

the section, and I certainly passed that bridge for traffic. Thirteen or fourteen years afterwards it was repaired, previously to a new bridge being put up, and out of all the lower cords only two were condemned. All the rest were perfectly sound up to that time.

553. *The Chairman.*] In connection with coal, do you know anything about the value of the coal in this district—I mean its value for steam purposes?—No; but evidence will be brought before you by Mr. Brennan. My report on the coal is merely a general one as to the coal I have seen, the thickness of the seams, and so on. I would suggest that the different seams should be experimented upon by an analyst, for steam or household purposes, for gas, or for smithy uses. The Government workshops at Christchurch use smiths' coal largely.

554. You are not prepared to give information as to the relative value of this coal, Westport coal, or Hokitika coal?—I am not. I don't think there has been any analysis made of any of the seams in the Reefton district.

555. Do you know at what price they are selling Reefton coal?—It is supplied at £2 a ton.

556. *Mr. Bell.*] Is it preferable to firewood?—Yes; it is the cost of bringing down that prevents the general use of it. If it were produced cheaper, more of it would be used.

557. Then, in passing from here towards the Ada Saddle, you have to pass another saddle which is very nearly as high as the main range. Don't you think that would prejudicially affect the traffic—running over two mountains of nearly equal height?—To a certain extent yes, but the grade is nowhere worse than 1 in 50. You have got the same grade on the Weka Pass.

558. *The Chairman.*] Do you think you could compete from Reefton with the seaborne timber and coal from other colonies or ports of this colony?—Unquestionably. The *Engineer* states that in October, 1876, the five principal lines running into London carried 330,000 tons of coal. Those lines belong to companies. They would not take that amount of coals over the lines unless they made a profit. It is dividends they are looking to, and there is considerable competition with seaborne coal in England.

559. In laying down a line *via* the Ada Pass or Lewis Saddle, what basis do you take as a point of delivery on the East Coast?—You will commence from the Waiau, and from that point down to Christchurch there is a settled population. As you approach Christchurch, the delivery will be greater.

560. Taking the southern towns of Canterbury into consideration, wouldn't a more southern line suit them much better?—I question whether they would not get their coal cheaper from Newcastle direct to Timaru than with such a long railway carriage as would be necessary if they brought coals from the west coast of this Island by rail.

561. But you think that would not apply to Christchurch itself?—No; because you can deliver coal in Christchurch for about half or very little more than half what is now charged for Newcastle coal.

562. Do you know what the price of Newcastle coal is in Lyttelton?—No; but I can speak with authority about Christchurch. I have been paying £1 18s. and £2 for not less than a ton. A great number of vessels were chartered from Melbourne and Sydney to proceed to Newcastle to bring cargoes of coal to Lyttelton in view of taking cargoes of grain home to England. A great number of these charterers were disappointed in their expectations, and cargoes from 1,000 to 1,500 tons were sent direct to San Francisco, because they could not get freights for them. They had overdone the market.

563. Assuming the evidence we have to be right, Newcastle coal is landed at £1 1s. a ton in Lyttelton. Do you think they would be able to send it from here by railway cheaper? Yes; for this reason: that it will cost, I think, about 5s. 6d. a ton from Lyttelton to Christchurch. That makes it £1 6s. 6d., and then there is the retail profit. We could undersell them by sending direct from here. Assuming that the same price per ton is charged for the through traffic rate to Reefton at 1d. per ton per mile, we could then land the coal in Christchurch at £1 a ton. Five shillings a ton will put it into the trucks, assuming there is a siding alongside.

564. And you think you would also be able to stand the competition of the Greymouth Railway?—Yes; and deliver it for less than they would. If the railway *via* Arthur's Pass and Hokitika is extended on to Reefton, I don't see that there will be much difference in the length. I am under the impression that it will be longer.

565. Then it is about the same distance north-about as south-about?—Yes.

566. Then, under those circumstances, would it not be better for the whole of the West Coast if the railway went south-about?—No; because you reach minerals 110 miles from Christchurch by the Ada Saddle.

567. These minerals are not worked?—Certainly not. It would not pay to work them in the absence of communication. That they exist there can be no question of a doubt.

568. Should you be called upon to recommend the construction of a private railway for people to invest their money in, would you do so on such a consideration as you have just mentioned?—I should not hesitate a moment—knowing what I do of the country from Cannibal Gorge westward, independently of this seam of coal which is said to exist on the Ada Saddle—to recommend a private company to make it.

569. Do you know the width of that seam of coal?—It is reported to me by settlers to be 14 feet thick, but I don't know myself.

570. What other minerals are there?—Gold, certainly, from the Cannibal Gorge to the coast and quartz also.

571. Has that reef been tested?—Yes; by a company of miners, but in no other way.

572. Can we get any information as to what the yield of gold is?—I don't think it has been developed to that extent. I have no doubt, from what I have seen of the country, that other quartz reefs can be found in the country. You may certainly look for gold anywhere between Cannibal Gorge and the coast, alluvial and quartz.

573. *Mr. Bell.*] If the line were made from here, how would the southern portions of the coast