

81. There is nothing to prevent them using it anywhere and for any purpose if they doubled the rent?—Yes.

82. I suppose you used to follow the run of applications made throughout the country for rights to generate electricity by water-power some years ago?—I was one of the first to suggest this method.

84. Have you heard of any one applying to the late Mr. Seddon for water-power and being refused?—Yes.

85. And also Mr. Hall-Jones, when Minister of Public Works—both refused the applications?—Yes.

86. You say that 3d. per month per horse-power is too much for mining purposes?—Yes; I do think it is unfair when it leaves a district abandoned. If I knew the district was going to be prosperous and the scheme would go on all the same, I would not require anything further; but, when I see it will practically isolate a district from the scheme, then it is a bar, and, if a bar, it is an injury to the district, and, therefore, I say it is too much.

87. Then, that means we should give water for generating power for mining purposes free everywhere as a principle?—I would not contend anything of that kind, because I think that where there is power for them, and it can be worked by that scheme, there should be a sliding scale which would permit the ground to be worked if any one had the courage or the enterprise to take it up.

88. Then you think the charge should be more for generating electricity by water at Ross than at Rimu?—I think a great deal of that kind of thing can be overcome.

89. I want you to answer?—I just want to point out—

90. Do you say you ought to charge more to a rich district than to a poor one? Do you think we should charge more in Central Otago than in Rimu?—No.

91. Do you think we should give the water for nothing in every case?—I am not in favour of giving water for nothing in every case, but I am opposed to any district being barred if it is for the benefit of the country.

92. You mentioned the names of certain gentlemen: do you think they make their offer for the benefit of the district or to make money out of the scheme?—To make money out of it, certainly.

93. And why should we give them power to do so at the expense of the rest of the community?—It has been suggested that there is another party to undertake the pioneering work carried out by the present promoting syndicate, and that it is ready to take it up if these people drop it.

94. I suppose it does not matter to the district who takes it up, so long as the water-power is used?—No, but I say it would be a cruel wrong to take it at the pioneer syndicate's expense.

95. But they have done nothing—what have they done?—I did not go to their office to inquire the amount they have expended, but I do know that they had men employed prospecting. I know that they had a surveyor employed for making a reconnaissance survey and another special survey. Those are items I do know of, because I saw the plans supplied by Mr. McFarlane.

96. Are you satisfied that, if these people do not go on with the scheme and some other people do, it would be just as beneficial to the district?—I am not a partisan, but I like to see fair play. It would be of the same benefit to the district, undoubtedly.

97. You said you were a farmer?—Yes.

98. Whereabouts?—At Back Creek Flat, along the Hokitika River, on the south side between the terrace and the river.

99. And you say you were working at Kumara ten or twelve years ago, mining?—Yes.

100. How much were you paying for water then?—Tenpence per head per hour.

101. How many years ago?—I think, about twelve years ago.

102. Are you sure it was not 2½d. that you were paying?—We paid £1 5s. for ten heads for three hours' water. That was our usual pay. That is what we called a shift—three hours.

103. Twopence halfpenny per head per hour has been the price for twenty years, I believe. You do not know what they are paying in Kumara now?—No. I have heard things, but never made inquiries so as to have a reliable knowledge of them.

104. Going back to the Rimu Sluicing Company, they have a water-race, and do you know that they have an option to purchase that race?—I believe they have the option to purchase the race belonging to the Rimu Miners' Water-race Company.

105. Then, why should they object to this company taking more water?—The Rimu Miners' Water-race Company have no option; they have dams of their own and are a separate institution.

106. The water-race that syndicate has an option over?—They are not opposed.

107. You said that this syndicate did some prospecting on Rimu Flat?—So I understand. They were working there. Bill Irving was working there, and he gave me an idea of what he was doing.

108. As a matter of fact, you are not in a position to say they have been doing any prospecting?—Yes, I saw men sinking a shaft on the high ground above Seddon Terrace.

109. How long is it since you lived at Rimu?—I never lived at Rimu.

110. Do you live on a farm now?—Yes; I previously lived at Woodstock.

111. Mr. Seddon.] Do you think it possible, if this company fails, that any other company would take up the same proposition?—I do not look forward to it, and that makes me feel so strongly in favour of the present syndicate.

112. If this company fails, you have no other company locally to take it up?—I do not think so.

113. The Chairman.] Have you any reason for that?—It is owing to the difficulties experienced with the regulations, and the uncertainty of mining. Anything that is loaded in regard to mining is generally looked upon as at set-back.