

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1873.

Dr. HECTOR, F.R.S., in attendance, and examined as follows:

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you be kind enough to furnish a statement, for the information of the Committee, as to what has been done in the prosecution of your researches for coal and iron? I can tell shortly what has been done during the past year. (Full information will be found in my reports.) The chief works in progress have been on the west coast of the other Island, wherever sufficient evidence of the existence of coal was found. That is the only district of particular importance, as, indeed, it is the only one in which evidence of the existence of valuable seams of steam coal have been obtained.

*Collingwood.*—At this field, a drive has been put in in order to test the value of the field. The work has been undertaken by a company, assisted by Government funds. It is making fair progress, and I doubt not will be completed by Christmas. A great many difficulties have been encountered, the drive having been carried through a large amount of hard rock, and a great deal of water has also been met with. In the course of these operations, two good seams of coal have already been met with. One of these, which I expected would be met with from the indications of the outcrop, is very much improved. It is much thicker and freer from shale than we expected it to be. At the surface it was an insignificant seam only six inches thick, but has now increased to sixteen. The second seam is covered by a very valuable band of ironstone. In course of time, it will be worth while working it in conjunction with the working of the ironstone. The outcrop of the coal strata has been traced on the surface for a distance of about five miles on the south side, and for six miles on the north side.

### *Ngakawau Coal.*

2. *Mr. Steward.*] This coal is of good quality: is it perfectly good for steam purposes? I have been using it for about a month past in my own house, and I find it a capital household coal.

3. *The Chairman.*] Would it be good enough for blacksmith purposes—for the requirements of a forge? It is most distinctly good for all purposes of the forge. The coal at present got out of the mine is, however, much more friable than the seam upon the plateau may be expected to be. The company propose to work under Mine Creek, so as to reach the coal at its rise into the hill, and then work it at its outcrop by means of galleries. I have not found more than one seam.

4. *Mr. O'Connor.*] Are you aware if any ironstone has been found in the neighbourhood of the Ngakawau? I have not seen any that could be worked, but have not searched. The overlying clay marls contain clay ironstone.

5. Are you aware that Chambers's party discovered a quantity of ironstone about one mile and a half up the Ngakawau River? No; I am not aware. It must have been discovered since I was there.

6. Were you consulted by the Provincial Government of Nelson as to the disposal of the coal field? Only at the time that a company, consisting of some four or five men, applied for a lease. They held, first of all, a prospecting license, which extended over one or two miles. They then applied for a lease for working the coal, and I represented that great care should be exercised in drawing up the lease so as to secure access to other parts of the field. The Superintendent, I believe, made provision for securing that right.

7. Was that the whole objection you had to the granting of the lease? That was all. I had not any objection to the granting of the lease.

8. Were you consulted relative to a six-square-mile prospecting license, applied for by a person named Walker? No; I never heard of it until the other day. My opinion is, that something might be done, independent altogether of the construction of the railway, so as to get the coal away at once. From the examination of the place, made along with Mr. Dobson, I think that by employing a tug, small vessels could, at a very moderate expense, and with very little risk, be got to take the coal away in the meantime from the river.

9. *Mr. Stewart.*] What depth of water is there available for vessels to get in? The depth of such bars generally varies. It cannot be less than 7 feet with ordinary tides. Sometimes it is as much as 10 or 12 feet. I have just had a letter from Mr. Leech, Harbour Master at Greymouth, which I submit. It reports very favourably on the present state of the bar. The bank which had gathered up at the mouth of the river, consequent upon the late dry weather—the weather having for several months previously been very dry—had disappeared.

10. Have any cargoes of coal been got from the place? One cargo, I believe, was brought up to Wellington, and it gave great satisfaction.

11. What works would you recommend for the Ngakawau Harbour? I certainly would not recommend any very expensive work to be done.

12. *Mr. Carrington.*] Would you recommend that piles should be used? The Otahu, or Little Wanganui River, a little to the north, has a rocky ledge on the south side, and, although a much smaller stream than the Ngakawau, it remains constantly open. Perhaps the study of how this works might prove valuable as a suggestion.

13. *Mr. O'Connor.*] What do you estimate the cost of that operation would be? I merely offer this as my opinion. I could only form an idea of the probable cost from the rough estimates made by Mr. Dobson.