

*Mr. Bell:* The position was different eighteen months ago from what it is to-day. The company's finance was not impossible then. The statement of the position made when the extension of time was asked for was as I have now put it.

*Mr. Wilson.]* Do you, Mr. Seddon, confirm Mr. Gordon's statement that, on an average, one acre of ground is worked out by each sluicing miner per year?—It depends upon the nature of the ground. Sometimes more, sometimes less.

2. Is that the average per man?—I can only speak as to the West Coast. I should say that in driving and sluicing, shallow and deep, there would be about that worked out.

3. Is the Kumara field about a mile in radius, and has it an area of about 1,000 acres?—About that.

4. Is it a fact that only 550 acres have been worked out in sixteen years?—First of all they worked on one level, and when that was worked out the same land was worked on another level; then it was sluiced; so that you may calculate that as being worked three times. First it was worked on the shafts, then on the gold-level with tunnelling, then the whole of the remaining ground was sluiced.

5. Is it correct that there are 235 miners at work on that field?—Yes.

6. If you take the area worked out as 550 acres by 235 miners, say, for argument's sake, would that not give an average of between one-tenth and one-fifth of an acre per man?—Kumara is no criterion. Some of the ground there is 250ft. high. Kumara is one of the places where the smallest area is worked out.

7. Would it be fair to assume that it is twice as deep as other places?—Yes; it is five times as deep as it is at Waimea.

8. If it is five times as deep, it would only average half an acre per man?—At Waimea it would average from 5ft. to 10ft.; at Kumara it is 200ft. in parts.

9. Is it a fact that the whole of the miners in Nelson and Westland number about 5,883?—I dare say there are now that number.

10. Has there been a decrease in the number of miners in the last year's returns?—A decrease in the number of miners, but an increase in their working capacity by the aid of improved machinery and larger bodies of water.

11. How many men are engaged in quartz-mining and deep-sinking?—There are 5,883 men employed in mining claims on the West Coast, of which 629 are engaged in quartz workings, and the rest in alluvial and sluicing claims. At Reefton it is quartz-mining, and at Ross it is deep-sinking, and sluicing and dredging.

12. Do deep-sinking and quartz-mining operations require less ground than sluicing?—No; they require a larger area.

13. I cannot see where that argument comes in?—If you had to put your hand into your pocket for a few thousand pounds for quartz-mining you would see it.

14. Why do you require more ground?—Because you require a larger amount of capital to work it. There may be only a narrow vein running through the claim. These claims vary, and companies have to expend several thousand pounds in the erection of a crushing-battery, besides the expense in opening-out and prospecting the ground, and then find there is only a thin seam of quartz, or that it cuts out as it goes down. Then, I say, you must certainly give a larger area of ground.

15. Do you work out so large an area as an acre of ground in a quartz-mine?—It is difficult to determine when a quartz claim is worked out. We have had cases in Reefton where they have worked out a vein of quartz, and then found further quartz down below. Then, some claims nip or pinch out, and they are sometimes considered that they are worked out. Ultimately another company find quartz at another level, and they take it up again. I say that you must have a large area for the capital invested, to encourage this branch of mining. Many times it takes a number of years to prospect and develop the workings in one of those claims.

16. Do you work out a larger area in a sluicing claim than you do in a quartz-mine?—Certainly you do.

17. Then the area required will be in proportion to the cubic tons moved?—Certainly not. You may have to take away a hill 200ft. high. In that case you shift everything from the bottom to the top. Boulders and everything else have to be removed. In the other case you take only a narrow strip of quartz. If you go to Kumara you see nothing but a heap of stones which have had to be moved bodily away.

18. Does quartz-mining require a less area than sluicing?—It requires a greater surface, certainly.

19. Would it be possible to conserve the mining rights in quartz-reefs—to conserve the underground rights, as is done in the coal-mines in England?—No; the surface is required for water-races, dams, machine sites, and for timber to work the mine.

20. Not if the quartz-reef did not come to the surface?—Yes.

21. Why?—Simply because the quartz starts at the surface. A quartz vein dips in a slanting direction through the ground.

22. What is the average width of a quartz-reef?—There is one at Waihi 40ft. wide. Some are like a crack in the ice, and run away into stars. The reef is in many instances intermixed with slate and sandstone, and you have to quarry it out.

23. Is that exceptional?—Yes.

24. Then, generally you do not require the surface?—Yes, you do. I have been twenty-two years here, and I cannot say that I know of a single case where the surface belonged to one party while the ground below was being worked. In Victoria we have had cases like that.

25. Would it be possible to take the surface?—I do not think so.