

After they have purchased portion of that land and have money out here now, ready to spend a large amount of capital in prospecting and opening it up, they find they cannot do so if this Bill is passed, for the simple reason that they may spend £50,000 or £100,000 in prospecting, and when they have found something another company can mark off the land, and make an application to the Government for its resumption. After spending all this money the people at Home think it is not dealing with them fairly. We have not the capital in the colony to develop its mineral wealth, and now, when capital is willing to come into the colony, they think it is a very unfair thing to bring in a Bill for the resumption of land from those who were willing to open it up. It is not one syndicate alone that is affected. There are plenty more that will say the same. These syndicates are so mixed up together that you are dealing with all the English capitalists who have money coming to the colony, for their interests are involved one with another. I really feel an interest in mining, and I wish to see the mines of the country opened up, when I believe the industry will be far the largest in the colony; at the same time I do not wish to see a monopoly. Give the capitalist a chance: induce capital to come into the colony, and hem them in with such provisions that you can make working the land a condition, so that you do not make a monopoly of it. The people now connected with this boom in Auckland, taking up so much land, are not really capitalists, but people without the means to spend one sixpence in developing the country. A man will go out on horseback with four pegs, and come back to you and say, "Here is the thing for English capital: we have a great property to sell, with a splendid reef"; or, "We are alongside a company that is being run by English capital." And they ask you a big price. In one instance I have been charged personally £1,000 to be allowed to go on to land and look at it, and see whether I will take it or not.

194. *Mr. Duncan.*] Have you paid any of that £1000?—No, but I have at the present time an option. If I do not give that thousand I have no opportunity of prospecting it. If I were to go on spending money in this way I would have to spend thousands of pounds; so I have telegraphed since I came to Wellington to take the men off the property, as I would not pay the money. And I am not alone. There are many syndicates in the same position as I am.

195. *Hon. the Minister of Mines.*] Is that private or Crown Lands?—I believe it is Crown land, but there is something wrong with the title.

*The Chairman:* Perhaps you had better finish your statement.

*Mr. Gordon:* That is the position. I think, if the Government would only allow capital to come in, and then if the capitalists did not work the land, it will be plenty of time to bring in such a Bill as this to resume. That is really the pith of the thing, and I do not think it is any use taking up the time of the Committee. That is what the English capitalists want represented to the Government.

196. *Mr. Carnecross.*] You suggest, instead of legislation, that they take steps to hem such companies with such conditions as will make them to work the land to advantage?—Yes.

197. Do these conditions not already exist in our mining laws?—Yes, as far as Crown lands are concerned, but not as far as private freehold land goes.

198. You would suggest conditions for freehold land—to make them comply with certain conditions?—I think it would be a good thing to do that.

199. What position does this really place freehold in in this respect: We will suppose an English capitalist has purchased a freehold; if this Bill is passed, then, can your people go Home with it and place companies on the market?—No; but I may say they wish to have the land thoroughly prospected before they form any company, or take land for the purpose of forming companies on the English market. At present some men say they must place properties on the market or throw them up. There are companies being sent Home at the present time and getting English capital, of which the investors will never see one sixpence back. It would be much better that a company should develop it before taking up the land and trying to form companies to work it.

200. Do you know Kathleen?—Yes.

201. That belongs to an English company?—Yes.

202. Is it a fact that since this Bill has been proposed certain individuals have gone on it and pegged out claims in the heart of it, and if this Bill is passed they can take them up?—I do not know, but if the Bill is passed they may likely do that.

203. *Mr. Mills.*] Do you know this land now comprised in the Kauri Freehold Gold Estates Company?—Yes, I know it.

204. Does its main value, in your opinion, consist in its minerals?—It consists in its minerals and timber. Where the land is denuded of timber it is not worth a shilling an acre. The surface-value is worthless.

205. Then, if I sold you a block of similar land, and reserved the minerals, and a rich reef was found on it, would you claim the right to the minerals?—I could not claim it if that was mentioned in the sale that the minerals were excluded.

206. Then, if the colony had such a proviso in the sale of that land, would you think they ought to maintain them?—Yes, if they had such a proviso.

207. Do you think that if some arrangements could be made with a company of that description to pay a royalty for the concession from the Crown, that it would meet the case?—I think it would meet the case, and I think the company would be quite willing to pay royalty. I think it might be possible to get them to make a compromise.

*Hon. Mr. Cadman:* I am sure that is a sign of weakness.

*Mr. Gordon:* They would rather do that than fight.

208. *Mr. Mills.*] Do you know from your experience if there are other blocks that would be affected by the Bill?—There is no doubt about it. I could point out two properties purchased previous to 1873 that would be affected.

209. Do you know of any very large blocks held by companies?—I could not point them out.