

land, I shall take the most liberal view, and assume, in fairness to the Province, that it is good land, and worth £1 per acre. Admitting this, the fact of there being no road whatever, not even a bush track, renders it either in the present or future of little value. At present it cannot be reached, and to make a road would cost five times its value. A large proportion of the 10,000 acres on the Little Grey, generally known as McHardy's Run, is very light and poor, a considerable area near Square Town being utterly useless for either grass or corn growing. The open land between the Grey and Ahaura Town up to Mackley's is of much the same character—namely, very light shingly land. Wherever, as in the Totara Flat and some other few spots, anything like decent land existed, I found upon inquiry that it was private property.

Taking, therefore, the piece of country as a whole, and viewing it from an agricultural and pastoral point of view, it is not, in my opinion, adapted for the permanent settlement and support of a large number of people. That in some future time, when rapid and cheap communication is opened up, its timber will produce once for all a considerable revenue, I have no doubt; but that the land generally will be tilled within the present or next generation is not probable. There are so many millions of acres in the Colony of so much better land yet for sale, as to effectually prohibit any practical person from attempting what is next to an impossibility. That the country is also very rich in minerals I think admits of no doubt; and judging from the many observations made to me by the people living in the districts, it is in its minerals that the true wealth of the country lies. This question, however, formed no part of my duty (nor do I assume any practical knowledge thereon), and I merely venture to give the gist of my opinion and observation for what it is worth.

Below I append a short statement of my approximate value of the bush and open land in its present state, and under present circumstances as to roads, &c. :—

Say 150,000 acres forest (after deducting the 6,000 sold or leased) with the timber now growing thereon, at 15s.	£ 100,000
Say 22,341 acres open (after deducting 5,409 acres sold or leased), at 20s.	22,341
Say 30,000 acres light soil and shingle, at 10s.	15,000
	£137,341

Supposing a railway to be in existence, and running through the country, I should say that about two-thirds of the forest land would be increased in value threefold. The value of the open land I do not (for the reasons before mentioned) consider would be materially altered, except perhaps in the vicinity of the Ahaura.

Another item of considerable amount would be the cost of survey in the event of this immense track of forest land being cut up into sections for sale. At present persons applying for agricultural leases pay the cost of survey, but that practice could hardly be carried out in a general survey of land for sale, and even if it were, the purchaser would indirectly take it into consideration. In Otago the Government give one shilling and sixpence per chain (in addition to the regular survey fees) for all bush land. That item alone would represent a large percentage on the amount realized.

In conclusion, I beg to return my hearty thanks to Messrs. Mackay and Sayle for the uniform kindness and courtesy shown to me during a long and tedious journey of some 300 miles—in mid-winter—through a rough country, with execrable roads; a journey attended with considerable discomfort and danger.

I am, &c.,

THOMAS CALCUTT,

Railway Lands Assessor.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.