

*Mr. R. McKenzie* : He has told us that the Bill, if passed, will frighten capital, and I wish to know what he would recommend his company to do?

*The Chairman* : My ruling is that Mr. Gordon need not answer what he would recommend.

246. *Mr. R. McKenzie*.] I will put it this way: Will your company discontinue operations if this Bill is passed?—I cannot answer that question.

247. If this Bill is passed what will he recommend his company to do?

*The Chairman* : I have ruled that Mr. Gordon need not answer that question.

*Mr. R. McKenzie* : Then, I will move that the question be debated. I am willing to adjourn, but I will not ask any more questions till I get an answer to this.

248. *Mr. Duncan*.] What is the nature of your company's operations? Do they intend working these mines or exploiting them for sale?—My company will either take them up and advance capital to develop the minerals, or form companies for the purpose of working them. We will do anything that is required to thoroughly test and ascertain the value of the ground before putting it on the market for flotation.

249. Then, to begin again. Supposing we confined the question to this particular property. Is it for the purpose of working the gold in that property that they are now endeavouring to stop the passage of this Bill, or for the purpose of exploiting it for selling to other companies?—There is no doubt that no one company could in itself really work the whole of it. They would need to form subsidiary companies to work different portions. A company or syndicate would want millions, otherwise, to work it.

250. To work 30,000 acres?—That is only portion of it. Portion is leasehold, and there are 24,000 acres of freehold not included in the Kauri Gold Estates at all.

251. Held by whom at present?—Held by the Kauri Timber Company.

*Hon. Mr. Cadman* : They have got the whole side of a country.

252. *Mr. Duncan*.] You stated in your evidence that you did not like monopolies?—Yes.

253. Is not this in the nature of a monopoly?—No company can be a monopoly if you make it utilise land to the greatest extent it can do. If you make it spend money and employ labour, then it cannot possibly be a monopoly.

254. Would it not have a tendency to frighten capital away if we impose these conditions?—They are perfectly willing to take up this land on these conditions, which are the same as on Crown lands.

255. What are they so frightened of?—You cannot for a moment expect that they are going to spend £50,000 or £100,000 in opening up portion of this land only to find people the moment that anything is found to come and take up their land. What is the use of taking up a special claim until you get something worth taking up? There is one thing I am sure of, and that is that the capital is not in the colony to open up the country, and if you do not get outside capital the land will lie useless for years.

256. I do not see that they have very much to complain of. They are able to hold more ground, and if we are not to pass a Bill submitting them to the ordinary conditions of the goldfields they could not hold the same ground?—We do not want to hold more ground, but my company tells me to be sure I do not send Home a thing to be put on the market unless I am perfectly satisfied that there is a fair prospect of the men getting their money back.

257. What I am coming to is these monopolies. I do not say they are not a good thing, but it is necessary there should be exceptional facilities for special work?—The greatest monopoly at the present time is that of people holding these lands who will not make use of them, and will not take a price at which capitalists can take them up.

258. What right have they to hold Crown lands and not work them?—The Commissioner of Crown Lands thought he had a power to grant claims, and claims were granted, and it was found he had not the power to grant them, and until such time as they get it the title under the Goldfields—

259. Then they have really no title?—They have a title now, because they have a prospecting area.

260. What is the maximum size of a prospecting area?

*Hon. Mr. Cadman* : A mile square.

261. *Mr. Duncan*.] Do you represent the only one in the same class of business in New Zealand?—I think all the companies from London are interested one with another.

262. Amalgamation?—Not exactly amalgamation.

263. *Mr. Allen*.] What company do you represent?—The Anglo-Continental Gold Syndicate (Limited).

264. You say their interests are entwined with all the others?—They are connected with most of them.

265. Are they connected with this Kauri Gold Estates Company?—I cannot tell, but I think they are connected in some way.

266. Can you tell, with regard to land purchased prior to 1873, whether the Crown retained the right over precious minerals?—That is a question of law: whether the minerals belong to the Crown or the Natives.

267. Can you tell us whether the Natives retained the gold and silver?—The Natives have, in some instances, sold land and retained the mineral rights.

268. Can you give us an instance?—Waihi West; in which Mr. Vesey Stewart told me they have sold him the land and the Government purchased the mineral rights.

269. Supposing the Government had retained the right for gold and silver, would they retain any right to mine for it?—None whatever; they could not break the surface.

270. *Hon. Mr. Cadman*.] How do you give that opinion not being a lawyer?