

257. Is there any prospect of producing these things on the Coast?—Not so cheaply. We do produce them to a certain extent, but the quantity of rain that falls very often spoils the crops.

258. Surely you grow potatoes?—To a certain extent, but nothing like sufficient to supply local requirements. We always import very considerably.

259. *Mr. Bell.*] The 20,000 tons includes food and all sorts of merchandise?—Yes. I took the tonnage as it came in.

260. Is this the actual quantity?—Roughly, it is, excluding timber, bricks, &c. The tonnage refers to the importation of general goods exclusively.

261. *The Chairman.*] Do you import bricks?—Yes. There have been some made here several times, but not successfully.

262. Have you no stone that would answer the purpose of bricks?—No. They make fire-bricks at the Brunner.

263. *Mr. Wilson.*] Then you have supposed that the present traffic by steamer would entirely go by railway?—We assume that if you can send your order away to-day and get it by train, that fact would make the trade come here. You have now to wait for a vessel, and run the risk of bad bars, and the vessel going ashore. I think nearly the whole of the traffic would go by rail, and of course we look to the establishment of the railway to make an increased traffic.

264. *The Chairman.*] That is a natural assumption, but have you any data to go upon, or how have you arrived at that?—We only have the general data that wherever railway communication is made it has always led to increased traffic, and we feel perfectly satisfied that, given increased facilities, our population would largely increase.

265. I see you have 150 passengers each way per week. Have you any idea what the passenger traffic now is?—The coach traffic would run from thirty to forty per week each way.

266. And the foot traffic?—I cannot tell. Sometimes you will find 100 men going over. In the case of Kumara over 1,000 men came over in a few months. The present coach rates are so extreme that they are practically prohibitory.

267. *Mr. Bell.*] Is this an estimate of 150 passengers each way?—Yes, 300 a week, equal to £15,600 per annum. There would be a great traffic for part distances. Plenty of people would go up to look at the glaciers and the Otira Gorge, and on shooting excursions, if the rate were a moderate one; but you cannot go and pay £4 or £5 a head for families to stay for a few days, besides the personal inconvenience. It is rather a severe journey for ladies to make. Practically, no one goes unless they have special and important business.

268. *The Chairman.*] Is the population on the West Coast increasing?—Yes. I think it has been remaining pretty well about the same, increasing a little; but we look to its increasing very considerably within the next year or two. From 1876 to 1880 our gold increased from £131,000 to £216,000 in value. That is the export from Hokitika alone. In addition to that, there is Greymouth, Reefton, and Westport gold. That is only the export from Hokitika.

269. I presume they have exhausted the fields?—No. They took the gold that was most easily got. Stafford and Waimea are now doing better than they have done for many years. Government water-races have been brought in, whereas before they were entirely depending upon rain. A week or fortnight's dry weather makes a most appreciable difference.

270. I thought you had too much water?—Not enough. I assure you that for a fortnight or three weeks hundreds of parties of miners are standing idle.

271. And it is your impression that the alluvial mining will afford lengthened employment for large bodies of men?—Unlimited employment, in my opinion, because the gold here is not as it is in Victoria. They used to get it there in patches. But here gold is distributed over the whole area. You can get more or less wherever you sink. It only wants the introduction of water to enable it to be worked to advantage. That is what is being done to a greater or lesser extent. I consider mining entirely in its infancy; we are only making a commencement to work it in a satisfactory and systematic manner.

272. Are there any other minerals worthy of consideration?—There has not been very much found. We have copper, galena, silver ore, and we believe we have found tin from time to time; some has been found occasionally, but has never been traced to a developed lode yet.

273. *Mr. Bell.*] In a report similar to the one laid before the Commission by the Westland Railway League there was a certain return put down for stone. What stone do you think they could have referred to?—They have got plenty of limestone at Greymouth. They are using it for making the breakwater.

274. Is it a crystallized or chalky limestone?—I am not sure. You will see it when you get there. We have very important deposits of lithographic limestone at Pawarika, which we are unable to work for the want of communication. We have had it tested in Wellington, Victoria, and London. It is a very valuable stone. I know those who are in it think some day they will make a fortune when they are able to get it worked, because there is only one other place in the whole world where the same stone has been got—namely, in Bavaria.

275. I see the working expenses of the railway in your statement are set down at 65 per cent.—Yes.

276. You mention it is double the usual rate?—We were led into that by the report of Mr. O'Connor, which he has explained to-day. He says he put it down as being the minimum. We thought that would be too low an estimate, and we made it £600 per mile per annum. That came very nearly to what is the usual rate.

277. *Mr. Wilson.*] There is coal found at Reefton?—Yes, but not worked, except to keep the engines going.

278. *Mr. Bell.*] In this statement here, is the actual traffic at present existing in the district given?—Stock is actual; merchandise is actual within a trifle—it was put roundly at £20,000, which I think is just as near as you can go to it. Some of this must be estimated.

279. *Mr. Wilson.*] And the timber, is it the actual quantity? Do you absolutely deliver that