

202. What do you estimate the life of a birch sleeper at there?—It varies a good deal. I should think from five to seven years.

203. What do you estimate to be the life of a silver-pine sleeper?—We have not had enough experience of that yet. I may state that a good many new sleepers have been put in between Spooner's Range and Belgrove.

204. That was before the line was opened at all?—After we took charge of it. We repaired the sleepers immediately after. I think there were one or two hundred.

205. What percentage ought to be allowed for depreciation of the line from the time it was constructed till July, 1900?—The departmental reports would show that. The decrease would be nothing on the rails, because there was next to no traffic. There was light traffic, and a very small engine running.

206. Was there any construction-work after you took control?—No.

207. *Dr. Findlay.*] You were asked by Mr. Hudson to express an opinion with regard to the prospective increase of traffic over the piece of line between Norris's Gully and Belgrove?—Yes.

208. And you expressed the opinion that little or no increase was to be anticipated?—Yes.

209. You gave as one of your reasons that the traffic at the present time goes to the Belgrove Station and is put on the train there?—Yes.

210. How long had the line been running before you left?—About twelve months.

211. You say that during that twelve months produce was taken to the Belgrove Station and put upon the train there?—Yes.

212. At a time when the train was running from Norris's Gully?—Yes.

213. In other words, settlers would cart their stuff over the hill and on to Belgrove?—Yes.

214. Would you say that a considerable portion of the produce was so carried?—I could not tell you the proportion.

215. Would there be three-fourths of it?—No.

216. Could you give a rough estimate?—I should say one-third of it.

217. What class of produce?—Hops.

218. Nothing else?—Nothing else to cart except wool.

219. Have you any other reason to give for the produce being carted to Belgrove except the one you gave—namely, that there was no accommodation for teamsters at Norris's Gully?—I do not know anything about the district—the value of the land.

220. Supposing Norris's Gully had been equipped with similar conveniences to those at Belgrove, would that traffic have still gone to Belgrove?—Yes, I think so.

221. So that it is not dependent on the conveniences at Belgrove at all?—No; it is the convenience of the grower.

222. Then, it must pay him better to cart the stuff to Belgrove than send it by train from Norris's Gully?—Yes.

223. If that is so, why would it not pay him better to take it right in to Nelson?—I cannot say.

224. Do you suggest that the teams can profitably compete with the railway in this part of the country?—I am not prepared to say.

225. What is the height of the hill they have to cross before they reach Belgrove?—I cannot say, but perhaps 1,000 ft.

226. The wagons have to ascend that 1,000 ft. to reach Belgrove?—Yes.

227. And you think it pays them better to do what you say?—I do not know whether it pays them better, but they do so.

228. Do you know anything of the country round about Belgrove or Norris's Gully?—No.

229. You do not know whether it is fit for settlement or not?—Norris's Gully is not.

230. Do you know anything about the country which lies beyond Norris's Gully?—No.

231. How can you say whether or not there is likely to be any increase in settlement there? Do you know anything about the chance of settlement beyond Norris's Gully?—No.

232. You cannot say what the prospects are of increased traffic on this line from increased settlement?—No, I cannot.

233. *Mr. Bell.*] When you were in charge a separate account was kept, was it not, of the traffic on this particular portion of the line?—Yes.

234. And full rates were charged, were they not—separate rates?—Yes.

235. Because it was the Midland Railway Company's receipts?—Yes.

236. So that there would be two charges—the charge from Norris's Gully or Motupiko to Belgrove—full rate—and then another full-rate charge from Belgrove to Nelson?—Yes.

237. The rate, of course, now from Motupiko to Nelson would be less than it was in your time?—Yes.

238. It is possible that may have made a difference to the people?—Yes.

FRANK SLEE examined on oath.

239. *The Chairman.*] What is your occupation?—I am a land-broker, residing at Westport.

240. Are you acting as agent for the Receiver of the Midland Railway debenture-holders?—Yes, in connection with the sale of these Westport sections.

241. There are some of these sections not yet sold?—Yes, a few.

242. How many?—That is shown in the list submitted by Mr. Snodgrass.

243. I want the value of the sections unsold, and the number unsold on the 8th February?—They are valued from £5 to £15.

244. Is there any reserve on any of them above that amount?—No; I sold them from £5 to £15, according to where they were placed.

245. Have you ever submitted them to public auction?—Never.