

738. That is for the whole line, including the piece from Brunnerton to Greymouth?—Yes. I may say in support of this that you have only to visit the railway-station on Saturday and you will see a full train, nearly all sawmill people.

739. Now, can you say anything of the value of the land after the timber is taken off it?—Well, it is very difficult to say. It depends greatly on the class of timber growing on these special areas. If it were pine-lands generally, and the timber-forest were cut on a face, and the greater portion of the timber felled and then fired at special seasons—not as they do, in some cases, at any time—the land is certainly fit for pastoral purposes. That has been proved in cases where the timber has been felled properly and the burns have been good. I saw an instance of that a short time ago near Lake Brunner, where some 100 or 200 acres were carefully cut.

740. Were these 100 or 200 acres somewhat typical of the larger bush areas you mention?—Yes. There the fire was a good one; the weather was dry and it burnt clearly. The man has sown a large quantity of grass-seed, and it has come up and looks very well. The same treatment in other parts of the forest would give the same results.

741. *Mr. Bell.*] Is there not the wineberry, and is there not the underscrub, too?—No; I think not sufficient to prevent burning.

742. *Dr. Findlay.*] When did you see it?—Quite lately. It resembles very much the land in the vicinity of Taihape and Mangaweka. It is quite equal to many portions of the land in the vicinity of Ohingaiti and Mangaweka.

743. Are there any other areas which have been cleared and sown in grass to which you could allude?—No, there have been very few indeed. Nearly all the other areas were under cultivation years before I came here.

744. You think, from the instance you have given and from your own experience, that if this land, or a large portion of it, were properly burned it will produce good grass?—Yes, if they fire it at proper seasons.

745. Can you give any rough idea of the area of the large tracts you have mentioned which might be rendered available in this way?—If sufficient inducement were given by the Government in the price of the land, I think a certain class of persons would come from the south and elsewhere who would take up many of these areas.

746. Can you advance something a little more definite? I suppose you are not in a position to say anything about the area which might be so rendered available?—No, I would not like to say that. My duties have not required me to report upon the special suitability of the land for close settlement.

747. You have had a large experience with coal in the Canterbury District, I believe?—Yes.

748. And an experience of these West Coast coals?—Yes.

749. Do you know the coal which has been obtained north of Reefton?—Yes, I have frequently seen it burning at Reefton.

750. What is your opinion of it as a coal for domestic purposes?—I think it is an excellent household coal.

751. Do you think, if facilities were offered for bringing it to market, that there would be a market for it?—Yes, certainly. It is tougher and less friable than any of the West Coast coals I have seen yet, and consequently can stand removal.

752. The whole of the coal traffic from that district would come over this line?—Yes.

753. The coal from the Blackball Mine runs partly over this line?—Yes.

754. Do you think the Blackball Mine is capable of development?—Yes.

755. Do you think it is likely to be developed?—Yes. There were two gentlemen from Home, who had had a large experience in coal-mining in Devonshire and Cornwall, and with a large capital, who came to me with letters of introduction to show them any coal measures I knew of. They examined the Brunner Mine, and also the outcrops of the Blackball Mine, and they pronounced the Blackball seams as very extensive, and they would certainly have made an offer to purchase the field had there not been the objection of a bar harbour here. They came specially from Home to make that particular inquiry.

756. Do you know whether lately the Blackball Mine has been purchased?—So I hear.

757. By whom?—Sir Edwin Dawes.

758. *The Chairman.*] You do not know of your own knowledge?—Yes.

759. *Dr. Findlay.*] How long has Dawes owned the Blackball Mine?—I am not quite sure, but I think for about two years.

760. You think there is a prospect of a further development there?—I think so.

761. Do you know the system of aerial tramway employed?—Yes; it is very expensive, and it injures the coal.

762. Supposing, then, that additional capital were embarked, and the coal company connected its mine with the railway by a loop-line of railway, can you say what you think the total output of the Blackball Mine might be?—At present they can transport 500 tons a day, which represents 3,000 tons a week. I am not aware that they are doing that now. Had they that railway, there is no reason why they should not produce 1,000 tons a day. That was the Brunner output for some time in 1888 and 1889.

763. At any rate, you think it would be easy to increase the output to 1,000 tons a day?—Yes.

764. And how many miles over the Midland Railway does that coal go?—At present about eight miles.

765. I believe you know of the many applications which have been made from time to time to the company for land under section 33: how do you come to know about it?—From visiting the different portions of the district. My experience is more confined to that particular district between Reefton and Hokitika. I cannot speak with any certainty in regard to lands further north than Reefton.