

341. Goods for their supplies?—Yes.

342. And wool?—Yes; there will also be some hop-growing in the flats. I do not know whether I have to refer to the effect of any extension of the railway. There is timber there, but it would not pay to bring it now to the present terminus of the railway.

343. But, assuming the railway to stop at Norris's Gully, is there any likelihood of any timber traffic on the railway?—I do not think so. It is too far to bring it—fourteen miles at least.

344. *Mr. McKerrow.*] What sort of timber is it?—Rimu, some white-pine, and brown-birch, but not very extensive.

345. *The Chairman.*] Mixed bush?—Yes—that is, principally on the flats of the Upper Tadmor.

346. *Mr. Bell.*] You anticipate a timber traffic if the railway is extended to the Tadmor, but you do not anticipate there will be any timber traffic if the railway stopped at Norris's Gully?—No; it would not be extensive in any case.

347. I believe you are a member of the Commission now sitting to determine the question of rivers to be declared sludge-channels?—Yes.

348. And I understand for that reason you prefer not to speak of any possibility of gold-production in these valleys?—Yes, I prefer not to do so.

349. With regard to the land beyond the 30,000 acres, such as the Chairman has referred to, would settlement, for instance, at Murchison and Fern Flat, in your opinion, greatly increase the traffic upon this railway?—There will be a certain amount of extra traffic.

350. Passengers, of course?—Yes.

351. And goods?—Yes.

352. Do you know about what point, as the railway at present stands, does the supply from Nelson end?—I know it goes as far as Longford, but it may possibly go a few miles further.

353. So that an increase in settlement as far, at least, as Longford would increase the traffic upon this railway?—Yes; unless it was cut away through an extension of the railway from the other direction.

354. *Dr. Findlay.*] What area of land is within the Nelson District?—5,400,000 acres.

355. If the line had been continued from here to a junction with the line at the Reefton end, what area of land would have been profitably served by the railway?—About 200,000 acres—that is, within a certain period.

356. What period have you fixed for that?—About fourteen years.

357. Within a period of fourteen years it would serve about 200,000 acres, and your opinion is that the line carried to the point which it has now reached—something this side of Motupiko—serves more or less an area of about 45,000 acres?—Yes.

358. Now, you have given us something over a fifth of the area which would be served if the line had gone right through: how does that fifth compare in quality with the remaining 150,000 acres which would have been served if the line had gone right through?—I think the 30,000 acres are better than the average.

359. So that you would expect more than a bare proportion of settlement on that 30,000 acres?—I am not so sure about that, because down in the southern part settlement would be closer, for the holdings would be smaller.

360. Yes; but I do not want to limit it to any part of the 150,000 acres: I want you to tell me whether, comparatively speaking, the settlement on the 30,000 acres would be larger proportionately than settlement on the whole 150,000 acres left—it seems to follow as a deduction after what you say of the quality of the land?—The conclusions I came to when giving evidence on a previous occasion were based on the whole matter being gone into in detail district by district. As I showed in the evidence I gave before, I went into great detail, showing how much I expected from every district, and how it would be divided; and it is rather difficult for me to state specifically without this data before me.

361. Can you give me an idea? If the 30,000 acres are of better quality on the average than the remaining 150,000 acres, would you expect more settlement on those 30,000 acres than on the balance, proportionately?—That does not follow, and I will give you a reason. It is this: At this end we are throwing open blocks of land, laid off in areas suitable to the class of country; but in the southern part of the district it is very largely made up of surveyed sections of 25 and 50 acres. That is what I meant when I said there was likely to be more settlement there than at this end proportionately.

362. Does it mean it is merely a method of laying off—that it merely depends on having laid it off in different areas? Supposing it were free from such restrictions, and had not been laid off in any particular way—I want to get rid of any mere method of laying it off which the Government so far have adopted?—That you cannot get rid of, for this reason: The sections down there are isolated. Very often the land is “gridironed”—that is, sections have been taken up as freeholds and two or three sections have been left here and there. The unalienated sections are not always contiguous in the coast districts.

363. *The Chairman.*] From your answer I imagine the Commission are to understand you are laying these sections off to the best possible advantage for settlement purposes at this end?—Yes. At the other end we have to take them as we find them.

364. Or anywhere where you are laying land off?—Yes.

365. *Dr. Findlay.*] They are laid off to the best possible advantage: and, being laid off to the best possible advantage, settlement is no closer on the 30,000 acres than on the balance to which you refer?—No.

366. Supposing, as is now the fact, that the whole of the Midland Railway restrictions have disappeared between here and Reefton, and that the land is freely open for settlement during the next fourteen years, do you suppose that only 40,000 acres will be taken up?—No, certainly not.