

hood generally. There were plenty of food-supplies obtainable from the river—eels and white-bait, and so forth. The water was clear and good for human consumption and bathing purposes, and so on, and large steamers used to come up the river to Ohinemuri, right up to the township at Paeroa itself. The “Luna” was a large steamer, and she has been up to Ohinemuri. I think the year was 1872 when the “Luna” came up there, because that was the year in which my grandfather died, and I know it was then that Sir Donald McLean came up. The steamer came up as far as Te Kopu. That is a wide place in the Ohinemuri River, where the steamer turned round and went back. Now, that place where that big steamer turned round is all filled up with the sand, and even a canoe cannot cross. Formerly many large steamers have been up as far as Paeroa, as I say, but since the mining first started the steamers have gradually been put back, and put back, and put back. Then there was a large wharf called the Junction, but the whole wharf now is sealed up with this sand. The whole of the Waihou River is filled up with this refuse from the gold-mines, and the steamers are pushed away still further down stream. The Government are very persistent—my friend the Minister of Mines himself is persistent—in endeavouring to obtain our sanction to the sale of Moehau. We think it would suit us very much better if the Minister purchased from us these lands on which we are living at Ohinemuri, where they have been spoiled; but to sell Moehau we will not agree, because if the mines continue, and nothing is done to fix up the trouble in connection with this drift and deposit, well, then, we may just as well die, because there is no object in trying to live there any longer. I have therefore come here for the purpose of praying for redress to this House, which we have been led to believe does attempt to remedy and rectify grievances that merit rectification. Whether it will do so or not remains to be seen. With regard to Moehau, I might add that I have here a report that has recently been sent down by Mr. James Mackay from that district, to the effect that it would be advisable that Moehau should not be sold. This is the portion of the report to which I desire to refer the Committee: “In the Coromandel portion of the district the County Council have urged the purchase of large areas which principally belong to the Ngatitamatera Tribe, the majority of whom reside in the neighbourhood of Ohinemuri. Taking into consideration the fact that the lands occupied and cultivated by these people at Ohinemuri will shortly be rendered useless by the floods now frequently occurring through the silting-up of the Ohinemuri River, caused by the deposit of tailings and mining *débris* therein, I therefore recommend that this question be left in abeyance for the present. However, I beg to suggest that the lands owned by the Ngatiwhanaunga Tribe, in the Cape Colville Block, should be acquired, and a portion of those of the Ngatimarua and Tawera Tribes also.”

122. *Hon. Mr. McGowan*.] What report is that?—A report from Mr. James Mackay, Native Land Purchase Officer, to the Under-Secretary for Lands, dated Paeroa, 15th May, 1907. When the river was proclaimed a sludge-channel by the Government—I think the year was 1895 or 1896—being a Maori I am not perfectly certain of my dates, but I think it was somewhere about then—we never received any notification that it was the intention to destroy the Ohinemuri River. We had seen the mills and batteries at the Thames, and they did not shoot their refuse into the rivers. It was all piled up in a heap outside the mill. We never expected this until it had happened, and then we found we had been injured as I have described. I ask my friends the Chairman and members of the Committee to give serious consideration to this really serious injury. This Ohinemuri River formerly was a river of very great depth. I speak from experience, having been born there and having grown up there from childhood to manhood, and having been there all my life; and now, in this river, in places where it was 30 ft. or more deep before, we could stand up with our heads out. It will be apparent to all the members of the Committee that, when the river shoals up like that from the bottom, two days’ rain will flood the whole country. As I say, we have been seriously injured. We did not hand over the goldfield for the purpose of injuring the Europeans; we handed it over so that it might be of advantage to the Europeans and to ourselves as well. Therefore I say, look into our grievance and redress our injury. The Waihi companies are going along very satisfactorily, and we also ought to be put on a proper footing and have our wrongs righted. I say, again, that I am sure, if you look at the deed of cession by which we handed over the goldfield, you will find there is provision in that deed that we should be protected from injuries such as this. There is not a word in the deed to the effect that we may be injured and called upon to suffer in this way through the goldfields. If this is a new departure with the intention that we shall be injured, well, then, the original deed had better be destroyed.

123. *Hon. Mr. McGowan*.] Were you one of the parties concerned in the Proclamation of the Ohinemuri Goldfield?—Yes, I think so, on the first occasion.

124. What were the terms of the Proclamation, roughly, do you remember?—My recollection is that the Government undertook to protect us and provide for us outside and apart from the goldfield.

125. Did the Natives get anything for the cession of this Ohinemuri Goldfield?—Yes, I heard that some benefit of some kind was given to the Maoris.

126. Did they get any monetary benefit?—Yes, I think I may say that I have heard that money was paid over, but I did not receive any of it myself, because at the time I was too young.

127. Then you, being young, had no voice in the cession of this land for mining purposes?—No; but we were very much Maori in those days, and were not so conversant with pakehadom as we are now, and therefore the people who were approached and dealt with in those days were the people who were known as the leading men.

128. That practically admits what I want you to say, that you yourself had practically no voice, seeing that the chiefs of your hapu or tribe were the parties who dealt with the land?—That is beside the question, because I signed the deed, I think.

129. Then you were a party: what did you get for signing the deed?—That has nothing to do with it.

130. I am asking the question, and you must answer?—There was an arrangement made about miners’ rights to become payable after the signatures were affixed to the document. That was why