

the Crown. We know that we cannot get it all, but we require all if we can get it. We require outlets to the river for the purpose of carrying away the debris; we require the whole of the side-streams as tail-races; and there is one thing that we require the low-lying ground more especially for. We have already, under what is called the operation of mining, run over the shallow portions of these creeks and taken out what was easiest got. We were perfectly well aware that every one of these creeks have run their deposits of gold into deeper portions of the valley, so that we require the whole width on each side of the creeks as actual mining claims as well as tailings sites and other things incidental to mining operations. The tailings sites have been used and will be turned over and used as actual mining claims. We know the gold is there, and with better appliances it will be taken out. That is one thing we want particularly—we want the outlets to rivers and creeks included in the mining reserves. We have a great trouble just now with the few acres that have been parted with by the Crown. We have been hampered two or three times, and the whole of the operations have been stopped because of the few acres parted with by the Crown. Your Committee will therefore easily see why we are so anxious to have the reserves over all the outlets and low-lying flats. I have already stated why we want the terrace land. That is what we call the actual working ground. So that we want the flats for one purpose and the terraces for another—we simply want it all. I am well aware that we cannot get it.

27. Then you say there have been some disputes between the miners and the owners of some of the low-lying land?—Oh yes; continual disputes.

28. In your opinion it has not been a wise policy, in the interests of settlement and the mining industry, that these lands should have been sold?—There is no room for both classes of industry on the West Coast. Farmers and graziers should perhaps be permitted to make the best of the land until it is wanted for *bona fide* mining purposes; but by settling them there, and giving them a right to it you shut out the miners. There is no room for both in the same locality.

29. At all events Mr. Fergus said, "Hold your tongue, and the Government will do better for you than the company"?—It has been so often repeated by me that I can almost recollect Mr. Fergus's words. At all events, I can give the substance of them to the Committee. I wanted it one way, and Mr. Fergus of course declined. He said, "If you listen I will show you my plan, which is this: We will let the company select the blocks of land, and we will cause a strict inquiry to be made forthwith as to whether each block so selected is auriferous, or otherwise. If it proves to be auriferous, you will have it; and the company will have to select something else. That is the way we intend to deal with the mining reserves on the West Coast."

30. How long ago is that?—I do not recollect the date. It was the last visit Mr. Fergus paid to the Coast as Minister of Mines. It might have been his first too.

31. When the company stopped the miners cutting the timber, had the company any right to the ground?—I do not know whether they had a right to it or not.

32. They stopped them cutting it?—The letter stated that they were to take notice that they should not proceed any further with the operation of timber-cutting until they had agreed with the Midland Railway Company to pay certain rents, and a royalty at per hundred feet. Algie got a printed form showing rates of payment required by the company.

33. Would that interfere with the mining industry?—We could not tolerate that. No; it would not be conducive to the mining industry to interfere with the timber.

34. What effect has the making of the reserves had amongst the miners of the Grey Valley?—I do not know that it has had much effect yet. I do not know that there is any assurance that the mining reserves will be proclaimed in our district yet. If made it will give renewed confidence to the whole mining industry, and an impetus to the district. We shall know who we have to deal with and who to respect, and mining operations will spring ahead livelier than they have been doing for some time. That is to say, that there are several companies which are ready to start.

35. Is any of this high land which you have been alluding to, where operations have been carried on, fit for farming or pastoral operations?—There is an acre here and there, but you cannot get fifty acres fit for settlement.

36. What would it take to clear it and make it fit for agricultural or pastoral purposes?—On my folly—I mean my garden—I have expended £120, and I have not finished with it yet. I have got an acre, and am preparing it for fruit-growing.

37. You call it your "folly"?—Yes.

38. What induced you to go to this expense?—The possession of the water-rights, and knowing that I had plenty of ground to operate on as a mining claim so long as I existed, even if I lived to an old age, and to leave to a grandson to operate on as a mining claim.

39. Could you give an estimate of what it would take to fall the timber and grub the ground—to leave the stumps in?—I have had very little experience. The only information that I could give is what I have gathered in the Courts. I heard Mr. Drannen state that it took £15 an acre to clear, without touching the trees at all. No doubt it would take another £15 for these trees. As for stumping and grubbing, that would cost nearly as much as my garden.

40. Suppose any private individual had applied for the freehold of this land in your riding, would it or would it not have been granted?—I think under the mining law we had a chance of opposing it, and would have opposed it, unless it was for little patches in the north and east of the riding.

41. If any private individual had applied to purchase the land, you would have objected just the same as in the case of the company?—Yes; all the land to the westward of the Government dam would have been objected to.

42. What would be the grounds of objection?—That they were required for *bona fide* mining purposes, and that would be the ground for every acre lying between the Government dam and the river.

43. If the company left out Bell Hill, is that land suitable for settlement?—I do not say it is