

54. Would it not be possible to arrange that a man could take up a piece of land for settlement and have a small gold claim at the same time?—The Mining Act provides for that already.

55. Would that be conducive to the development of the gold industry as well as settlement?—I do not think you can call it settlement. The miner could fill in his time. It is already done in some places.

56. Would there be an opening for small people to make a fair living on the West Coast?—Always understanding that one and the same party held the same claim—no division.

57. If you had the railway to bring in stores and the necessities of life at a cheap rate, that would still further tend to development?—Yes, when they had it. They have not had it yet. We are worse off with the Midland Railway at our doors than we were when we had to go to Brunner for everything.

58. Then you prefer to pay £6 a ton for the transit of goods rather than 30s.?—I could get goods from Brunnerton for £2, and they would be carefully protected. It costs me now something like 30s. or £2, and I have no certainty of protection in the Midland railway-shed.

59. Have you sent a formal complaint to that effect?—I have not. I have had so little to do with it; but other people have. There is another thing—we are not half so well off so far as travelling is concerned. Previously to your coming up there, we had the coach going and coming back every night. Now, when we go, we have five or six miles to walk at night.

60. You stated that for quartz-mining you required a larger surface area than for sluicing?—I did not say they required it. I say they get it; that is, except under what we call special claims. Some of the special claims are larger than quartz claims: we have some of 56 acres.

61. You stated that there are little patches of land suitable for settlement in the mining district which are required for miners to live on?—You make a mistake. I say that if there are any small patches on the surface of quartz claims suitable for settlement, they are required for residence sites for working-men. I did not say there actually were these spots. I have not found any I would care to settle on, but I have no doubt there are spots.

62. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell the Committee whether it would be in the interest of settlement, if the area as reserved for the company was resumed and dealt with by the Government?—Yes, I can inform the Committee without fear of successful contradiction from any quarter that it would give a great impetus to the West Coast, if it were settled to-morrow that the Government had again taken over the whole of the West Coast—that they had relieved the company from any further trouble, that the whole Coast was open for mining and settlement purposes. It would be just the making of the West Coast.

63. Then, in your opinion, the state of affairs existing now—that is, with regard to the large area set aside for selection by the Midland Railway Company—has the effect of retarding settlement and preventing gold-mining?—I have no desire to find fault with the company. It is a fair company; but it is the uncertainty existing: we are not able to deal with anybody. I think I am speaking the mind of the miners when I say that it would suit us better if the state of uncertainty were removed by the Government retaking the whole of the land, and relieving the Midland Railway Company, as I have stated.

64. You think it would be beneficial to the miners and the colony generally that the Government should take the land from the company?—I do not say the colony generally. It might cost too much to retake it—it might cost more than the colony would like to suffer. Beneficial to us it would be.

65. I am sure the miners would not ask anything detrimental to the interests of the colony as a whole, although it might advance theirs?—Well, I believe they would.

66. I do not think you speak on behalf of the general body of miners; you speak individually?—Let it be individually, then. We want them certainly cleared away.

67. Is that what you meant when, in answer to one of the questions, you said it is the incubus of the company that tended to prevent mining operations?—Yes; it has a great deal to do with it.

68. The incubus you refer to is the uncertainty in dealing with the land?—Yes; not that we desire to find fault with the company.

69. You mentioned that the miners had objected to lands on the West Coast being reserved for the Midland Company as portion of their area?—Yes, in the early days.

70. I want to ask you how the miners did object to this; what form—public petition, public meetings, or how?—Public meeting on my part, and I think a petition was also got up. I recollect the petition you referred to, and the result of it.

71. Where do you say the public meetings were held, and when?—There was one at Nelson Creek and another at No Town; but, as I have already said, the public in Greymouth and Reefton were against us.

72. When was that—in 1884 or 1885?—I think that was before you were a member of Parliament. The miners got up an agitation and tried to prevent the lands being included.

73. Which is the fact, are the coach-fares cheaper than the railway, say to Greymouth, taking the whole through rate—the total cost, then and now?—It would be, I suppose, 12s.: 10s. coach and 2s. return ticket by the railway. It would be the same then as now, I suppose.

74. What is it now?—To get to Hatters' it is between 7s. and 8s.

75. The coach and railway fare before the company started was 12s.; now it is 7s. or 8s.—Yes.

76. Well, the fares for travelling have been reduced?—The fares are slightly reduced, but it is the inconvenience I speak of.

77. Do you consider it more convenient to travel by coach than rapidly by railway?—It is more convenient if the coach goes by your door. There is no regular running now—it is an uncertainty. You have more trouble to get away now if you have anything to take, and it costs more than the actual cost of the fare by railway.