

470. Now, is there any evidence that the timber industry is developing? Are there any mills going up?—Two mills are going up between here and Reefton.

471. Where are they?—One at Ikamatua, and another in the neighbourhood.

472. Will the output of these mills be carried over the line?—Yes.

473. Suppose, then, that private enterprise were connecting the terminus of the line at Reefton with the coal-measures, would the same line help to develop the timber industry—would it touch the timber forests?—Of course, they would have to connect with branch tramways.

474. But the timber lies in the direction in which the line would go to tap the coal-measures?—Yes; of course, the line will run down the valley, and the timber is on either side.

475. How far, then, might the line have to run from the present terminus at Reefton to reach these forests beyond Reefton?—Well, the line would have to be constructed six or seven miles to touch the first forest.

476. And then there would be connections with that by tram?—Yes.

477. Supposing that were done, and enterprise effected that connection between the coal-measures and the present terminus and these forests, do you think that sawmillers there could compete with the other mills now in existence?—There would be the additional railage.

478. That would be all?—Yes.

479. Do you know anything of the timber trade and its progress of late?—No. I know there has been a very large output since the railway has been handed over to the Government from the coast, and I also know that a great number of applications have been made for timber rights since the restrictions were removed from the land. At present there are a great number under consideration by the Warden, and the same thing applies in regard to coal. The only thing is that the persons taking up these timber and coal rights are individual and co-operative parties, with a view, I suppose, to ultimately handing them over if capital is available.

480. Looking at all the circumstances, and basing your opinion on the resources you have already referred to, what do you think might be the number of mills working on these forests within the next ten years?—Well, I should think there ought to be room for seven or eight mills.

481. *The Chairman.*] In addition to those at present in existence?—Yes.

482. *Dr. Findlay.*] And the whole of that traffic would go over this line?—Yes.

483. Now, with regard to settlement, you have, I understand, had some experience as a land agent as well as a mining agent?—Yes.

484. Can you say whether there has been any increasing demand for land lately in this district?—Since the restrictions have been removed I have made a number of applications to the Nelson Land Board for land.

485. What class?—Principally agricultural.

486. Where are those lands?—In the Inangahua Valley, generally speaking.

487. They were lands, I take it, within the Midland Railway reserved area?—Yes.

488. *The Chairman.*] How many do you mean by "several"?—I have made applications for about a dozen people, I suppose. I have filled in the forms.

489. Do you mean by agricultural land first- or second-class land?—Some of it would be first-class land and some second class, and some would be pastoral.

490. *Dr. Findlay.*] What would be the total areas of these applications?—I suppose they would run from 50 to 100 to 150 acres each.

491. And you sent in about a dozen applications?—Yes.

492. Averaging 100 acres each, which would give us 1,200 acres?—Yes.

493. *The Chairman.*] Are you aware whether what you term first-class land is what is classed by the Crown as first-class land?—That I cannot say.

494. Is it what you call first-class land locally?—Yes.

495. *Dr. Findlay.*] That is your experience merely as an agent, and covers the applications you have made?—Yes; acting as agent for the different applicants.

496. And I suppose there are other people who have applied, though not through you?—I presume so.

497. Can you tell me whether the land upon which these forests are standing will be suitable at all for pastoral or agricultural purposes after the timber is removed?—Well, as a rule, wherever you find pine-timber land it is usually very fair land for agricultural purposes. Birch land is not so good.

498. And a large area of this forest land you have referred to is, I understand, pine lands?—Yes.

499. So I deduce that a large portion of it would be suitable for pastoral purposes?—Yes.

500. You say you have a letter from a large coal merchant in Christchurch agreeing to take 250 tons a week of coal from your coalfields?—Yes.

501. What about the price?—I think he said if the price suited. Of course, that is where the difficulty of getting it away comes in.

502. *Mr. Bell.*] With regard to the gold industry, of course the gold has been there ever since the foundation of the colony?—Just so.

503. And the cyanide process is valuable only for quartz-mining, it is not?—So far.

504. Is there any other reason except the discovery of the cyanide process which leads you to anticipate this sudden development in gold-mining?—Well, I consider it is the main and principal factor.

505. And that is applicable to quartz-crushing?—Yes.

506. Are there large areas of quartz reefs in the district?—There are.

507. When you speak of this large belt of auriferous country, do you mean that throughout that belt there are quartz reefs?—Yes; they have been tapped, to my certain knowledge, at certain points. I could enumerate them, I think, pretty accurately.