

Mr. W. LLOYD to the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Westport, 28th January, 1873.

I have the honor to transmit for your perusal the enclosed memorial from residents in the town of Westport, praying that you will take early steps to have the railway from Westport to the coal fields of Mount Rochfort and the Ngakawau surveyed and constructed as soon as possible. Late discoveries added to those already known have placed far beyond doubt the question of the sources of supply being equal to the requirements of a large export trade at Westport and the Ngakawau. The memorialists therefore are desirous of learning that steps are being taken in order that the district, and Colony at large, may profit from the immense beds of mineral lying at the very threshold of the town.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
W. LLOYD.

Messrs. BAILIE and HUMPHREY to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

We, the undersigned residents in Westport, have the honor to call your attention to the under-mentioned facts:—

1. That the Joint Committee on Colonial Industries have reported on the Mount Rochfort and Ngakawau Coal Mines as follows:—

“Your Committee have satisfactory evidence that the coal in this district is fully equal in quality to that of the Brunner. They recommend that in this case also, further explorations be made before any considerable expenditure is incurred in improving means of shipment, as it appears at present doubtful whether it would be expedient to adopt Westport or the Ngakawau River as the place of export.”

2. That surveyors recently engaged in cutting lines have reported the discovery on the south branch of Mine Creek (a tributary of the Ngakawau) of a horizontal seam of coal, 5 feet thick. Thirty chains further up the same creek they discovered another of similar thickness. Half a mile beyond this seam, on the main south branch of the creek, they found a seam 20 feet thick. This seam also extends a considerable distance, and thousands of tons may be got by stripping off about 9 inches of soil from the surface, in many places the coal lying bare. On the south branch of the Ngakawau, under Mount Frederick, seven distinct faces of coal were counted, each from 15 to 20 feet in thickness. Two miles south of the Ngakawau, in an unnamed creek, 60 chains from the coast, another seam was found, dipping seaward, from 10 to 15 feet thick. All the coal thus found is the true black coal, as existing in the Mount Rochfort measures.

3. That recently, on two occasions, the s.s. “Waipara” came up from Hokitika for the purpose of taking coal from the Ngakawau Mine, but owing to the shallow state of the bar of that river, she could not enter, and therefore returned without cargo.

4. That daily experience proves the Ngakawau River unsuited, as a port of export, for the coal, there neither being sufficient water on the bar, nor available accommodation for vessels when inside.

5. That a sum of money has been placed on the estimates for the purpose of constructing a railway from Westport to these coal fields.

We therefore respectfully request you to use your best endeavours in having a line of railway surveyed and constructed as early as possible, in order that this district and the Colony at large may reap these great and lasting advantages which offer themselves in connection with the carrying out of such a reproductive undertaking.

We have, &c.,

BAILIE AND HUMPHREY (and 167 others).

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

Mr. THOMAS FIELD to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Westport, 28th January, 1873.

A petition having been got up by the inhabitants of Westport, and forwarded to you by this day's post, requesting that you will take early steps with the money voted in past Sessions of the General Assembly to make a railway from Mount Rochfort to this port, the petitioners request that the money so voted be used to make a railway from the Ngakawau River to Westport (some eighteen miles distance over a level country), the recent discoveries there (Ngakawau) being without doubt a continuation of the Mount Rochfort coal field, only much more easily available, the pit mouth of the mine now working being only some 40 feet above the Ngakawau River, and the coal wharf and shoot under a chain distant from it. The gentlemen who drafted your petition, and seven-eighths of those who signed it, never saw the Ngakawau, or the present working, on which about £1,000 has been expended by us in developing the mine—a seam about 20 feet thick, and of excellent quality (see Dr. Hector's analysis and report thereon)—yet those persons, the petitioners, do not hesitate to make statements which are not founded on fact, by saying that there is no shelter in the river during freshets, which, on the contrary, affords good shelter in floods for a number of vessels in a large deep basin several chains in length by 140 feet wide, with a general depth of 10 feet at low water all over it. There are two other places where shelter from floods could be obtained. They also speak of the inability of the s.s. “Waipara” to enter the river, owing to the shallowness of the bar; the “Waipara” has been once up to the mine last May (when prospecting first commenced), and latterly on the occasion spoken of by the petitioners. In one of those instances the sea was too rough to enter safely, and in the other there was 7 feet of water shown by the signalman (being neap tides); and although the “Waipara” only drew 5 feet, yet the master declined to enter the river, as he feared getting bar-bound, the barometer being low, and having the mail steamer to tender at Hokitika. The steamer “Result” went in and loaded, coming out same tide, with over 7 feet water (an hour after high water).