

141. You have stated that these reserves could be made when the section surveys are made?—Yes; but they could not be made in such large blocks.

142. But the reserves could be cut out when the section surveys are made?—Yes.

143. When would the section surveys be made?—When settlement is taking place.

144. The Government in that case could do nothing with the auriferous land until such time as the section reserves were made?—The land at present is in the hands of the Wardens. The proclamation of these blocks gives no more privileges to miners than they have at present. The land is simply taken out of the company's reach for settlement purposes.

145. Did not the company send in applications for small sections?—Yes; as they have a right to do under the contract.

146. Do you know if they have done so?—Yes; in areas of various amounts.

147. That is, in different patches?—All over the West Coast.

148. If the auriferous lands were to be left to them, it would take a long time to deal with them?—Not necessarily. If dealt with at the time of the settler's application, many might have been dealt with now. The system would be this: Instead of trying to define the payable auriferous land, you would define the unpayable land suitable for settlement.

149. You said it would be a very difficult thing to cut out any ground that was not auriferous?—The smaller the sections are the more possible it becomes.

150. Could you say whether it is possible to cut out selections that would exclude auriferous areas and not include any auriferous ground?—It would be difficult in some cases, but there are cases where it could be done.

151. In this area it would be possible to cut out the selections?—Yes. It would be some one's business to show cause that any land was payably auriferous, or likely to become so.

152. Could you find any one in the colony who could go over the ground and say that it was not auriferous?—Conversely, no one could go over the land and say any particular part was auriferous.

153. You said the total length of the line from Springfield to Brunnerton was 95 miles 9½ chains by the company's survey, and 95 miles 35 chains by the Government's survey. Therefore, the company's line is shorter than the Government's survey, and I think Mr. Wilson drew the deduction that therefore the deviation had not increased the length of line. I will ask whether the deviation has increased the length of line?—Taking the deviation itself, it increases the length of the line.

154. Can you tell us by how much?—It increases the length by something over a mile. The exact distance I could not say; at one time it amounted to a mile and three-quarters. We have made some alterations reducing this. It may have increased it by about a mile and a half longer than the original line, round Lake Brunner. I may mention that there was a considerable revision necessary for the Government trial line on the West side of the lake, and we do not know what the revised length of this Western line would be; but we know for a certainty that it would have been longer than the Government line as shown on plans.

155. Could you form any idea of what length the line would have been?—We tried to eliminate the heavy grades of the Western line, but could not do so, or only by greatly increasing length. A revised Western line would certainly have exceeded the length of the present line on the East side.

156. *Mr. Wilson.*] How was settlement dealt with on this auriferous land on the West Coast before the company's contract was made at all?—It was dealt with by the Land Board advertising the land intended to be thrown open for settlement, or by the applicants advertising.

157. So that objections could be made to applications being granted for lands known to be payably auriferous?—Yes.

158. It has been said that land on the West Coast has no value at all, practically speaking, being worth only £1 an acre, or less. Do you remember what values have been put on lands where we had to pay for compensation on the West Coast? Did they not range from £20 to £70 an acre?—They ranged from £5 to £100; £5 to £100 was claimed for improved lands along the course of the line.

159. And that is land said to be of no value on the West Coast for settlement purposes?—Yes.

160. Is it a fair inference that other lands now covered with bush in the same character of country will, when cleared, have a substantial value as settlement lands?—Land accessible from the railway has an enhanced value, and the railway will make land available for settlement where it was not possible before.

161. *The Chairman.*] Do you think the lands between the Grey River and the reserves for mining purposes—that is, between the river and Blocks 81 to 51—are payably auriferous?—I believe they are not payably auriferous, and I never heard of their being considered so. Most of this land is laid off in rural sections, the greater part having been alienated and settled for many years.

MONDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1892.

HENRY A. GORDON, A.M.I.C.E., Inspecting Engineer, Mines Department, examined.

1. *Mr. Wilson.*] Do you know the district shown on that map, including the reserves made and proposed to be made?—Yes, tolerably well.

2. Can you approximately state, from your knowledge, what area has been worked out in the district, say, from the time that gold was first discovered on the coast?—I could not, not even approximately; it would take considerable time even to do that.

3. What do you consider an average amount of land that each miner will exhaust in twelve months by sluicing and other processes?—That depends on the depth.