

33. *Dr. Newman.*] Does not Mr. Rich owe the Government several thousand pounds on account of works?—Not that I am aware of; he owes about £1000 for the rails.

34. Not more than that?—No; and he has offered to pay that repeatedly; and would have done so had the recommendation of the Waste Lands Committee been given effect to.

35. *Mr. Ballance.*] Can the mine be profitably worked?—Undoubtedly; it was done before.

36. Are you sure?—Yes.

37. I thought that a thorough trial had never been made of the mine?—Not at all; thousands of tons of coal have come out of it. It is a mine that is beneficial to the district; all that large and important district gets its coal there. During the time it was closed the people in the district had to pay six shillings a ton more for their fuel.

38. *Mr. Barron.*] You said something about an understanding but not a promise having been made that the Government would some day purchase the line? Was Mr. Rich then, as now, the sole proprietor of the mine?—I think there was a third proprietor, but I am not sure.

39. Are you not aware that it was a Joint Stock Company?—Mr. Rich and Mr. Williams were the principal proprietors.

40. Is the interest of Mr. Rich recently acquired or increased?—No.

41. It was as large then as now?—Yes; he is paying a fabulous rent to Hutchinson's Trustees who hold the original lease, upwards of £300 a year for the right to mine coal there. It is leased from the Government by Hutchinson's Trustees. The coal-field was originally leased by myself as Superintendent to a man named Hutchinson who paid a small royalty—a mere nothing—and he and his trustees have been receiving £300 or £400 a year ever since.

42. Do you not think that Hutchinson was a more enterprising man than Mr. Rich?—He was an enterprising man; but he had not the means.

43. He pressed less on the Government?—Nothing of the sort.

44. Did he ever come to the Government for assistance?—Yes; and got it to a considerable extent in making a harbor.

45. Was he ever a member of the House?—No; but he was a member of the Provincial Council.

46. *Mr. Peacock.*] Do you know the length of the line?—No; I could not say—2 or 3 miles.

47. Presuming it to be so it seems a small cost £8000 for such a distance?—That does not include the rails.

48. Are you satisfied that the line is really a good one at such a low cost per mile?—I have never been along the line; I have seen it and passed it repeatedly; but I can quite understand that it was made at a lower cost than it would have been by the Government. And is a dead level along the coast.

49. Is it a continuation of the main line or a branch?—A branch off the main line.

50. Some questions have been asked as to what constitutes a siding on a railway; you would not consider it a siding?—Certainly not.

51. Not even if it were a shorter length?—You may say that it is a siding inasmuch as it branches off; but I should not speak of it in that way.

52. There is a reference in Mr. Rich's letter that it was understood by the Company that they were to be repaid the cost of construction or allowed interest on it?—There was no written arrangement; but they naturally would have expected interest on capital or a rental which is the same thing. The Committee recommended that they should be paid £500 a year for the use of the line; and why it was not given effect to I cannot tell.

53. You do not know the condition of the line or the solidity of its construction?—No.

---

FRIDAY, 9TH JULY, 1886.

Mr. C. Y. O'CONNOR, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are the Under-Secretary for Public Works Mr. O'Connor?—Yes.

2. The Committee are considering proposals made to the Government for the sale of certain district railways—the Nightcaps Coal Company's line the Whau Whau, the Shag Point, the Ocean Beach, and the Fernhill Colliery lines—and wish to know what information you can give them as to the condition and value of these lines?—The lines are all in fair order, except perhaps the Ocean Beach line which is not in first-class condition; the other four are in good order and are being worked by the Government. The Ocean Beach line is not in good order; it has been in work for a long time, and has had at any rate recently, very little repairs.

3. *Dr. Newman.*] When was it constructed?—A long time ago; I could not say exactly when; it must be seven years ago or more.

4. *Mr. Gore.*] Has it not been constructed fully nine years?—Very likely; but I can only speak with certainty as to seven years or so (I have since ascertained on reference to papers that it was completed in October, 1876).

5. In what condition are the sleepers?—I do not know accurately; my only knowledge is from walking over the line. It is a line that has been laid down some considerable time and as very little maintenance work has been done recently it is rather worn down.

6. There is no traffic on it except at race-times?—No; I believe it is used only on race days, of course it was used a great deal before general traffic was stopped on it. It would not be a great work to put it in repair; but it is hardly fit to run rapid trains on at present.

7. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Assuming that it were in repair, there would be plenty of traffic on it?—I do not really know; it would be very difficult to estimate whether or not it would carry much traffic.

8. *Mr. Cowan.*] You know the value that is put on these lines by the different Companies?—Yes.