

121. Saying that it would injure capital?—I do not think it was to that effect. Mr. McGowan has the letter, and he can say what is expressed in it.

122. Did you ever write to Mr. Seymour George?—Yes.

123. What did you tell him?—I could not tell you what I did say to him. I told him in a letter that I did not agree with the Bill, so far as I had seen or read it. The principal objection I had to the Bill was in reference to the mine-manager's certificate.

123A. Did you not express the opinion that it would injure capital?—Not that I am aware of.

Mr. Fraser: I will refresh your memory. I have a copy of the letter; I will read an extract from it:—

“Thames, 28th July, 1896.

“I had a conversation with Mr. Eddowes to-day. He told me he had been speaking to you about the amendment to the Mining Act. I have also been spoken to by Mr. George Clarke, of the Moanataiari Company. I have the honour to inform you that I have already communicated with our member, Mr. James McGowan, re this amendment, which I do not believe in, as it is going to kill capital.

“Yours &c.,

“WILLIAM H. POTTS.

“S. T. George, Esq.”

Witness: What is the date of that?

Mr. Fraser: 28th July. About a month ago.

124. Mr. O'Regan.] Do the Thames miners, as a body, agree with the resumption clauses contained in this Bill?—Yes, these are my instructions.

125. Now, with regard to the objections?—My instructions were to support the Bill in its entirety, with the exception of one clause.

126. You are aware that adverse comments on the Bill have already appeared in the Auckland Press?—Yes.

127. What is the opinion of the miners as to these comments?—They do not think they are fair; they do not believe in them.

128. With regard to the effect of this Bill on the introduction of capital, do the miners think it will have the effect of checking the inflow of capital to Auckland District?—Certainly not.

129. What would the miners think if it had the effect of preventing the inflow of capital?—They would consider that a disadvantage.

130. Then, the opinion of the body you represent amounts to this: that the investment of foreign capital may be good or bad, according to the manner of investment. If it is used for developing the resources of the district it is good; but if used for the purposes of a monopoly it is not desirable?—That is so.

131. With regard to Press opinions about this Bill, do the miners think that the fear alleged to be entertained at Home is due to the provisions of the Bill, or to misrepresentations of its provisions?—To misrepresentations respecting the Bill in the Press of the colony, and the antagonism shown to it.

132. You are aware that mining operations are proceeding on Crown lands elsewhere in the colony?—Yes, in some cases.

133. Can you give us any reason why there should be a preference for the freehold as against the Crown title?—I cannot say.

134. Is it because under freehold tenure there are less stringent labour conditions?—On Crown lands the conditions are less stringent. I suppose on freehold they have less to comply with.

135. Hon. Mr. Cadman.] You say you represent the Miners' Union of the Thames?—Yes.

136. How many branches of the union are there on the Peninsula?—There are six—Waihi, Waitekauri, Karangahake, Thames, Coromandel, Kuaotunu.

137. They are spread fairly well through the Peninsula?—Yes.

138. Do you think the community outside the Miners' Union—the people living on goldfields—are of the same opinion as the miners?—Yes; we have correspondence from them. When I was there the matter was talked over, and there was but one opinion.

139. Then, taking the whole of the country—Ohinemuri, Coromandel, and the Thames—the people are fairly in favour of this Bill?—Undoubtedly so.

140. Do you think the statement made to the Committee that they were opposed to the Bill is incorrect?—I should think so.

141. Some members of the Committee asked you about prospectors knowing where there was gold, and wasting their time because they could not get a title. Will you tell the Committee whether this is open land or is it dense bush?—It is dense bush.

142. Are you aware that blocks have been surveyed so that people could tell where they were?—I do not know that there are any blocks surveyed to tell people where to go.

143. Do you think it is possible to tell in what blocks they are?—I am sure I could not know.

144. You object to the regulations of the Kauri Gold-mining Company in respect of their being able to peg off 30 chains all round you?—I object not to that only, I object to the whole of them.

145. What is the area prospectors can take up?—100, 50, or 30 acres.

146. I presume, wherever his find was, he would put down his peg in the centre?—Not less than 80 chains from any old find. There is another condition—that the marking-off should be recently proclaimed. It should be 30 chains in greatest length by two-thirds of the length. That is all he could take up, unless he was 80 chains away from the old find.

147. Mr. O'Regan.] In reference to the rent charged by the company, do you object to that?—I would not object to that so much as to the terms and conditions.

148. The conditions on Crown land are not so stringent?—No.

149. And in the one case the money goes to the public revenue, while in the other it goes to a private company?—Yes.

150. Mr. Duncan.] From the knowledge you have of floating companies, do you think there