

258. Will you verify that statement?—Yes.

259. Do you know whether that bush land—take, as an example, the bush land about Lake Brunner—when cleared by the sawmillers, is likely to be available for settlement?—A large portion on the east side will be, because on that side there is some very good land and some of less value which can be worked together. I have no doubt the east side of the lake will be settled very soon. On the west side some of the land may be used for settlement. Those two blocks aggregate about 20,000 acres.

260. Some of these lands have been sold lately by the company or by the Receiver?—Yes.

261. And they have been taken up rapidly?—Yes, and for the purpose of developing them.

262. Then, with regard to the tourist traffic, the Buller Gorge and the Otira Gorge are favourite tourist resorts?—Yes.

263. Do you know whether that traffic has been increasing, and is likely to increase?—I think that traffic must increase with the increase of population and prosperity.

264. You cannot give any figures in a matter of that kind?—No.

265. Can you say from your own knowledge whether the best bush land, cleared and sown, would carry sheep profitably?—Some of it would do so. White-pine land is generally good agricultural land.

266. And the rest?—I have seen much worse land used for it. It appears better than the land in the Motupiko Valley, for instance, and that is all cleared and used.

267. Taking these different heads, and the increase you expect under each, can you say whether the net returns of this railway will steadily increase, in your opinion, from now onwards?—There is every reason to believe that they will do so.

268. Take a period of ten or fifteen years: can you say whether that increase may not reach a fairly profitable stage?—I think it most probable. I have not seen the recent traffic returns, from which one must judge a good deal, but, considering all other indications of advancing industries, large increases in traffic appear certain.

269. You could not conjecture how many times the present net traffic would be increased?—No.

270. Do you think, on consideration, you could give the Commission any idea?—I would like to look into the existing information. Probably I might arrive at something.

271. *Mr. Bell.*] While the company had the railway they were at liberty to select timber, were they not?—Yes.

272. Did they do so to any extent?—They selected Block 28, which is purely a timber block, in the first place.

273. Where is that?—On the western side of Lake Brunner; also Block 26, which is partly timber land and partly settlement land.

274. What has been the result of that selection on their part: they still own the land, do they not?—No; I understand it has passed out of their hands.

275. The company continued to hold it as long as you had anything to do with the company?—Yes.

276. Did they manage to settle much of it?—They could not do so until they got their title for it.

277. There was a difficulty about the title, was there?—There was a delay.

278. That really did not make any difference, did it?—They could not sell without a title.

279. They managed to dispose of land on the East Coast, but they did not manage to dispose of land on the West Coast, and do you suggest that the difficulty was solely one of title?—No.

280. But they had an opportunity of selecting timber without actually taking the land on this coast, and they did not do so?—The timber trade was not then sufficiently developed. They knew it would be a big trade in the future, and they hoped to make it so.

281. The price of timber has recently increased?—Yes.

282. And the supply of timber in other parts of New Zealand has fallen off?—Yes.

283. And there is now a considerable demand upon the West Coast?—Yes.

284. Which, in your opinion, will cause an increased production of sawn timber on this coast, which will be taken over the railway?—Yes.

285. At what distance from the railway can timber be profitably carried by the railway?—It is carried very long distances in Marlborough and Southland.

286. What do you call long distances?—Fifteen or twenty miles, I understand.

287. That is all level country?—Yes, practically level.

288. But as to this district?—There is a considerable valley goes through the country up the Bell Hill way, on the east side of Lake Brunner.

289. How far distant from Jackson's?—About ten miles; it is close to Tekinga Station.

290. Do you suggest that, at a distance of, say, five miles or more from the railway, on those hills, the timber could be available for purposes of export?—It could be if the country is practicable for tramways.

291. Is it practicable?—In many cases it is. You cannot tell unless you go through the country carefully. Any one going over the country at first might have thought it impracticable for the railway.

292. I want to know your opinion?—As a rule, you cannot go large distances in this country without meeting spurs or gullies, enhancing cost.

293. *Dr. Findlay.*] It is all a matter of price, I suppose: if the price is higher you can afford to go further?—Certainly.

294. *Mr. Bell.*] And you think the price of timber will continue to increase?—I think it will.

295. And be exported, of course, from the Port of Greymouth?—Yes.