Railway land in the county.

107. How much of the 500,000 acres could be used for grazing, and how much is arable land?—Only a small portion of it is fit for arable land; I cannot say exactly, but I do not suppose 10 per cent. of it is.

108. What percentage do you think is suitable for grazing?—It is all more or less suitable for grazing, except the very worst of the hilltops, such as the Denniston hilltops.

109. Would there be 400,000 acres out of the 500,000 acres suitable for grazing?—Yes, more than that. I should not think more than 20,000 acres would be unfit for grazing.

110. What percentage of the increased population in your land district would be likely to travel over the railway-line to Christchurch?—A very small percentage.

111. What proportion do you reckon would go from Reefton to Greymouth by the railway?—Not very many. It all depends on the state of the Greymouth bar; if it is not workable, people go by way of Reefton.

112. Do you think more people will go that way in ten years' time than now?—I have no doubt there would be.

113. Would that be due to increase of population or change of habits in travelling? Are you aware that more people travel from here to Greymouth since the railway was made to Reefton than were in the habit of travelling before the railway was made?—I am not aware of it as a fact; but I should say there were more travelling to Greymouth since the railway has been at Reefton.

114. Now, following that up, do you think that an increase of population in that district will bring a similar percentage of that increase to the railway from Reefton to Greymouth?—I think, as the population increases the percentage will remain about the same.

115. Do you anticipate a considerable increase of population or settlement within the next ten or twelve years owing to the Midland Railway reservation being removed?—I do not think there will be very much increase of population, but we shall have considerably more settlement in the future than we have had in the past ten years.

116. Can you tell us what area has been settled in the last ten years in your district?—Practically none since the land was locked up.

117. Has there been any outside the railway reservation?—A little at Karamea; that is the only district outside the reservation.

WILLIAM ROBERTS examined on oath.

118. *The Chairman.*] You are Inspector of Permanent-way, and reside at Westport?—Yes; Westport is my headquarters.

119. *Mr. Bell.*] When did you last inspect the permanent-way on the Nelson-Belgrove Railway?—At the end of July and beginning of August last year.

120. You then inspected the whole of the permanent-way from Nelson to Motupiko?—Yes.

121. You saw it again last week?—Yes.

122. Was it in the same condition last week as when you saw it in August?—Much the same.

123. Has there been any ballasting put on the line since?—No.

124. I think you found it short of ballast?—Yes.

125. You found that the banks required some making up?—Yes.

126. Have they been made up since?—No.

127. Then, the line in July last was in the same condition as when the Commissioners saw it the other day?—Yes.

128. *Dr. Findlay.*] Do you know anything of the condition of the line in May, 1895?—No.

129. Between May, 1895, when the Government took possession, and July, 1900, when it was confiscated?—I was there in 1899; that was the first time I was there.