

4. *Mr. Colvin.*] How many men are employed in these mines with the companies?—I am secretary of the Miners' Union there, and we have a membership of 650.

5. And would most of these men be affected by this clause?—Yes, the majority of them.

6. *Mr. Allen.*] The only thing I was not clear about was the miner's right?—He has a vote provided he resides continuously in the riding in which his right is taken out for, and he has to be a holder of a miner's right on the 31st March previous to the election.

7. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood Mr. Betts to say that his Council demurred to the payment to Chairmen?—They suggest that the matter should be left to the Council itself, and the maximum amount payable to a Chairman should not exceed £400, as it is in the Bill. The Counties Conference cut it down to £100, which my Council considers is altogether inadequate.

8. *Mr. Stevens.*] What would you suggest to take their place in localities where at present local Boards exist whose administration of their local affairs would be wiped out by this Bill?—I might point out that in our district we have no other local bodies. The Council controls the whole county. There is considerable close settlement in the county. In and around the Town of Reefton I dare say there is a population of about 2,500; and the Town of Reefton is controlled by the Council.

9. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] I understand the greatest objection is the £10 rental qualification: can you give any reason why the limit should be reduced in the county instead of boroughs?—Well, I can give a reason. My reason is that in the borough the rents payable by tenants exceed the rents payable by tenants in various parts of counties. The rents in the boroughs are generally higher than they are in the country districts. For instance, the rents charged within the Town of Reefton far exceed the rents charged in outlying districts of the county.

10. Then, what would you do in that case?—I think that in many cases the people living outside the town limits in other ridings are more entitled sometimes to the franchise than those paying higher rents in the town. I would like to point out again that the miner's right qualification is not a safe qualification at all. A man might lose his vote altogether if he votes on a miner's right, simply because they might work in one mine for six months and then remove to another mine in another riding, and the result would be that he would be disqualified because he had removed his residence.

*Mr. Guinness:* I understand that you object to compelling a miner to take out a miner's right for the purpose of getting a vote where a miner's right is not required for a miner working for wages. I understand you to say that those miners who are paying 1s. 6d. per week rental are not ratepayers within the meaning of the Counties Bill, and do not come under the qualification, and are therefore deprived of the franchise.

11. *Mr. Flatman.*] I understood Mr. Betts to say that Reefton would suffer under the conditions of this Bill through not being a municipality: could they not prevent it by merging it into a borough?—The people in our district do not wish to have any more local bodies at all.

12. *Mr. Buddo.*] The population of Inangahua are, I take it, mostly single men, moving from place to place in search of employment?—A large number.

13. *Mr. Hogg.*] Have you any sawmills in your district?—Yes; we have three sawmills.

14. Do you know how the men are situated who work at these mills?—They are practically in the same position as miners working for wages.

15. Then, they would be disfranchised under this Act?—Yes.

16. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] In respect to miners' huts: supposing these huts to be on Crown lands, do you not rate them in that case?—We do rate them in a case of that kind under the Mining Act, as being in illegal occupation of Crown lands. I might say that the mining-property rate of our county is far higher than the general-property rate. Our mining-property rate equals £3,000, and the general-property rate equals £1,900.

17. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] What was the amount of rates you collected before you started the unimproved value?—I cannot tell you from memory. The rates would be less. I might point out that the unimproved value of property has gone up within the last few years.

18. Are the residents of Inangahua as satisfied under the unimproved value as they were under the old rating Act?—Yes. The total revenue of our County Council ending 31st March last was £8,520, which included Government grants of £2,968. We levied a rate of 3d. in the pound on unimproved value mining property, and a rate of 3½d. in the pound on general property.

THURSDAY, 22ND AUGUST, 1901.

FREDERICK HORRELL, Chairman of the Mandeville Road Board, examined. (No. 2.)

*Witness:* With regard to the Counties Bill, we, as representing the Road Boards in the Ashley County, consider that it would not be at all suitable. We do not wish to see this Bill passed, for reasons which I will point out to you. In the first place, the Road Board which I have the honour to represent—the Mandeville Road Board—the district has a population of 2,488. We have 428 ratepayers, and 829 rateable properties. Our capital value is about £623,290. In our road district we have about a hundred and thirty miles of formed roads, which are in a capital state of repair at the present time. Besides these hundred and thirty miles of roads, there are certain boundary roads which we have to contribute towards. We are bounded by the Boroughs of Rangiora and Kaiapoi, and I might say that our rates for last year (on the basis of a halfpenny rate) were £234. Our total income amounted to about £2,000, while our office expenditure to administer this is under £200. At any rate, we pay a very efficient man, who acts as surveyor, clerk, and collector, the sum of £140 per annum, and there are other expenses connected with the management which would not exceed the £200. I might say the £140 is paid to the clerk in addition to a free house. There are also other buildings belonging to the Road Board. Our policy