

would be any difficulty in getting capital to be expended on Crown lands?—Home capital will go on to Crown lands as quickly as on to any other.

151. How about the title?—I consider the title on Crown lands given by the Crown is as good as any title in the colony.

152. *The Chairman.*] You have seen the clause relating to the mine-manager's certificate?—Yes.

153. Will you say what is the feeling of miners generally in your part of the colony with reference to the compulsory clause in the Act which compels a mine-manager to hold a certificate?—You have had a resolution wired through as passed by a meeting held to consider that. We are unanimous in thinking that that clause ought to be wiped out. That simply prevents me or any man having charge of a mine unless we hold a first-class certificate. That is a hardship. This is the only colony where a compulsory certificate is required. In former times, when miners were free to work without any certificate, the work was as well done as it is now; we had no certificate at all then. When these certificates come a good many people are debarred from getting their living as managers. In some cases, no doubt, that may happen from neglect; but I think I am correct in stating that the feeling now is that it will be for the benefit of the employer as well as for the men if this clause is struck out, for I know, myself, that it will cause hardship. I am positive in making this statement. I was offered a billet myself, but I had to take a back seat. There are others in the same position. With all respect to the School of Mines—and I hope the Government will continue to encourage the schools—there are men at the present time who are perfectly capable of taking charge of any mine who have no certificate. By all means let the Schools of Mines be encouraged. By-and-by better men with greater knowledge than we have will grow up. But there are men who have had charge of some of the principal mines in the colonies—thoroughly practical and capable men: these men will be debarred from getting their living unless they have this paper. My instructions from those whom I represent are to induce you, if possible, to take a favourable view of this matter, and allow those who have been proved to be capable men in the past, and who are capable still of taking charge of a mine without this paper, to get their living. Let us employ capable men whether they have this paper or not.

154. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Suppose candidates were examined, so many on the practical part of the business and so many on the theoretical knowledge required?—That would be all right if you took the men underground to see whether they really knew their work. In former days we left nothing to chance, but it is possible to find any number of men who will go down into a mine and have to depend on the man working for him. It is necessary for the learner to go underground. I say, all honour to the School of Mines, because of the knowledge they give to those who are under them. But the older men who are perfectly capable yet of taking charge of a mine are valuable to show what goes on underground. I tried hard to get through the School of Mines, but I found it too big a contract for me. I think you should abolish this clause, but keep the School of Mines going all the same. You cannot teach in three years in the school what is necessary. I have been forty years at it, and I do not know it yet.

155. Can you suggest any means of examining men who have been in charge of a mine without a certificate; how will you know they are capable other than by certificate?

*The Chairman:* That has been suggested by the Inspector.

156. *Mr. Fraser.*] Could he not examine a man so as to test his efficiency?—It could be done if this penal clause were abolished.

157. If you abolished the penal clause men would be in charge of mines who ought not to be in that position. There ought to be some test. Could it not be ascertained by the Inspector in his annual round?—We have sent a petition to the House asking for this clause to be struck out. The directors of companies are not going to employ any other than capable men, whether they have paper or not. There are lots of good men who have no paper.

158. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] What part of the examination do you object to?—It would not be necessary for a mine-manager to be an assayer; a surveyor he must be to some extent, but I do not think that, where a man is in charge of a mine, surveying is required. We have surveyors all over the colony engaged almost wholly on other work. I do not think surveying necessary in a mine-manager, although it is a very useful thing to be able to do it.

HERBERT GORDON sworn and examined.

159. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a miner.

160. You come before the Committee to give evidence with reference to the proposed Mining Act?—Yes.

161. Will you state to the Committee in your own words, as briefly as possible, what you wish to put before the Committee?—I have had considerable difficulty for many years with the Kauri Timber Company trying to get a title. I spent two years in prospecting, but I could not get a title. The Government could not acquire a title. I wish the Committee to try and do something towards opening this land. Many other prospectors are in the same fix.

162. *Mr. Carnaross.*] Have you read this Bill?—No, I have not.

163. *Mr. W. Kelly.*] You come from Tairua?—Yes.

164. The land you want to open is the Kauri Timber Company's land?—Yes.

165. Is that bush-land?—It is fern-land; there has been bush cut off it.

166. What extent of bush has been cut off?—700 or 800 acres.

167. Do you know what quantity of land there is in Tairua?—I have not the slightest idea. Pretty well all the bush has been cut off.

168. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Have you seen the conditions which the Kauri Company require to be observed for prospecting on their land?—I have not seen them, but I have heard what they are.

169. Have you not read them?—No; I have not read them.