

96. Do you speak generally or only in respect of the particular case?—Of course a good deal depends upon the circumstances of each case. In this case, where the only means of communication is by shipping—where there is no railway or anything of that sort—and where a large population contributes considerably to the revenue, and is entirely dependent upon the harbour, I think the improvement of that harbour is essentially a colonial work. I may say also that the Colonial Government has already recognized this in the case of Greymouth and Westport, and have spent money on these ports, while nothing has been done for Hokitika.

97. Do you think that the improvement of harbours is essentially a colonial work?—I should think so.

98. Do you contend that there is anything special about the matter? If so, I should like to hear it. Is there a large extent of agricultural land?—Yes, there is a good deal of agricultural land, but it is covered with bush, or a great part of it is, and it would be expensive to bring it under cultivation. But we have much good country.

99. What sort of a port is Greymouth?—Very similar to Hokitika.

100. Large sums of money have been spent there, I understand?—Yes; in connection with the coal mines and the railway.

101. What distance is it from Hokitika?—About forty miles by road; but the distance direct is about twenty-two miles.

102. What sort of gradients are there on the road?—In some places they are very sharp; perhaps one in eight or ten.

103. Would it not be advantageous to run a railway between the two places?—I have always advocated that being done.

104. If it were done, would it not obviate the necessity for these harbour works?—I do not think it would, because, although large sums have been spent upon Greymouth, I am not sure that that harbour could always be relied upon. It is a bar harbour, and, though it may be improved, I do not think it would be sufficient to meet the wants of the whole of that part of the coast.

105. I am given to understand that the road goes through the centres of population. I may say at once I am quite unacquainted with the coast myself. Do you not think if there was a railway run from the one place to the other, through the centres of population, that that would meet the case. Surely a railway to the port would suit all parties better than another port simply. Which do you think would be preferable?—Supposing I had my choice, I should say most distinctly that a good port ought to be obtained. There is now a considerable population south of Hokitika, and that population I think is likely to increase, because that part of the country is practically untried. There is every evidence that it is rich, and it is sure to become more thickly populated than it is at present. Take Kumara as an instance. A few months ago there were a very few persons there; now it has a population of 5,000, and is likely to become a permanent settlement.

106. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.*] I understand you to incline to the opinion that a good port is of more advantage to country settlers than a good road, because without a port they can neither import nor export?—Yes.

107. Greymouth, you think, would scarcely be a sufficient port to feed the whole population?—Certainly not.

108. It is during the winter months I understand that the Port of Hokitika is closed?—Yes; during July, August, and September, and then the spring freshes come down and the river regains its force.

109. Then the crops would be gathered in before May, and could be got out of the port before it was closed for the winter?—We have not got the length of crops for export yet.

110. Then, as a matter of fact, you want the port opened because it is the port to the mining district?—There is no doubt that at the present time mining is the main resource of that part of the country; but, at the same time, I look at mining as the precursor of agricultural settlement.

111. The district cannot feed itself and must be fed for some time?—Yes, for some time.

112. You say the port is closed for want of water?—The reason is this: At present the river and lagoon waters are divided into a number of different streams, and during the winter months these are not sufficient to overcome the force of the sea, consequently the bar becomes blocked up; but if these waters were combined by the erection of suitable works I have no doubt the bar might easily be kept open all the year round. A reference to the plans of the river will more fully explain this.

113. You have seen the Wanganui bar? Does this resemble that?—Yes. Perhaps it is rather worse, because the Wanganui bar is protected to a certain extent by a bluff.

114. A railway would cost about £6,000 per mile?—The line between Hokitika and Greymouth has been surveyed, and detailed plans have been prepared. The cost, I believe, is estimated at £213,000.

115. What do you consider to be the difference in the value of goods at Hokitika and Greymouth?—I could not say, because during the summer months the prices at the two places are equal; but at times of blockade the values at Hokitika are much enhanced.

116. If you got these harbour works the port charges would be increased?—They are very heavy now.

117. They would then be increased?—You cannot levy port charges above a certain rate.

118. Then the outlay in harbour works would be unproductive?—It would tend to increase the population there.

119. There would be no return in money?—If you improved the port, trade would be largely increased, and port dues thereby increase.

120. But there would be no direct return?—Perhaps not at first. I do not think it would be fair to levy heavy charges upon the present limited population, because the benefit of the work would be felt, I was going to say, by all posterity. It would lead to the permanent occupation and settlement of the surrounding country.

121. In the case of a railway there would be an immediate return, because carriage of goods would have to be paid for?—Yes.