

could be stretched in the company's favour, and I told Mr. Wilson we should do so if it were possible to do it. We now cross the river to the Bell Hill reefs. Of course, the company do not dispute for a moment the necessity of a reserve at Bell Hill. It was one of the first fields on the West Coast. A large amount of gold has been got there, and the miners are now working the ground, while the reefs are payable. The block we could give the company there we had no hesitation in giving them. I now come to the reserves on the north bank of the Teremakau River to Greymouth—that is, following the course of the line. The reserves made excluded land at Back Creek and Cameron's, and only last summer a rush took place, and payable gold was got there. We find that on the flat we had left out the miners are now getting payable gold. So that it would indicate to me that the gold runs right down to Cameron's and the Cape Terrace Diggings. We come across then to Marsden Diggings. An application was made for land at the end of Maori Creek. The Maori Creek miners petitioned, and public meetings were held. The members representing the district were asked to intervene and prevent the flat which was being applied for being granted, as it was the key to the whole of the gullies or workings near Maori Gully—Orima, it is called. Had it been granted very serious injury would have been done to the mining interests in the locality. This was immediately pointed out to the company, and private evidence was given, showing what would be the effect, and the company immediately intimated that it would not have anything to do with it. That showed the necessity for taking the land there, which was subsequently taken. So far as any blocks of land taken between the Teremakau River and Greymouth are concerned, we have had no protests, as far as I know, on the part of the company; neither do I think there is any reasonable ground for complaint. I should say it would not be reasonable to say that any land we have reserved there is not required for mining purposes, or for purposes incidental or conducive thereto. Moreover, Mr. Wilson said in his evidence that it was a proper thing to do—that is, to take land surrounding the workings. We now come to the Grey Valley reserves. Of course, under the original contract the colony had the right of taking mile by mile, with a frontage—of course, not to the railway—but taking the railway as a base line, the frontage would be on private lands. The lands here were sold many years ago. The first land of any consequence taken up between Reefton and Greymouth is what is known as Totara Flat. Now, had there been any Crown lands in this district fairly suitable for settlement, the alienation of which would not interfere with mining, I feel satisfied that the residents and others in the locality, when money was plentiful and people were well to do, would have taken up these lands. When Reefton broke out a splendid market was found for supplies, such as dairy produce, and so on. I knew of potatoes costing £2 and £3 a ton in Canterbury bringing £15 at Reefton. I must not hide the fact that the carriage was £7 or £8 a ton. But still, both Reefton and Greymouth have been splendid markets for the Totara Flat farmers. Sheep-farming has also come into vogue during late years. The development of the cattle trade, however, has brought the Coast into closer connection with the other parts of the colony, so that in root crops they could not compete with the outside markets, such as Canterbury. In certain times of the year they make a profit out of beef and mutton. Now, if this land was really suitable for grazing and sheep-farming, it is strange that no application was made for it between the time of the company's right of selection accruing and the making of these reserves, because we are only making the reserves now. If the applications for lands under section 33 are produced, it will be seen by those who are able to judge how very few applications have been made for purposes of settlement. There have been applications, but not by *bona fide* farmers and settlers, but by clear-headed men who understood the mining industry, and had a good idea of what would be a good selection. One of the applications was by Mr. Perotti, for a section in these very gullies where the area was to be taken for mining; and the Committee will see that the granting of the land to any person would have given command of the whole of the reserved country. It is a piece of land on the left of the road going up to Reefton. I am quite satisfied that if you sent an expert there he would say the land was not wanted for settlement. Mr. Perotti is not a farmer; he is one of the keenest of speculators, and timber and quartz-mining are more in his line. His application is not the only one of this class. The applications are not for the most part by settlers or settlers' sons, or people who really want to settle; they are by applicants who think that if they can get an advantage they may expect the Government to pay very well for what may be wanted hereafter. Now we come to the reserves up the Grey Valley. You will see by the way the gullies trend into the river that they mostly run at right angles, or slope down the stream almost at right angles to the river. A case in point is Antonio's, Block 62. Now we come to the Ahaura River, and down to Nelson Creek. The Committee will see that these different streams here [map referred to] spread out like your five fingers, all over the blocks. These were the creeks where the miners got the best gold in the early days. Each creek formed a sluice- or tail-race. The constant wash going on has left the gold in the creeks, and the drift has gone up the main stream. All this land has been subject to glacial action. In my opinion, as a mining expert, originally this was one flat, and these creeks that run down to the main streams have been made by the constant action of the water from that time, and the auriferous drift having undergone a process of concentration by the creeks acting as natural tail-races or sluices. The miners, therefore, get the best gold in the creeks. All these creeks have been worked. Not only that, but as they traced the gold in from the creeks they got it on the terraces. What would make this payable is hydraulic sluicing. The poorest ground would not perhaps give a spec to the dish, yet it is payable there when a large quantity of water is used. Mr. Lord, in his evidence, said along the gullies we should take a narrow strip. At Nelson Creek there would be two strips; there would be several strips at Noble's Creek, which has five branches; and on the Waipouna River there would be no less than twenty strips; and so on. If you got the whole of the surveyors of the colony, I do not think they could make the surveys that would be required within the time available. There are flats between the river and the gold terraces, and there are auriferous drifts right through. To survey it at right angles, as suggested by Mr. Lord, would have been a waste of time and money, and would not then have conserved what was intended by the contract. We