

116. You say that you would exclude all the creek-beds and gullies if you were to lay off the ground for settlement purposes. That, I take it, would cut off the water. Would that land, without the right to the water, be of any value for settlement?

*Mr. Wilson*: I think provision is made that all rights to the streams are retained by the Crown.

*Mr. Gordon*: The point is this: The freeholder has no right to the water going through his ground.

*Witness*: I do not mean that. I would not exclude from freehold every little watercourse; I would exclude only those creeks which were probably gold-bearing. The creeks with a small run of water would not be excised.

117. If all the creeks and streams were excluded, would the land remaining be valuable for settlement?—If all the creeks likely to contain gold were excluded, there would still be sufficient water, from the tributaries to such creeks, for timber and stock purposes.

118. You say that about an eighth of the land would be auriferous?—I give that with considerable qualification, because it is very difficult to determine the quantity.

119. Do you think it would be possible, if you had to lay off the auriferous ground within that area, that you would exclude all by only taking one-eighth of the area?—I think you could exclude all that anybody could make out a good case for as being payable auriferous ground.

120. How would you know it was not payable—by reason of its not being worked?—I presume that, taking you as representing the miners' interest as against that of the general settlement of the country, the onus of proof would rest with you.

121. Is not new ground being taken up every day within the area, and the workings being extended?—A great many of the extensions are applied for in connection with existing claims.

122. Is it not a fact that portions of the ground, although auriferous, are not worked at the present time simply because there is not sufficient water?—Some of the ground would be worked if there was more water, and the ground at present worked would also be worked out sooner.

123. Take the country between Ahaura and No Town. There is little of that which is not auriferous?—There is a great deal of it auriferous in patches.

124. Would you like to go and survey off a large block of land there if you were not to include auriferous ground?—I say it would be difficult or impossible to do it in large blocks. It could only be done by making a survey in close detail.

125. It is probable that in a close detail survey you would include auriferous ground in that you surveyed?—There would be a possibility of it.

126. You say you know this country; what is the general character and depth of it from Ahaura to Nelson Creek, and from Granville and Duffer's?—It is from a few feet in depth, on the reef, up to a couple of hundred feet.

127. A couple of hundred feet would be an extreme case?—Yes.

128. There is a great deal of it shallow ground?—I think most of the shallow ground is worked out.

129. Therefore, if you had a good stream of water, you would go over a large surface of it?—Of course, the shallower the ground the larger the surface you have to go over.

130. It would not be judicious for the Government to confine the auriferous blocks to the actual present workings?—That opens up rather a wide question, because, taking an extreme case, it might be more judicious for the Government to sacrifice even known goldfields for the purpose of obtaining settled population than to conserve them.

131. Then you say it would be judicious for the Government to sacrifice the auriferous country?—I say it might be so. Your question opens up a great many considerations.

132. The Government having the right to select 750,000 acres from time to time, could they select ground more likely to be auriferous, or more auriferous ground, than what is included in these reserves?—I suppose, with the exception of Kumara, that stretch of country through the Grey Valley and Inangahua is amongst the best mining country on the West Coast.

133. What is the value of that mining land so far as the timber is concerned?—The value of the timber depends entirely upon its access. For instance, I have heard of eighteenpence a hundred feet royalty being paid, and, assuming that there were 20,000ft. to the acre, that would be £15 an acre the owner of the land would get, and he would still have his land and have it cleared. That perhaps is an extreme case.

134. You know that the company has the right to cut the timber off the land within the mining reserves?—I understand so.

135. If the timber was worth £15 an acre the company could not have much of a loss?—I am speaking of an extreme case. It is quite possible that land near the railway might yield £5 an acre, but out of that the company might have to spend large amounts to reach the land further on.

136. I am taking the first reservation made. What is the value of that land as timber land?—The value of that is fixed by the contract.

137. What is the value of the timber on that land?—It would depend upon access. The timber might be worth from £2 to £10 an acre. The further from the railway or means of access to a market the less value the timber is.

138. Is there much flat land available for settlement within this area?—There is not much. There is some unsold land along the Grey River, and I am not sure whether it is included in the reservation or not. There are some old surveyed sections unsold. Flat land is the exception.

139. If the flat lands about the beds of creeks were to be sold, would that not stop the mining?—The flat land would be required very likely in some cases for mining purposes.

140. The land would be covered with tailings?—A good deal of the flat land would be required for gold-mining purposes out of the settlement blocks.