

The Chairman: In your opening, Mr. Mueller, you said you were going to prove that a large area of Native land was affected. You have not given us any statistics in regard to that.

Mr. Mueller: I did not go into figures as regards these last two Native witnesses. The plan shows a considerable area of Native land.

Mr. Hanna: I appear on behalf of the Karangahake Miners' Union. I will just make a very few opening remarks, and will then call certain witnesses. The number of witnesses is only three, and I propose, with your permission, to call one witness, who is the chairman of the Karangahake Miners' Union, and his evidence will be supported *in toto* by the other two witnesses. The reasons why the Karangahake Miners' Union desire to appear before this Commission and give evidence are summed up in two memoranda which have been placed before me. The first one is, "As a Miners' Union we respectfully submit that the sludge-channel should be kept open, because there is no other way to get rid of the tailings from Karangahake." The second one is, "That, supposing the closing of the sludge-channel was brought about, it would throw hundreds of men out of work in Karangahake alone, and with their wives and families dependent upon them that would be most disastrous, and many would be rendered destitute." In commenting on the evidence which I will adduce, I am informed that this union represents all the miners in Karangahake. The membership is over five hundred. The union is a branch of the Thames Miners' Union. Evidence has already been brought before the Commission to show that the population of the Waihi, Karangahake, and adjacent districts is about ten thousand. I am advised that fully five thousand of that number, if not more, are actively engaged in mining operations in this district.

The Chairman: What area of land is included in that population of ten thousand? Are we to have census statistics?

Mr. Hanna: I am only following the evidence already laid before you. I intend to give some evidence of these facts. I am only taking it roughly that ten thousand is the total population to effect the necessary alterations, and during that period the whole of these miners, with their wives and families, are actively engaged in mining-work. Their toil is a very arduous one, and if their work should cease and they should be thrown out of employment, they would have extreme difficulty in getting fresh or similar employment or in starting employment of a different character. These miners, after a very severe struggle, have managed to save a little money and have secured small cottages for themselves and their wives and children, and they submit they are just as much entitled to consideration as the farmers of the district. Shortly put, our contention is this: that the revocation of the Proclamation means this: There are a great many miners who prospect and dig and work on their own, and their *débris* is put into the river in the ordinary way. That body of men would be prevented from carrying on their ordinary work. Mr. Moresby informs me that according to the Year-book for 1909 the population of the Waihi district is 5,594, and of the Ohinemuri district 5,895, making a total of 11,489. I have referred to the small prospectors and single men who go working about the district. Sometimes there are men banded together in small bodies and in mining partnerships to work these mines, and these people would be debarred from carrying on their operations. And particularly there are tributers. A large number of men take tributes in these mines, and undertake to get out the ore at a certain price. They are charged for the treatment of that ore, and, of course, the charge for the treatment depends upon the facilities for the disposal of the tailings. If these facilities are taken away, then, of course, the cost of treatment becomes materially greater, to their detriment. Lastly, if it should be found necessary to revoke this Proclamation, it will mean a complete alteration of the mining machinery and plant which is at present utilized in treating the ore; and I am advised the result of that would be that it would probably take from one to two years to effect the necessary alterations, and during that period the whole of the miners, with their wives and families dependent upon them, would be absolutely without means of support unless they took up some other work. I do not think I need say any further. I propose to call the president, secretary, and treasurer of the union. I could have called many of the miners, of course, but I did not think it necessary. I think these are ample to give you all the information you require.

JOHN MCGREGOR examined.* (No. 37.)

1. *Mr. Hanna.*] You are chairman of the Karangahake Miners' Union?—Yes.
2. What is the membership of your union?—The Karangahake Branch has a membership of a little over four hundred.
3. Do you know what amount of money was collected there last year as the total fund?—About £547.
4. Do you know what was distributed in accident and sick pay?—Close on £300.
5. So your union is active, and it looks after the members properly?—Yes.
6. What do you do yourself?—I am a miner.
7. What form of work do you do?—I am a tributer in the Talisman.
8. You contend that the Proclamation declaring the river a sludge-channel should not be revoked?—That is so.
9. Was this a unanimous resolution of the union?—We got up a petition in the place, which was signed by over five hundred.
10. Have you got that petition?—I have a copy of it. It really came from the Waihi Borough, but we made a few slight alterations in it. It is as follows: "The Hon. the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.—The petition of the undersigned inhabitants of the Borough of Waihi and the surrounding districts humbly sheweth: 1. That the petitioners are vitally interested in the gold-mining industry carried on by the various companies in Waihi and Karangahake, their livelihood being entirely dependent thereon.