

171. In what order were they?—They were new.

172. What was the condition of the running-track?—It was in fair order. It was bare of ballast all through—the banks wanted making up; and the line wanted regauging.

173. Can you give us any information as to whether there was an amount allowed for maintenance from the Public Works Department immediately after handing over the line? You know it is customary for the Public Works Department to allow a certain sum for maintenance during the first three months: did you have any authority for that?—Not that I remember.

174. You do not remember any such authority being issued?—No; repairs on that line were always kept separate from the Government part—Nelson to Belgrove.

175. It was charged to the Revenue Account practically?—Yes.

176. What was the state of the line and rolling-stock at the date you left?—The rolling-stock was in good condition; the tarpaulins were in good condition. There was just the ordinary wear-and-tear.

177. As to the running-track?—It was in very fair condition. From Belgrove to about three-quarters of a mile on the Belgrove side of the tunnel had been regauged, and a small portion between the tunnel and Norris's Gully Bridge had had a little ballast put on to it in very bare places.

178. What was the condition of the track on the 13th July, 1900, comparing it with the condition when handed over to you in 1899—I am referring to the line from Belgrove to Norris's Gully?—It was in better order.

179. In every way?—Yes.

180. *The Chairman.*] Do you mean in better condition for durability?—I mean for running purposes.

181. *Mr. Hudson.*] Was there any ballasting done on the line during your charge between Belgrove and Norris's Gully?—Twelve trucks of ballast were put on.

182. Was that ballasting done during your charge?—Yes, on that portion—the Belgrove-Norris's Gully portion.

183. Now, I wish to ask you some questions with regard to the prospective traffic on the railway between Belgrove and Norris's Gully. Assuming that it is fully equipped for traffic, but does not go any further than Norris's Gully, what business would be likely to accrue to the railway?—Very little indeed, I should think.

184. Why do you express that opinion—you have got an extension of the railway to that point?—There is not much settlement close to Norris's Gully, and people have to drive a considerable distance with their produce, and when once they get it there they might as well go over the hill with it. The majority of them go into town with their produce, and see it sold. Of course, it will increase to a certain extent; but I think if it stopped there the increase would have been very small.

185. What class of traffic did you have during the period of your charge?—General merchandise principally, and two dredges went through.

186. What produce?—A small quantity of hops going from Motupiko, and perhaps 500 or 600 bales of wool, and a few trucks of firewood.

187. Would that traffic have gone on the railway at Norris's Gully, assuming the railway had stopped there and did not go to Motupiko?—Hops and wool?

188. Yes?—I think not; I think it would have gone over the hill by the road.

189. Why do you think that, seeing it would have saved a great deal of uphill?—My reason is this: that they have done so since the railway has been to Motupiko. I cannot say for certain. I do not know the district personally. I think if the line stopped at Norris's Gully they would go straight into Nelson with their hops, and see them sold.

190. Do they do that from Tadmor?—Yes, as a general rule; they have to make arrangements for selling, and have to go into town themselves.

191. Do they drive their hops right into town?—To Belgrove.

192. If they put their hops on the railway at Belgrove, why not also at Norris's Gully?—Possibly they would if the freight suited. I may state that these wagoners have six- and eight-horse teams, and they must have separate accommodation.

193. At Norris's Gully there is no accommodation for the men and horses, and therefore they go on to Belgrove, where there is accommodation?—Yes; there is accommodation for the men and horses there.

194. The returns of revenue you rendered do not contain any traffic due to construction-works?—There was a 3-ton crane taken up to the Motupiko station-yard—that was done after the line was open for traffic; but there was very little else. There was the crane and the material for making the concrete foundation. That is as far as I remember.

195. Am I to understand from your evidence that, assuming the line stopped at Norris's Gully, in your opinion there would be very little business carried over the railway at all, or that the business due to the increase of settlement would increase if it stopped there?—I think the increase would be very small.

196. And very little business in any case?—Yes, I think so.

197. *The Chairman.*] Coming to the rolling-stock, you say that was in good condition?—Yes.

198. None of the trucks required painting?—No.

199. And the tarpaulins were practically as good as new?—Yes; I think we had three in the shops for repairs during that time.

200. What do you value them at when new?—Something like £5 each, I think, but I am not sure.

201. What class of sleepers are in the line from Belgrove to Norris's Gully?—There are some silver-pine, but the majority are birch.