

ground that would pay if we had the water; but we are assuming that if we had a supply of water some new ground would be opened up. Of course you will see at once that the lower the price of water the better chance we would have of making the poorer ground pay. There is no doubt that the claims working since 1888 are what would be termed rich claims. I do not say the whole of the field would turn out so well as those. But 10d. per head is what they are paying at present for water, and that is a high price.

26. *Right Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] You know the Kumara Goldfield?—Very well indeed.

27. Do you think there is as much ground at Back Creek and Seddon Terrace as there is in the Kumara Goldfield?—I should think so if there was a water-supply. If it had not been for the Waimea-Kumara Water-race such results would not have been obtained there. I think £2,000,000 of gold was won from the Kumara Field.

28. Was the ground driven out at the Kumara at first?—Yes, and afterwards sluiced.

29. Is the Rimu and Back Creek Goldfield driven out the same as at Kumara?—Yes, as I have stated the men do nothing sometimes for twelve or fourteen weeks. I do know that men have driven out small quantities of the ground to keep things going.

30. Now, in sinking shafts at the Rimu Flat to get down to the ground they drove out, did they find gold scattered right through the wash?—Yes.

31. Is it from that fact that it is estimated that with a fair supply of water the ground would pay for sluicing?—Exactly so. That is what I term the lower-grade ground where it would pay to work if the price of the water was reasonable.

32. Could you give any estimate of the area of the ground driven through after the shafts were sunk?—No, I think Mr. Beare, who is connected with the Rimu Miners' Water-race Company, would be able to answer that question better than I could.

33. I mean the number of acres. Kumara was estimated at 300 or 400 acres. You have just now said that Rimu was as extensive as Kumara?—I should think certainly there were more than 400 acres of auriferous country. There is no doubt that it is a very extensive field if the water was there.

34. Kumara was discovered—when?—In 1875.

35. Have you any idea how long it was before the Government water-race was made from Waimea and Kapitea?—It was a considerable time.

36. Would you say, at all events, that the water has been at the Kumara for about twenty years?—Yes, about that.

37. And the claims are still working there and support a large population?—Yes, many of them, and they are carrying a considerable population there now, although they have been working since 1875.

38. You almost make one's mouth water when you tell us that men are earning as much as £50 a week?—There is a claim known as Deehan's, and another as Boyd's, while Clifton and party and others are doing very well. Of course I qualify what I state by saying that they can only do well when they have a good water-supply.

39. If they had a constant water-supply, that would give them some permanency?—Yes.

40. Why, with such possibilities as that, do not these people raise the necessary money to bring the water on the field?—I fail to see why, having these few good claims, it would enable the miners who signed the petition to raise so large a sum as £50,000 or £60,000.

41. Are those claims you allude to fronting on the terrace?—Yes, they are. I do not believe that the several miles of country would all prove so rich as the claims I have mentioned.

42. If they were to go further in working, would they not need to have longer tail-races?—Yes.

43. Well, you described the system adopted at Kumara—have they brought in long tail-races there?—Yes.

44. And those are very expensive?—Very expensive, indeed, especially for ground like that, which is very rough; and very often in bringing in tail-races dynamite and timber are necessary, and run into a lot of money, as some of us know to our cost.

45. The proposal, then, is that there should be a small subsidy given to the company to encourage them to run the risk of constructing the race?—I am afraid a *small* subsidy would not allow the work to be undertaken. I have already quoted from a letter to this effect received from Mr. Spencer, the engineer. People think that if £15,000 were placed on the estimates advantage would be taken of it; but I am afraid it would very likely prove to be a repetition of the Ross Flat subsidy, which has been available for four years, and has never been taken advantage of.

46. Do you think people would back their opinion by putting money into the scheme?—Yes, I do.

47. That is, if the company were trying to raise capital for the construction of the present Humphrey's Gully race at Milltown, people would help them locally?—Yes, I think they would subscribe part of the capital if the Government would help them with a subsidy. I believe the feeling is so strong on the West Coast in this matter that some assistance would be forthcoming, but nothing like sufficient to enable the work to be undertaken as a local concern. Meetings have been held, and the feeling is very strong.

48. Have there been any trial surveys, or any surveys at all, between Milltown and Back Creek?—No, that is a serious aspect of the present position. If the Government would undertake that work—I do not know what it would cost, but it would run into a substantial sum—the probability is that that would be the first thing to do in order to make sure of our height. The figures given of the height of the water are not sufficient to act on without a survey.

49. Are you aware that the Government have a report in reference to bringing in water on this field from the Hokitika River?—I was not aware of it—a recent report?

50. Yes; some four years ago. The cost of the siphon was put down at £40,000 without the