

Mr. Burns.
22nd June, 1882

251. Your Companies are prepared to give a guarantee to pay a royalty upon 300,000 tons, which at 6d per ton would amount to £7,500 per annum?—Yes.

252. So that the Government would be in possession of £7,500 as a certainty, and the railway haulage rates as well, there being a probability that they would receive a royalty, and haulage rates on 200,000 tons more.

253. *Mr. Fish.*] You guarantee an output of 300,000 tons, which would yield to the Government a sum of £45,000, including the haulage?—Yes, at present railway rates.

254. But you have no hesitation in expressing your strong conviction that your output would be 500,000 tons instead of 300,000 tons, which would yield to the Government £75,000 instead of £45,000 per annum?—Yes; provided we have the necessary depth of water on the bar.

255. *Mr. Fish.*] What is the capital of your Company?—£400,000.

256. *Mr. Macandrew.*] From your knowledge of Westport Harbour, do you think you could say the expenditure of £50,000 would greatly improve the harbour in the way of increasing the depth?—Yes, I believe it would give us the water we want. At present we have 16 feet on the bar, but we cannot depend upon that. I may say that the wall already erected so far has done good service. Our Company has perfect faith in the concern, and will go as far as our articles of association will allow us.

THURSDAY, 6TH JULY, 1882. (Mr. MUNRO in the Chair.)

Dr. HECTOR, examined.

Dr. Hector.
6th July, 1882.

257. *The Chairman.*] The Committee, Dr. Hector, wish to get information from you as to the extent of the Buller Coal Field?—It has been estimated from the surveys that there are 140,000,000 tons.

258. *Mr. Macandrew.*] We understand that there has been additional information from subsequent surveys, which alters that estimate?—I understand it is reported that the enormously thick seam on one part of the plateau, which was supposed to be 53 feet thick, has proved in one place to be considerably less. Still, the margin that was allowed in making the estimate of 140,000,000 tons would quite cover that, and there would be no deduction required from this estimate. That estimate is of the coal on the Mount Rochfort Plateau, extending from Ngakawau River to the Buller River over Cascade Creek, and between the Sea Coast and Mount William Bay. This is the amount of coal proved to be there, from actual surveys; it is no mere estimate from isolated observations. In arriving at that result, all blocks of barren ground in the area were left out. The amount was arrived at from measuring observed sections of the seams, and several hundreds of these sections were made in order to get the information in such a form as to be a reliable basis for future expenditure.

259. *The Chairman.*] Is there not an extension of the coal field on the south bank of the Buller?—Yes; recent surveys tend to show that the coal field at Reefton will extend over the whole of the upper part of the Inangahua Valley. The seams rise on the hills in the Taparoa Range in the direction of the Blackwater and the Ohika Creek. Although we had expected that the coal extended in that direction, it had never been sufficiently surveyed to put it on the maps, so that now we shall have to show on the maps a largely-extended area of the coal formation in this district, but as this has not yet been done, I cannot put a map showing it before the Committee.

260. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Your estimate of 140,000,000 tons is based upon actual surveys?—Yes.

261. But it is quite possible the amount may be much beyond that?—That estimate is for only a certain portion of the field. The coal area is much more extensive than that, the coal area extends from the Raramea to Greymouth, and it probably goes inland to the source of the Inangahua.

262. Do you know what is the total area of the Buller Coal Field. I see here in a document it is stated to be 129,000 acres?—The Buller Coal Field, if the term is to be applied, will extend to all this new area I have just spoken of.

263. What, I should like to know, is the total area of coal-bearing ground to which the Harbour of Westport will be the outlet?—That would depend altogether upon what might be done to provide land communication with the Grey River. If you take the natural outlet, then the Inangahua is a tributary of the Buller, but at the present time the communication with that district is principally down the valley of the Grey.

264. Well, can you say the total area for which Westport will be the probable outlet?—I think for any connection with the Upper Buller country it will be necessary to make connection through the Buller Gorge. If that is done, then Westport would be the best outlet for the whole of this upper country.

265. What would then be the total area?—The mine surveys considerably more than double the area of the coal formation, but I have not yet sufficient information to say what is the actual amount of coal in this extended area.

266. What is its proportion to what has been surveyed?—I think less than half, or perhaps only about one-third of the coal formation for which Westport might be the outlet has been surveyed—that is, not including the Grey field at all.

267. The area surveyed is estimated to contain 140,000,000 tons?—Yes; that includes about one third of the coal formation, the outlet of which would be the Buller. I may say that up to the present time the estimates have not been found erroneous in any way.

268. *The Chairman.*] The Blackwater is a tributary of the Buller?—Yes; so is the Inangahua. At the present time of course there is abundance of coal within easy reach of Westport.

269. You know the overflow at Snag Falls?—Yes.

270. What is your opinion of the cause of the accumulation there?—Originally there was a natural pier-head down at the mouth, composed of snags brought down and shingle thrown up by the sea, both being mixed and hardened by the action of the sea. On that the original township was built. The fairway of the tide is now where actually the town first stood. The miners found it easier to dig out the wood for firewood than fetch it from the bush; and channels were cut in this natural pier-head to get several vessels that went ashore into the river. The result was, that this natural pier-head was cleared away