

may or may not be granted. No more than two square miles may be granted to any one company or individual, unless after the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, when a further quantity may be granted. Applications have been sent in for 15,000 acres, two having come in for the same ground, but they will not be considered till I return to Nelson. The coal field is a very extensive one, the reserve being 114,000 acres, and the Provincial Engineer's report only refers to a small portion of it. I sent an engineer to report on the Little Wanganui entrance, where there is a similar coal field. A railway will give the greatest facility for opening up the Mount Rochfort Coal Field by connecting it with Westport.

47. As Superintendent, can you say that no more leases will be granted until the railway has been made? As far as I am personally concerned, I am in favour of granting leases as rapidly as possible, always provided that we are satisfied as to the *bona fide* working of the mine with sufficient capital, to secure which stringent conditions are inserted in every lease, requiring a certain minimum number of tons to be brought to market.

48. How can they work before the railway is made? One application from a company states that they would object to use the railway, on the ground that the land which they apply for is at such an elevation that it will not answer their purpose to take it down and convey it by the railway. They propose to make a wire tramway direct to Westport.

49. How far is that land from Westport? It is at a distance of about ten miles from Westport and eight from Ngakawau. I refer to the Colebrookdale seam, at the head of the Waimangaroa. [Pointed out on map.] I consider, with reference to the development of mines, that this is the time to take advantage of the abundance of capital and the high price of coal which prevails. If we do not see that our mines are developed as soon as possible, we may find in the course of two or three years that we have made a great mistake—that capital may not be so abundant, and that coal may not bring so high a price.

50. There are no other applications which object to the railway? There are several other applications for prospecting licenses, but none, I think, for leases. On that reserve one other application has been granted for a prospecting license, some nine miles from the Ngakawau. That is the only prospecting license that has been granted to Walker.

51. Has the land, in the application in which the wire tramway is referred to, not been granted under a prospecting license to Mr. Walker? No.

52. You say that one company can work without the railway, and proposes to use a wire tramway; are there any other parties that can work without availing themselves of the railway? I imagine that many companies working the high ground nearest to Westport will work independently of the railway. It will most likely be brought down in small trucks, and it will not answer to shift it into other trucks for conveyance for a short distance.

53. What other means of conveyance do you refer to? Either a coal tramway or a wire tramway.

54. With reference to the coal tramway, are you now referring to the line of tramway surveyed to Westport? I am not now referring to any particular line of tramway. I believe that companies will be prepared to work mines and convey the coal by their own lines to Westport.

55. Have you any estimates of the cost of these works? No.

56. No proposals have been made relating to them? I may mention that one proposal has been made, but not in writing as yet. It would have been made in writing, only that I said that owing to the action of the General Government, and at the request of the people of Westport, we are for the present refusing to entertain any applications for any part of these coal fields.

57. *Mr. J. Shephard.*] The power to grant 15,000 acres under prospecting license is granted by the Buller Reserves Act; has that quantity been granted? No; between 6,000 and 7,000 acres have been granted to Walker. That is the largest prospecting license which has been issued.

58. Is there anything to prevent three or four persons, to whom leases are granted, from uniting afterwards? I think the conditions of the lease would probably prevent it. We always put conditions in the leases, providing for the quantity of coal that shall be mined and brought to market under each lease; so that, in point of fact, there are obstacles in the conditions of the lease to a profitable union.

59. The question was put as to what work companies could do before the railway was made: would there not be a large amount of preliminary work going on simultaneously? The prospecting license is granted for the purpose of enabling parties to ascertain what part of the ground it is most desirable for them to apply for a lease over. And after the actual lease was granted, it would be a long time before any of the lessees would be prepared to send down coal.

60. So that if leases were granted now, they would not be much in advance of the railway when they were ready to ship coal? I do not think they would. I am speaking of the field generally. It would take a considerable time to bring coal from the plateau. Where actual outcrops can be got, of course the time would be comparatively short within which the coal could be got.

61. As to the expense of getting coals from considerable heights, I presume there would be no serious obstacles to coals being brought down by self-acting inclines, as in the English collieries? I am not aware of any difficulty.

62. I understood you to say that probably some of these companies would rather carry the coal direct to Westport than be at the trouble and expense of changing trucks; would there be any difficulty in running the trucks on to the line, to have them taken up by a locomotive? It could not be done easily if the coal was brought down by wire tramway in the usual small trucks containing 5 cwt. Especially, it would be difficult to connect a wire tramway with a railway line.

63. Presuming the lines from the higher ground to be self-acting, there is nothing to prevent the trucks from being shifted at the junction, and then being sent on by the railway? No.

64. *The Chairman.*] There would be no difficulty in bringing down coal by a self-acting incline from the plateau? I think not; but I am speaking from the opinion of others. I am not speaking my own opinion, but the opinion of those whom I believe to be well qualified to judge. [Mr. Curtis referred to the opinion of Mr. Dobson, the Provincial Engineer.]