

FRANZ DAVID BAUCKE examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your full name?—Franz David Baucke.
2. What is your occupation?—I have been mining and farming—both.
3. You are a settler?—Yes; I have land leased from the Crown, and have been mining up to quite recently.
4. Are you representing any body on the West Coast?—Yes, I am representing the mining interests generally.
5. You have not been appointed to come here from any association?—Yes, by the executive of the Rimu Mining Association.
6. I understand that association is an association of miners and of residents?—Yes, and contributes so much a year.
7. They have associated together in the interests of the district or the interests of mining?—In the interests of mining purely.
8. You wish to give evidence in respect to this petition, which I understand you have signed, with regard to the Water-power Regulations?—Yes.
9. *Mr. Anderson.*] Is this association interested at all in the syndicate which purposes bringing the power in?—No, not that I am aware of. Members of the association may have an interest in it; but, so far as I am aware, the association is merely taking the matter up on broad lines for the benefit of the district and in the interests of mining.
10. *The Chairman.*] Have you your letter of appointment?—No.
11. What is your position in the association?—Secretary.
12. Would you like to make a statement with regard to the petition, and then members of the Committee can question you on the matter?—Yes. The chief point to which exception is taken is that the water is being granted for mining purposes, and power for the purpose of pumping the water. The difference between the two is very wide. Supposing that water was granted by the Warden for mining purposes and was siphoned down over the deep flats, it would be under the mining regulations, whereas, this proposal coming under the Public Works Act, it carries a heavy rental.
13. What is the amount of the rental?—Contrary statements have been made about it. Practically what we should like would be to have the water-power on the same conditions as it can be obtained for ordinary sluicing purposes.
14. That is, free?—Yes, because there is never any absolute certainty in mining; and, so far as that district is concerned, taking the lower portion—the Rimu Flat—it is ground the opening-out of which will be very costly. If the country is not opened up by capitalists, no party of miners will ever take up a foot of it working as a party, because it is too costly. There would be only grades for discharging the lighter material, so it would be a costly undertaking to open up this ground, and beyond the scope of what might be called private enterprise or independent party enterprise. Then we think it would be a great benefit to the State to have the district in a prosperous condition—it would be good compensation to the State. Supposing three hundred men were employed there, the State would benefit through the Customs revenue; and the general prosperity of the people is the first care of the Government. Modified regulations have been issued, but people seem to shun the undertaking, and there has been no eagerness to take up the venture. There is no mining proposal that I know of with the exception of this one to be worked on the same principle. I should very much prefer answering questions, lest I be covering ground already gone over by the other witness. I wish to point out in connection with the field that the present supply of water there can only work a certain area. When that is done, it would not pay any enterprising company to bring water in; and to work it out in dribs and drabs as at present, with the insufficiency of supply after the available ground were worked out—no one would do it for the purpose of working the higher point—what is called the Seddon Terrace—which is about 300 ft. level, and which is not commanded by the present water-supply. I should like to have it understood that a certain amount of opposition that is coming from Rimu is through private interests—that is to say, there are clashing interests. One party have got a very large claim called the Rimu Sluicing Company, and are considered to be looking for a supply at a very small cost by-and-by, and if the proposed company is formed they will have to pay for their water. I do not think the opposition is very extensive. There has been a lot of persuasion about it. Some of the men depending entirely on wages have been persuaded to oppose it by those who have private interests.
15. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] You say the opposition is instigated by private interests: are you interested only as a philanthropist?—No, because what benefits the district benefits me, and gives me a market for my produce. I am not mining just now.
16. *The Chairman.*] Who are the opponents?—So far as I know, there are about eight or ten.
17. What are they?—They are miners. They object to the water-power being brought there at all.
18. *Mr. Scott.*] You say you are a farmer: what sort of produce do you grow?—I chiefly raise sheep and cattle, and also produce—potatoes and suchlike—and grow winter food for cattle.
19. What is the area of this flat or ground which this water would command if it were brought in—the water that is pumped?—Some have put it down as 6,000 acres, and some at half of that. Mr. Smythe was asked to make a survey, and reported on the area. I should like to take his estimate, but I have not been able to get hold of it. When you take the district from Sandy Gully to Look-out, it is close on four miles in extent. I should put it down at somewhere about 4,000 acres.
20. What class of ground is it that it is proposed to work?—Alluvial ground.
21. Is it good for farming purposes?—No, it is not land that is adapted for farming at all. It is ordinary mining-land—sour land. Most auriferous lands on the West Coast are unfit for farming unless you go to great expense.