

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER, 1912.

The Chairman: I understand, Mr. Witheford, you have authority to appear on behalf of the petitioner?

Mr. Witheford: Yes, I represent the petitioner.

The clerk at this stage read the petition, which was put in as an exhibit.

JOSEPH SMYTHE examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Smythe, we will not formally swear you, but all evidence given here is acknowledged as sworn evidence?—Yes.

2. What is your name and occupation?—Joseph Smythe, agent.

3. Where do you reside?—Christchurch. Here is a plan of the property known as the Parapara leases. The Washbourn area is 56 acres and the Cadman 920 acres. In front of the lease is this big tidal basin of nearly 600 acres. At high tide there is 10 ft. or 12 ft. of water at the mouth of the inlet. The depth of the inlet itself—it is now filled up with tailings—but 40 ft. could be got by dredging. Possibly you could get deep water right up here. [Witness described the position of the lease.] The Parapara and the mud-flat are adjacent. A piece of the lease is in the Washbourn Block. The face of the iron is barely a mile and a quarter from the sea. The Onakaka River is a boundary between the two leases. Here is the tram-line down to the sea to a small wharf about 300 ft. long. On the western side of the lease is a large limestone-deposit, suitable for smelting purposes. Coal-mines are about six miles away. Coal can be got from the Collingwood district mines or from Westport or Greymouth.

4. *Mr. Sidey.*] What is this green colour on the plan?—This is a range of hills here—the same there. The workings are 30 ft. above sea-level, and the face rises abruptly to 390 ft. above water-level, and at the extreme end of our lease the ore is 1,250 ft. above sea-level. The iron is all round, and extending away to the south over the Onakaka Hills. You see it away on the hills towards Parapara Peak, nearly 4,000 ft. up. We have stripped the overburden from the ore on a very large area, and put in several tunnels—one is 30 ft. above the water-level, and there is 200 ft. below the level to the top. The amount of iron-ore we have discovered is enormous. We have done about 3,000 ft. of tunnelling at the present time. We have stripped the Washbourn area from the top. *Re* places where the outcrops of ore were showing, there is a big hill here and there several chains away. We had to strip all, and have proven the iron is one continuous mass. In Dr. Bell's report he shows how the iron is outcropping in various places. We have done a considerable amount of work there, and according to Mr. G. H. Allan, our manager, he reckons a conservative estimate would be about 250,000,000 tons exposed at the present time. The Onakaka lease is extending south; that must be an immense deposit, and we have no reason to suppose it is less than the Parapara. It may be a little more difficult of access, but the two are one formation of iron and of about the same quality.

5. *Mr. Lee.*] Where are you speaking of now?—Onakaka. The iron-deposit extends nearly six miles that way. There is very little flat land here in the Parapara basin. [Witness described the position to the Committee.] This is a range of low hills 200 ft. or 300 ft. high leading to a pakihi terrace of several thousand acres, Government land, suitable for a township, extending to there. This [pointing to map] is a Maori lease—this flat country. This high country is all limestone. When you get on to the top I should think there are 10,000 or 15,000 acres of land there between this high hill and down to the Aorere River. There is not a solitary house on any of it until you get down to the main road. This shows what an immense Government township it would be possible to have there—it is quite close.

6. *The Chairman.*] Have you anything else, Mr. Smythe?—Here is a report from our manager. [Report handed in.] We had some electric smelting done [sample put in to the Committee]. Here is also a report by Mr. Harley E. Hooper on the property of the Parapara Iron Company (Limited).

7. Subject to this information, Mr. Smythe, that is your evidence?—Yes.

8. *Mr. G. M. Thomson.*] I did not catch the name of the coal-deposit?—Mount Burnett.

9. How much coal is available at Collingwood and Mount Burnett?—We have Dr. Parke's report on it; it is not a very large deposit; its seams are not very big. There is one important element about the coal in Collingwood just now, and that is that they are about to sink a bore on the foreshore in Puponga for coal. There is every indication that the coal is extending under the sea there. The coal is outcropping all round the hills right round to Nelson. There is abundance of coal.

10. We will have to get the estimate of that from Dr. Parke's report?—Yes.

11. In regard to the limestone: is that practically unlimited?—Yes.

12. Have you any analysis?—Yes, the Government analysis; it is in Bulletin No. 3 of the Parapara Subdivision.