

212. Do you know what class of men the Government have employed for a few years back in tunnel-works throughout the country?—Yes, we have had good men.

213. Do you think they are as good as a contractor gets for this work?—They are sometimes the very same men.

214. You have had some very expert men?—Yes, very good men.

215. Men quite capable of taking charge of this work under the supervision of engineers?—They would be bosses of shifts, and that sort of thing, but they would not take charge of the tunnel from end to end. You would have to get some competent manager, as well as an engineer.

216. Admitting those conditions, do you think it possible for the Government to carry that work out as cheaply as a contractor?—I do not think there would be much difference in the cost. It all depends on what profit a contractor would want: that is the whole point.

217. Would not the interest he would have to pay for financing affect it?—Yes, that might affect it. The actual work itself, I suppose, is not going to cost more.

218. *Mr. Seddon.*] You referred to two tunnels on the Westport line that were done by contract, and said they were harder to drive than the Otira Tunnel?—Harder rock.

219. Did the contractors lose by those works?—Not that I am aware of.

220. And the contract prices were £40 and £45 per lineal yard?—Yes.

221. You referred to a long tunnel and said that a different feeling comes over you when you are a mile in?—Yes.

222. Do you mean that there is not sufficient fresh air for the workmen when you are a mile in? What is that different feeling?—You have that feeling.

223. If there is plenty of ventilation, that feeling would not come over the workmen?—Possibly not.

224. You have not been in the Otira Tunnel, have you?—Not lately. I was in when the heading was first started.

225. How far was it in then?—Ten chains, perhaps.

226. When you spoke about that different feeling, were you referring to the disinclination of men to go in any distance?—I have been into a good many tunnels being made, and they are in a dirty state, and you wonder where you are sometimes.

227. Did you mean to imply that there was a disinclination on the part of men to go in when the tunnel was in a distance?—They do not like long tunnels. They like to be near the outside, as a rule.

228. Regarding the works that have been carried on by your Department along the Cass and the Broken River, have you always been able to get a sufficient number of men on those works?—I am hardly in a position to say. I know that at times we have been short, and at times there have been too many. It varies according to what other work is going on.

229. Are the hands employed good workmen?—We have fair workmen there. The Canterbury men are very good men.

230. The Cass works now are quite near Bealey Flat, are they not?—Yes, they are getting right up.

231. Is there any difficulty in getting men to go up there?—They have not been so plentiful this winter: it has been too cold and wet.

232. Can you get plenty of men when the spring and summer come?—You get them in the spring, but harvesting comes on after Christmas, and you get short again.

233. The men that you get on those works are good enough to do tunnelling-work, are they not?—You want special hands for the actual drill-work, and so on, in a tunnel; but you can employ a lot of good labour in moving things about, and that sort of thing.

234. These men are good enough to do that, are they?—Yes, if they are worked in.

235. In your answers to Mr. McKenzie you did not tell the Committee whether the Department could carry on a big job like this and itself employ the special management that you say is needed?—Oh, yes, the Department are able to do that.

236. They could soon get a staff together?—I could not say soon, but they are able to do it.

237. Has it been brought under your notice that at the Bealey end and the Otira end there are plants for generating electricity?—Yes.

238. Have you any idea of the value of those plants, or what would be their value if the Government were to take them over?—They would only be suitable for what they are being used for now.

239. You could not, for instance, use them for electrifying the railway?—It is not proposed to use them; they are not permanent enough, either. I have not gone into the question. It is a matter that Mr. Parry, the Electrical Engineer, is taking up. He is connecting that with the Lake Coleridge scheme, which will be available, and no doubt will be used.

240. We want to get an assessment of the value of the plant at the time the contract will be finished. You have no idea what the value will be?—I do not think you can take in the value of the two plants there. We have looked at them. The Engineer-in-Chief has been getting information about a plant that could be got there from the Rolleston River, leading the water by a race over the Otira end of the tunnel and getting a power-station there. But he is not prepared to go on with these small arrangements that are there now, because they are subject to being frozen in winter and to drought in summer.

241. There is no system of storing electricity?—You cannot store electricity to pay.

242. *Mr. Davey.*] You agreed that if there was a shortage of labour it would add considerably to the expense of tunnelling?—I said so.

243. We have it in evidence that the contractors like to have nine men at the heading as a full complement?—Yes.