

500. *To Mr. Harris.*—I might get 150 tons a month into my place.

501. *To Mr. Trenwith.*—Out of that I might send about 50 tons to the Beech Forest, speaking roughly.

502. *To the Chairman.*—I know nothing about the timber. The only line that would serve me at the present time is the one from Colac. Since I have had my place down there, off 700 acres I have had cleared in the last two years I have sold about a thousand sheep—that would be about 600 fat sheep, 200 or 250 two parts fat, and 200 stores. I have 800 acres under grass. I have 1,500 acres there altogether. The timber was rung when I bought it; most of it belonged to my father and sister eighteen years ago. The last 2 years I have had 40 men clearing there on the average. I have not cultivated any of the land; the freight would be too high. It would cost me £1 a ton to cart from Gellibrand here, 16 miles. Two years ago I bought potatoes in the Beech Forest, and I paid 30s. a ton for them. I sold all my sheep in the wool. At the present time I have on the 700 odd acres cleared 1,300 sheep and 100 head of cattle. I sell the sheep in the Colac district. I sold 500 in one mob. If there were a railway and I were sending fat sheep, and I could get direct from the Gellibrand to Ballarat, I would send them by rail.

503. *To Mr. Trenwith.*—I do not mean if I could send them to Colac and then on to Ballarat; I mean through Beeac if the line were continued; it would make a difference as against going *via* Geelong and on to Ballarat. If there were a narrow-gauge railway from my place to Colac I would truck them and unload them at Colac, and truck them again on this line to go to Geelong and Ballarat if the expense were anything in reason. I have a farmer going down next week to inspect a portion of my land to rent it for the purpose of growing potatoes. I have put 50 acres under offer at £1 per acre per annum. I could cultivate about 150 acres on one portion of my land. Most of the land I am offering for cultivation is completely cleared; the balance is being cleared now. It costs about 30s. an acre for clearing. My land is mostly freehold now. I selected a portion of it in the first instance.

504. *To the Hon. D. Melville.*—I have no doubt of a railway paying on the narrow gauge. I think a line from there would pay very well. Take my own case: if I were to let what I propose letting, I ought to be able to turn out at least 750 tons yearly off 150 acres; but I know to my personal knowledge, that my customers have grown from 10 to 12 tons to the acre, and I always give £1 a ton more for potatoes from the forest than for local grown potatoes; they are much better. If we had a railway I have no doubt it would enhance the value of my land. I should say it would enhance it £2 or £3 an acre in the capital value.

505. Suppose a railway were constructed, would you think it a fair thing if the State were to make it in some way a charge upon the contiguous land—that is, in the event of its not paying, to make up its loss on the enhanced value of the contiguous land?—If we could cultivate that ground, and we were growing produce upon it, it would be a fair thing; we would save far more than that upon freight.

506. Do you think it would be a fair thing, or would you and others in the district agree to some responsibility in connexion with the railway?—I would be quite agreeable to take it if the others would do likewise!

507. If they would not, would it be a fair thing to impose in the Act authorizing the railway a condition that any loss should be spread over the people whose property had been enhanced by the railway?—I can hardly answer that question. I think it would be a fair thing if all contributed in equal shares, and I would be quite agreeable to that. If a railway were made, each farmer and selector, instead of growing just sufficient for his own use, would put in from 10 to 20 acres, whereas now they cannot get the produce out.

*The witness withdrew.*

Thomas Dare, sworn and examined.

508. *To the Chairman.*—I am a stonemason, living at Colac. I do not know very much about the district from here to the Beech Forest. I have been there. I did a job there a few months ago; it was building a stone house. I went down to build a couple of chimneys in a wooden house, and in the meantime we had got on to some beautiful stone, and at the price that we could do the work for, the man could not resist building a stone house. I built the chimneys, and then I built the stone house. There was plenty of stone easily got out. I do not know of any better stone; I never saw better stone in my life. It is what I would call a light bluestone, easily dressed and easily quarried. You could build a house with that stone cheaper than with brick. You could not get brick there at any price. You would never build a brick house when you could have stone like that at the price. I suppose the quarry is about 28 or 30 miles from here. I think it is about from five to seven miles away from Ditchley Park, bearing to the west.

509. *To the Hon. D. Melville.*—I do not think it is more than half-a-mile or three-quarters of a mile off the road. That is not a picked bit of stone—[*producing a sample*]. I think you could get stone 100 feet deep; it is in blocks. There was one block of stone and as near as we could calculate we got 40 dray loads of stone out of it. The house is ashlar stone—it is very nice; it is not a hard brittle stone. It is a sort of toughish stone; it is a good working stone. It did not destroy our tools; we took only a hammer each there, and we used the one hammer the six weeks we were there. The stone hammers freely; we cut it with plugs and feathers. You can get a length of stone 7 or 8 feet long without putting a pin in it. There is not a particle of honeycomb in it. I never saw cleaner stone in my life. A window sill could be dressed and supplied at the quarry, I think, at 3s. a foot. It would be beautiful stuff to saw. I do not know any part of Victoria that produces stone like it. I have not worked the Harcourt bluestone, but I have worked the Malmsbury stone in Melbourne, and another stone, the name of which I forget. This stone is perfect; it is very even—you could work a chisel for two days without putting it on the grindstone. I am certain there would be any amount of demand for it if there were any outlet, but the cost is so great it can never be brought into town to use. I do not know how near the proposed railway would be to the quarry. I have never in all my experience seen a specimen of stone like it; it is fit for all purposes. It will take a beautiful polish; it is so even. I think the quarry is on a selection. I should almost think there is some of it on public land, though I never travelled very much about the neighbourhood. As to the area of stone in the quarry, the face from the fall would go from 80 to 100 feet—we never worked into the hill. Our job was only a small one and we had not a great deal of working to get into the stone.