

139. And took part in the agitation which led to the constitution of the first syndicate?—Yes.

140. You were a believer in the advantages to be gained by a railway from coast to coast?—Yes; a very sound believer.

141. Have you had any reason to change that opinion?—No. I am still of opinion that it would be an enormous advantage to the country if the railway was carried through.

142. You know the reserve which has been made—what we call the “blue patch”?—I know it by repute.

143. You know that all settlement over that area has been prevented?—Yes.

144. You know also that the population on the Coast has actually decreased?—Yes.

145. You know what it was the people of Christchurch estimated would be the advantages to be derived from the construction of the railway?—Yes.

146. Would you tell the Committee first of all what in your opinion the Canterbury people particularly, and the colony generally, lost by the non-construction of the railway?—Of course, the colony has suffered damage in various ways, in the various ramifications of business and settlement. I am not prepared to go minutely into the figures, but, still, I can give you my opinion under various heads as to the approximate loss which the colony has sustained.

147. This has been prepared by you independently of any suggestion?—Yes.

148. Would you give it to the Committee?—One item, it appears to me, is the very large loss to the colonial funds in the expenditure on the construction of the railway itself. I take it that a very large amount would have been expended in labour and in the manufacture of certain materials in the colony that are not brought into the colony from other places. There would have been at least half a million of money expended on these matters in the colony. Of course, that cannot be put down as a direct loss altogether, but a certain proportion of it is an absolute loss; and I calculate that the proportion of absolute loss to the colony of that half-million would be £150,000. Of course, I am giving my figures roughly, and I have not gone into minute calculations about them. Then, supposing the railway to have been finished when it ought have been—that is, in 1895—I think there would have been a very large expenditure in the colony by tourists. I have travelled by coach and on horseback through this country, and on one occasion I met what is familiarly called “globe-trotters” from England. They had been all over the recognised routes, and had seen all the show places, and they told me they had never seen anything to beat the scenery or sights on that line in all their travels. I think it would be a very reasonable average to say that during the last five years there would have been five hundred more tourists going through the country if this line had been constructed, and that would have resulted in profit to the colony of at least £10,000 a year, or £50,000. That is on a very mild calculation. Those gentlemen of the Committee who have toured in other places will agree that that is a reasonable estimate of the expenditure by these tourists. Then, I think, from my own knowledge of the Coast—and I was for several years there—that there is a great deal of mining land there which contains gold in a very large proportion, that would only pay to work under a state of circumstances which would allow the miner to live at a very cheap rate. I think that if the railway was through to the Coast the living of the miners would be so very much cheaper by their being able to get their supplies through from Canterbury, that there would have been a great deal of mining land worked which could not be worked under present conditions. If the cost of living were cheapened very much a great deal of this land would have paid to work, and the inability to work the land there must have resulted in a very great loss to the colony through the mining land remaining idle during all this time. I think it is a very reasonable calculation to say that the colony must have lost, at any rate, £20,000 a year owing to the decrease in the production of gold.

149. *Dr. Findlay.* For how many years?—I am simply making my calculation in round numbers for five years, and I am taking it from the place where the railway is finished, and if I am over a reasonable calculation I take it it would be made up through the loss in the areas where the railway was partially but not wholly constructed. Then, there is the settlement on the land, which has been so fully gone into by the last witness. I made a small calculation in my own mind on that score, and I came to the conclusion that the loss for the last five years under that head would be £150,000 as a total. I put it down at £30,000 a year. It is in this way: In the first place there is the loss of population, and these settlers in the colony would all be consumers of Customs dutiable goods, not locally producible, and I arrived at a calculation that at the very least the colony has sustained an absolute loss of £30,000 a year.

150. *Mr. J. Allen.* Is that all over the colony?—Yes; the colony as a whole. The local loss would not be that; but I take it the colony lost by the non-production of certain producible goods, by the absence of settlers and their non-consumption of dutiable goods and colonial products, and I think it is a reasonable calculation to say that the colony lost £30,000 a year in this respect, which would total £150,000. Then, to my mind, Sir, one of the greatest losses the colony sustained is the absolute decrease in population on the Coast and the non-increase in Canterbury. I have looked at that from all points of view I could, and it seems to me it would be reasonable to say that had the railway been there the population in Canterbury and Westland would have been at least ten thousand more than it is at present. Many people who would have settled in these places have settled elsewhere, and I know from my own experience that, although Canterbury is prosperous, still for years young men have been going away because they saw no prospect of getting any profitable occupation. I feel convinced in my own mind that had this railway been there the census of Canterbury and Westland together would have been at least ten thousand more than it is at present.

151. Would the census of New Zealand have shown ten thousand more?—Yes; I think it is this special line which would have caused the increase. I do not think it would have affected the rest of the colony, except in so far as that it would be a slight increase in consequence of the fact that the increase in one district must affect the others. I think it is not an unreasonable calculation.