

254. *The Chairman.*] You, as one of the early residents on the Thames Goldfields, have a good deal of general knowledge of mines in that district?—Yes.

255. Do you think that every buyer or seller of this land took into account the mineral interests on the eastern watershed?—The lands on the western watershed were within the areas ceded to the Crown for mining. In the early days, Mr. Robert Graham bought the freehold of Grahamstown.

256. I mean the lands we are now discussing. When sold by the Maori owners, were the mineral interests taken into account in this sale, or was it not simply timber interests?—I think the first thing the purchasers went for was timber. The prospects of gold on the eastern side of the range were not thought much of. That was in the very early days, and some of those titles go back to those early days. But having bought them the purchasers are entitled to all consideration.

257. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You do not agree with resuming land for mining purposes? Are you aware that in Victoria and New South Wales they have Acts permitting mining on private lands?—Yes, I have seen those Acts. It was imperative on those colonies to pass such Acts because they had parted with very large areas in the early days. The Mining on Private Lands Acts passed by these colonies say nothing about resuming the lands. These Acts provide that if a man is mining the land they shall not operate at all. Under the Mining on Private Properties Act of New South Wales this Company's (Kauri Freehold Company) land would be quite safe.

Mr. R. R. HUNT in attendance, and sworn.

258. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Richard Robert Hunt.

259. And your profession?—I am general manager of the New Zealand Exploitation Company (Limited).

*The Chairman:* The Committee will hear your evidence with reference to this Bill, and will ask you to be as brief as possible, so as to save repetition of evidence already given.

*Mr. Hunt:* I may say that, although anxious to get away by steamer, I do not mind remaining till Tuesday if the Committee think it desirable. [The Chairman replied it was not considered necessary to detain him.] One word of statement with reference to the Bill. The objection that I have to the Bill is simply this: that, with regard to freeholds, if you are to resume lands which hitherto people have considered to be held by an indefeasible title it will certainly upset the relations between capitalists and the colony. In London they are very sensitive about titles, and the least thing causes a "slump." You all know, gentlemen, that the tide is flowing this way. New Zealand is the fashion just now, and certainly the fashion should be taken advantage of. Those who have been as long in the colony as Mr. Cadman has must know how the Thames has languished for years and years, and yet just as the chance comes to get in capital you disturb its titles. Capital will withdraw to a certainty. With regard to titles, my company is interested in titles acquired by option from the Kauri Timber Company, and is also interested in the Kauri Freehold Gold Estates Company. Personally, I have also a little bit of freehold land, and I should be sorry to see that land resumed—either the company's or my own. My company feel it is better to get this question settled in some way by compromise rather than have any ripping-up of the question year after year. That compromise, I believe, should be in the direction of a royalty, recognising that the Crown has some right to the minerals—charging us a percentage of 1 or 2 per cent., and then giving us a title there is no getting behind. Concerning certain leases at the Thames, my company have also an option over these leaseholds, such as it is, and we are prepared to spend very large sums of money on them. We have men out now on the freeholds prospecting, giving them money enough for food—giving them £250 if they make a find, and paid-up shares besides that. We hold freeholds from the Kauri Timber Company under option, and also an option over leaseholds. I need only say, with regard to both freeholds and leaseholds, if some kind of compromise can be made in the direction of a royalty, and allowing some portion of the block to go to the company, the balance to be thrown open on leasehold, my company have instructed me to compromise the matter in every way, so as to get to work while the sun shines. We can get money easily now in London, and six months hence you may not get a farthing. I was five years in London when you had only to mention New Zealand and you were shown out, and told "We want security first."

THURSDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 1896.

Mr. J. H. POTTS, Miner, sworn and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are a miner?—Yes; and president of the Thames Miners' Union.

2. Will you now shortly, in your own way, state the evidence you wish to bring before this Committee; afterwards, if the Committee should ask you any questions, you will be good enough to answer them?—I have been sent here by the Thames Miners' Union to give evidence on their behalf with reference to the proposed Bill now before Parliament. For a considerable time the greatest dissatisfaction has existed among the mining community on the Peninsula with reference to the manner in which lands have been locked up, preventing the miners from taking up areas of ground to which they can get a title. I refer to the lands known as Tairua particularly, also to Whangapoua Block. There have been representations made from all parts of the Peninsula by the Miners' Union and others drawing attention to this state of affairs, and, at a meeting held for that purpose, it was decided that I should come down and give evidence before this Committee with reference to these blocks so far as I know them. With reference to Tairua, I am aware that several findings of some importance have been made on leasehold properties on the Kauri Timber Company's ground. These finds have been made by prospectors. In some cases the money has been lodged in Court for the licenses, but not being Crown lands, or, as far as I know, no Proclamation having been made over the ground, they can receive no title.