

great favour with all the Natives, an influential man and very straightforward—to do all that he could at the other end.

286. Is it correct to say that before the meeting at Te Kuiti on the 22nd March those of the Natives with whom you had communicated or had got into touch had made up their minds to agree to the proposal?—I believe they had. All those that I saw or had any influence with through Damon or Macdonald expressed their willingness—in fact, many of those who signed the writ really did it out of kindness to me—they did it hesitatingly, so some of them said—they signed because they thought I was their friend, but at the same time they wanted the money. They were bordering on destitution, and some of them wanted to clear the bush from their lands, and the time was getting near when they would have to do it or lose the season. I took every opportunity to make the Natives acquainted with the matter before them.

287. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] Did Mr. Bell hold out any hopes that the Natives would be successful in the action to fight the leases?—He was not at all sanguine, judging by the tenor of his remarks. He was fairly sanguine with regard to 1H—at least, he knew we had no show there—and he was not at all sanguine with regard to 1F.

288. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] 1H is the block in which your people had most interest?—They had very little in 1F.

289. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] And yet he advised that the Natives should take the case into the Supreme Court?—Yes, he made preparations for that.

290. *Mr. Seddon.*] You spoke about a Mr. White: what was that in connection with?—In regard to the promotion of the company. I believe it was in his mind that the whole thing originated.

291. *The Chairman.*] Where does he reside?—At Hastings.

292. He is not a resident of the King-country?—No. He is an old friend of mine, with whom I had had business dealings before.

293. *Mr. Seddon.*] What was the statement, then, that Mokau was worth £45,000?—He said that the company, if formed, proposed to take over the coal-mines on the Mangapapa Block, which is entirely separate from the Mokau-Mohakatino Block. There was a coal-mine in working-order, and it was proposed to take that over, and, if it were possible, to take over the leases from Mr. Lewis, or, what is more, the freehold.

294. He was more interested in mining, was he not?—He started with the mines—that was the foundation. I consider that the coal-mine was by far the most important thing of the whole lot.

295. From your knowledge of mining, you do not think very highly of the coal prospects there, do you?—I think the coal prospects on the Mokau-Mohakatino Block are really not worth anything. Economically they are worth nothing. If you have a mine on your left-hand side belonging to one company, where the coal stands about 35 ft. up, and you can drive a tunnel straight in and get out the coal and run it out into a hopper and tip it straight into a steamer, then you have got a very good proposition.

296. How far has this coal to be carried before you can get it away?—About 2 chains from the mouth of the tunnel, and the tunnel is inclined slightly upwards, so that there is no pumping to be done.

297. What are these steamers like that trade there?—I should say 300 or 400 tons.

*The Chairman:* 52 tons is the biggest load that has been taken out.

*Witness:* With suitable steamers perhaps 200 tons could be got away.

298. *Mr. Seddon.*] They have not got facilities there like you find at Greymouth?—I have not seen Greymouth. I am speaking only of this coal-mine, as compared with the coal that exists or does not exist on the Mokau-Mohakatino Block. In the one case you have got an economic proposition; in the other a proposition in which, even if you spent a million of money on it, you would have to sink a shaft, pump the water out, and elevate the coal; and one could not possibly stand alongside the other for twenty-four hours.

299. From your knowledge of geology, what do you think of the other minerals besides coal on this block?—I do not know whether you call lime a mineral. I suppose it is. The deposit of lime I examined closely, and I found very little lime there.

300. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] Was it patchy?—I saw it only in one place, and I took it to be the same form of limestone that exists all over the country. It does not exist as an extensive bed horizontally, but a fringe along what is now an estuary of the river, or has been in past ages an estuary. Take, as a case in point, the Wilson and Government quarries at Te Kuiti: it was found in the course of working that the lime was only like a fringe; it did not extend into the country at all. This was due to the way in which the lime was precipitated in the first instance. It is not the shell limestone, but a marine limestone; and it occurs there and at other places simply as a fringe.

301. *Mr. Seddon.*] Have they ever discovered any gold there?—I have never heard of any gold being found there, and even if it were it could never be in large quantities, because the rhyolite—the only country rock in which gold could be found there—has never been known to contain gold in payable quantities.

302. *The Chairman.*] Do you know if there has been a lot of gold lost up that way?—I think there will be a good deal more lost in the future.

303. *Mr. Seddon.*] Do you know if any prospecting for gold has been done there?—The man would be a fool who spent any time in prospecting for it.

304. I ask these questions because minerals have been mentioned freely in connection with this Mokau Block?—I know an opinion was held by a number of people that there was copper there. Pepene was very much interested in it, and he brought me some samples, which he said were copper. It was really serpentine. I showed him by a chemical examination that there was only iron present in that stuff.