

279. Do you think it would pay, according to the present traffic, supposing it did not go beyond that point, and that it was run in connection with the Government line?—I do not think the Government would make much profit over and above the expenses.

280. Would they make any profit?—I would not like to say they would.

281. Would you say that they would not?—I do not think the balance would be much one way or the other.

282. *Dr. Findlay.*] You said you took charge here in May last?—Yes.

283. Had you been resident in the district before that?—No.

284. You had no knowledge of the district at all before that?—No; I was never in the district at all.

285. So you came here in May last practically as a stranger to the whole district?—Yes.

286. Do you know anything about the country lying around and beyond this section of railway with which we are dealing?—I have never been beyond Motupiko.

287. And I may take it you have made no examination of the country?—No. I have been as far as Reefton from Greymouth.

288. You really do not know what kind of country lies beyond Motupiko at all?—No. I have not been over the country at all.

289. I suppose you have not considered the gold-bearing character of the rivers: the Motupiko River, for instance, or any of the rivers lying beyond Motupiko?—No. I know, of course, that we sent some dredging plant across that way.

290. Do you know, as I have been told, perhaps incorrectly, that a good many claims have been pegged off in the Whangapeka River?—I have seen so in the newspapers.

291. Supposing there was a large development of the gold-mining industry in that direction, would it not affect the earnings of this line?—It would, if the plant were carried over this line.

292. But, in addition to that, there would be a large amount of general goods traffic if the industry developed?—If the traffic went from this direction.

293. And if the line were not carried right through would it not be in this direction?—It depends whether it went from this end or from Reefton.

294. I may take it that you are not very competent to say whether there will be a prospective increase or not on this line?—No.

295. You have not qualified yourself to answer questions put to you by the Commission, and you cannot confidently say anything about country the resources of which you do not know?—No.

296. Is there not a certain amount of tourist traffic goes from this end, taking the coach from the terminus?—There are tourists.

297. Is that not likely to increase in common with the tourist traffic all over the colony?—The Government are taking it up, and it may possibly increase on that particular line.

298. You do not know whether the mails were carried over this line before you took charge in May last?—I cannot say for certain, but they would be carried as far as Belgrove.

299. But beyond that?—I cannot say.

300. They were being carried in May, when you took charge, to Motupiko?—Yes.

FRIDAY, 22ND FEBRUARY, 1901.

HORATIO JOHN HOOPER BLOW further examined.

301. *The Chairman.*] You wish to present a return in connection with your evidence of yesterday?—Yes; a return [Exhibit 7] showing the amounts expended by the Government on construction-work on the Belgrove-Motupiko Section of the New Zealand Midland Railway between the 25th May, 1895, and the 31st August, 1897, and which amounts were either recouped out of traffic receipts on other sections of the Midland Railway or were paid by the company.

SATURDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 1901.

THOMAS HUMPHRIES examined on oath.

302. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Nelson Land District.

303. Residing in Nelson?—Yes.

304. *Mr. Bell.*] You have been asked to estimate the value of the Crown land which has been used for the purpose of the Belgrove-Norris's Gully Section of the Midland Railway?—Yes.

305. Have you done so?—I have.

306. Will you give the Commission the value of the Crown land on which the line is constructed—viz., 36½ acres?—The area is 36 acres 2 roods 24 perches, and the total value is £30 8s. 9d.

307. You have carefully taken out the value?—Yes; it is taken out in sections.

308. Part of it is the land through which the tunnel runs?—Yes.

309. The tunnel runs through Crown land at Spooner's Range?—Yes; and that portion is only valued at 5s. per acre.

310. *Mr. Graham.*] There is a number of different values?—Yes; some of it is timber land.

311. *Mr. Bell.*] Do you know of any lands purchased by the company further on?—Yes; that is, between Norris's Gully Station and Motupiko Station.

312. What do you know about that?—27 acres of it was Crown land in a run leased to Ellis.

313. What is it leased at?—5,800 and odd acres are leased at £30 a year.