

*Dr. Hector.*  
16th Aug., 1872.

or so being obtained. As to the other places where petroleum has been found, I have nothing to add to what I stated last year.

38. Can you give us any information on the subject of iron?—I have very little to add to what has been already given. The only new iron ore of consequence is found at Collingwood.

39. This is hematite; can nothing be done with it except as a pigment?—Yes; but the difficulty with it is to get rid of the stones mixed with the ore, with which it forms a conglomerate.

40. Do you know of any ironstone?—Yes; where you get good brown coal, you will always get more or less ironstone. But this branch has been dealt with in my previous evidence. Wherever you get a coal formation fairly developed, you always get some indication of ironstone.

*Mr. Curtis.*  
16th Aug., 1872.

O. CURTIS, Esq., M.H.R., in attendance, and examined.

41. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us any information as to mining?—I presume Dr. Hector has given you all information as to the character of the mine at the Grey. It is some distance from the mine to the port, say six or seven miles, and the obstacles experienced in working it are the difficulty and cost of transport there. The Government have undertaken to make a railway to Greymouth; but it may be some time before it is done. In the meantime it was desired by the Provincial Government to lay a tramway of wood, to carry on the trade till the railway could be finished. For this purpose, application has been made to the Government for an advance of £5,000, under the provisions of the coal-mining clauses of the Railways Act. There has been no answer to that. If the proposed tramway were made, the supply of coal would be largely increased. In reference to the port itself, there is sometimes a depth of 16 feet at high water; at other times it is as low as 6 feet or less, and occasionally, even when there is sufficient water on the bar, owing to the roughness of the sea outside, no vessel can cross. The difficulty is this: they can only reckon on the minimum quantity of water. Dr. Hector speaks of having vessels built specially for the purpose, but my opinion is that would not pay as a commercial speculation, and the only way in which any trade of importance could be done is by supplying all seeking vessels with a cargo of coal. There has been a suggestion that the port might be improved, but that is an engineering question into which I cannot enter. From all that I could learn, it would cost more than the Colony would go to, and possibly, when done, it might be of only temporary benefit. As to the quantity of coal available, I can only rely on Dr. Hector's reports. It is a very satisfactory coal, equal to the average of the North of England coal, and from 10 to 15 per cent. better than the best Australian coal. The railway proposed to be made by Government is not entirely for the purpose of shipping this coal; it is supposed to be part of a main line that will go down to Hokitika. The tramway proposed would be intended simply as a temporary work. It would cost between £4,000 and £5,000, and, according to calculations made, the whole cost would be recouped within two years, and I have no doubt but that the trade would be immediately developed. I may state that many of these facts were brought before the Minister for Public Works three weeks ago, but no answer as to the intention of Government has been received.

42. Would it be desirable to build wharves for facilitating the shipment of the coal?—No, I think not; it would be delivered from trucks direct to the ship. It is so tender that any knocking about reduces it to dust. I have not seen the North of England coal ports, but I understand that is the way it is done. In the present case, there would be no difficulty in running a stage into deep water, from which coals could be shipped.

43. *Mr. O'Conor.*] You stated that the money advanced would be recouped in two years: could you furnish us with a copy of your calculations?—I am not sure if I have them here.

44. You have not said at what price the making of the tramway would enable you to deliver coals at Greymouth?—I have not got the figures here, but if required I will get them from Nelson.

45. Have you any idea of what the demand may be at Greymouth?—No further than that there is delivered at Greymouth from 12,000 to 15,000 tons a year, and there is a demand for more.

46. What are the prices obtained?—The price at which coal is sold at Greymouth, under the present arrangement is, at the mine, 10s., and at Greymouth it varies from 16s. to 26s. The price of 10s. per ton at the mine arises from the men working the mine not getting constant employment, and consequently higher wages have to be paid than there would be were there constant work. This is caused by the difficulty in transport to the port. A tramway would lead to constant employment, and therefore reduce the price of the coal. A new line of tramway laid out on the north side would not be so liable to damage as that on the south. I have here a report on the subject, which I will read. [Report read.]

47. *The Chairman.*] Who owns the ground?—The Provincial Government is proprietor of the mine, and it is worked on their account. They offered to give the General Government security in land, besides that of the mine itself, if the money was advanced for the tramway. The mine itself is to be given in security for the railway to be made. I have here reports from the Provincial Engineer on the merits of a tramway, which I will lay before you.

48. Is there any timber near suitable for a wooden tramway?—There is plenty of black birch in the district.

49. How about floods?—I consider there is no danger of the line being flooded, except at Coal Creek; and then it would not be liable to sweep the tramway. In this, however, I am speaking from hearsay. I understood Mr. Dobson to say that.

50. In reference to the Ngakawaho I know very little, save what appears in the reports of Dr. Hector. I simply understand from them that the coal there is equal to the Grey. There is no lease granted for it. An application was sent in, so far as my recollection goes, and they were told that they had better apply for a prospecting license. They did so, and obtained two square miles for either three or six months, I am not certain which, when it was intimated that a lease would not be granted for more than 20 or 30 acres. I consulted with Dr. Hector about having that grant, so that it would not be locking up the coal field. I am sure every care will be taken in this respect. I am told that wharves have been constructed, but the parties have no prescriptive right to them. A prospecting license