

the disadvantage to the colony I claim that it is a disadvantage to the people of Canterbury and Westland as well.

*Mr. J. Allen :* Does Dr. Findlay claim that there is a set-off against that of £30,000 a year.

*Dr. Findlay :* If you take Mr. Gordon's figures that is the loss on the railway.

*Mr. Allen :* Do you rely on his figures?

*Dr. Findlay :* Mr. Gordon is an expert called by the Crown. He may be right or he may be not; but assuming that his estimate of export of gold from the mines is right, then in ten years the company would lose £300,000.

*Mr. J. Allen :* Do the company rely on Mr. Gordon's figures?

*Dr. Findlay :* We do not take any of the figures.

*Mr. J. Allen :* If you did it would point to the fact that that was the reason you wanted to get rid of the railway.

*Dr. Findlay :* A witness comes here who has agitated for the construction of this line, and makes out that the colony has suffered a large loss through its non-construction, and I pointed out that it would be a large loss to the company: I am only testing the statement he has made.

*Mr. Bell :* I have taken very slight notice of the evidence given in 1892. The Committee is aware of the fact that the company adduced evidence before the Committee of 1892 showing that the line would pay, so that all the Committee has to do is to read the evidence of the company in 1892.

125. *Mr. Guinness* (to witness).] Can you give the Committee any idea as to what would be the increased value given to the private land on the West Coast by the completion of the connection between Westland and Canterbury?—Of course, that would depend to some extent on the increase of population.

126. I want you to take everything into consideration in basing your estimate as to general increase in value. I am speaking of the rateable property. Can you give the Committee any percentage of increase in value of the rateable property through the construction of the railway?—Property on the West Coast has remained very much the same value until within the last three years. The value of the rateable value of the property in Hokitika has increased from £105,000 to £109,000 during that period, but if we had a line through to the East Coast it would have doubled in value during the last ten years. There is no doubt that the property in Greymouth has increased in value through the construction of the railway to Reefton.

127. Has the construction of the section of line from Brunnerton to Reefton and from Brunnerton to Jackson's, in your opinion, increased the trade on the Coast?—I should say it has in Greymouth very materially.

128. What about helping to develop industries?—The only development that has taken place in that direction is a few sawmills that have sprung into existence on the northern part of the Coast, which could not have carried on their operations without the partial construction of the line.

129. *Mr. Dalston.*] What about the Blackball Mine?—That would not have been developed without the construction of the line.

Mr. JAMES FRANCIS BYRNE in attendance, and examined on oath.

130. *Mr. Bell.*] You are a settler on the Coast, Mr. Byrne?—Yes.

131. And Chairman of the County of Westland?—Yes.

132. How long have you lived on the Coast?—Since 1866.

133. You have heard the evidence given by Mr. Michel?—Yes.

134. Do you agree with that evidence or do you differ from it, and if you differ from it will you tell the Committee why?—I agree on the whole with what he has said.

135. Do you think he has overestimated the amount of damage?—I think he has underestimated it. I think there would have been more benefit than he has reckoned if the railway was constructed. He has not given enough value to the settlement which would have resulted from the construction of the line.

136. I asked him to exclude that point, and I ask you to exclude it, because I want to keep the two things separate. I do not want you to take into consideration the blue mark on the map, but just to take the disadvantage to Nelson, Westland, and Canterbury through the non-construction of a railway, at an expenditure of three millions of money, which has been stuck up for ten years. Has he overestimated or underestimated the disadvantage?—Underestimated it.

Mr. DAVID JOHN EVANS in attendance, and examined on oath.

137. *Mr. Bell.*] What are you, Mr. Evans?—I am clerk to the Westland County Council.

138. And you live where?—Hokitika.

139. How long have you been on the Coast?—I was born there.

140. How old are you?—Getting on for thirty-five.

141. With regard, first of all, to the Hokitika-Greymouth Railway, did the construction of that railway make any difference to the population on the Coast and to the condition of trade there?—Oh, yes, a considerable difference.

142. In what direction?—It was a great convenience in the matter of communication.

143. You have heard Mr. Michel say that the number of people passing from one place to the other had increased from less than a couple of hundred a month to several thousands: is that so?—Yes.

144. And due to the railway?—Due to the convenience given by the railway.

145. Mr. Michel told us sawmills had been erected there since the construction of the railway: is that so?—In Westland County about five have been erected along that portion of the line which is in the Westland County—that is, fifteen miles.