

136. How much would be rendered accessible for agricultural settlement?—I did not consider that point, but I think I might say a fourth of it, or perhaps a third. We do not know what will grow there, because at one time they thought wheat would not grow beyond Taieri; then we shifted to Clutha; then to Queenstown, which is now one of the finest wheat-growing districts in the colony. Mr. McKerrow.
29th Aug., 1877.

137. Your answer is that it would render available 1,200,000 acres?—Yes. Of that 1,200,000 acres the whole of it is Crown land, with the exception of about 40,000 acres, which is a very important point.

138. Of these 40,000 acres how much is the education reserve?—I excepted the education reserve.

139. Is the 40,000 acres besides the education reserve?—Yes; I think it would be more nearly 30,000 acres when I consider it.

140. Mr. Macandrew.] How many families do you think could be located there?—Mr. Reid said 1,000. I consider that a family could do very well on every 1,000 acres of it. If you have 1,000 families settled that means 5,000 people. These will give employment to probably half the number of townspeople.

141. You described the country from Blair Taieri to Clyde, and said it was easy to make a railway?—Yes.

142. What is it as compared with the Waiareka Valley?—Very similar.

143. You think a railway could be constructed for about the same price?—Yes; it is all a series of plains.

144. Mr. Hislop.] Do you think only a portion of the land would be opened—namely, that alongside the railway line?—I should think it would double the value of the land tinted on the map. This Strath Taieri Hundred was opened up and advertised, and a lot of Taieri settlers went up and started farming, but they found they could not work two establishments on account of the hilly road intervening, and came back. The Strath Taieri land is at present unavailable for settlement on account of its inaccessibility.

145. Are these mountains to the west side of the railway?—They are mountain slopes.

146. Can it be said the railway will open up this country?—Yes, up to the watershed.

147. But not beyond it?—No.

148. Mr. Macandrew.] You say that this line would render available 1,200,000 acres?—Yes.

149. Have you any idea what would be the ultimate value of that land, assuming the line were made, per acre?—I really believe you could sell 400,000 acres at 30s. an acre, that is £600,000, and the remainder would sell on an average at 15s. an acre; that would bring it up to £1,200,000, after the railway is constructed.

150. Supposing now that you were asked to indicate what would be the best line to open up into the interior of Otago, which would you recommend, knowing the country as you do?—I will qualify the reply a little. The Strath Taieri route would open up the most country suitable or available for settlement, but in my opinion the best interior line to reach Clyde and the districts beyond, inclusive of ultimate extension to the West Coast, is the railway line *vid* Lawrence.

151. That would be because it is the shortest?—And, because it goes over the lowest country. If looking at it in a selfish light, and I resided at Cromwell, I would say the line should go that way.

152. At the same time the Strath Taieri is the line that will open up most country for settlement?—Certainly.

153. Mr. Carrington.] From your professional and local knowledge, would you be kind enough to say which you consider the very best line for opening out the interior of the Otago Province, with a view to getting to the West Coast?—I would say that the Strath Taieri line is the best line for Otago only; but if you look at it in the colonial sense, the Clutha is the best railway line.

154. The Chairman.] As this Clutha line has been brought up, I will ask one question about it. Between Lawrence and Clyde, up the valley of the Clutha, is there any land available for settlement?—Not very much.

155. Then it would be merely a line of communication, not for the settlement of the country?—It would open up 260,000 acres of Crown land, instead of 1,200,000 acres by the other route.

156. How much of that 260,000 acres would be available for settlement?—I do not know.

157. Do you think 1,000?—More than that. There might be 10,000 acres fit for agriculture of this 260,000 acres.

158. Another projected line is a line from Palmerston by Macrae's?—My opinion is you need not make any inquiry about that; it is an absurd proposition.

159. There is another line which starts also from Palmerston up the Shag Valley. What is your opinion of that line?—My opinion is that the engineering difficulties would be so great that it should also be set aside. I may say that, with regard to this Shag Valley, I think it a proper thing that a branch railway should be made to Luk's, near Sir F. D. Bell's station.

160. There is another proposition to make a line from Kingston to Frankton and from Frankton to Cromwell. What is your opinion about it?—It is very practical; it could be done.

161. Would that open up any country for agricultural settlement?—It might open up a few thousand acres. It would be a great convenience to farmers at Arrowtown.

162. With regard to the Oamaru line, there is a proposal to take a line from the Waitaki Valley over the mountain to Kyeburn. Would you give us your opinion as to the character of the country, as to the construction of the railway, and the character of the country opened?—From Duntroon to Livingstone it passes through an excellent piece of agricultural country. Then from Livingstone to Kyeburn it passes through a succession of mountain gorges, where little or no settlement is possible, and where the engineering difficulties would be enormous.

163. Mr. Hislop.] What do the difficulties consist in?—There is a succession of spurs coming down to the main valley, and you would require to cut round these spurs, and bridge these tributary streams. You could not go over the pass, which is close on 3,000 feet high. You would have to tunnel. The difficulties would be so very great, and the expense so much, that I do not think it can be entertained in comparison with these other lines.