

## Searching New Zealand for Minerals

Title 209

Before leaving Sydney I visited the Australian Subsidiary Company of Metal Traders of London and received, as arranged, a valuable technical briefing of what my final report was to elucidate. The questions which these far-sighted traders were anxious to explore, were indeed extensive, and they reminded me of those anyone would ask before beginning any ordinary scientific experiment. I made a long list and was able to reply to most of them in my final report.

Basic to all were financial and legal questions. Could minerals or their products be exported, like coal? Did Development Allowances exist, like a 40% claim? Was there a Tax Holiday for the first 3 years of mining? What was the NZ Government policy on foreign investments and technical help, was it welcome? Is Japanese capital, through Metal Traders, acceptable? Does NZ require native interest in its company law? What is preferable, to buy production or the mine? And so on and so forth.

The technical questions were of course much more detailed. Did sulphur occur in commercial quantities and was it already exploited? Are there any coking ovens in NZ, as there exists a Japanese interest in this product? Who is working or only exploring the Iron Sands? Can production of copper sulphate, used as trace element for fertilisers in West Australia, be doubled for a market, if they exist and how is it produced in NZ?

Many questions were concerned with specific metals and minerals, as for example copper and its ores, chromium, tungsten, antimony, lead, tin and platinum. New Zealand's surplus hydro-electricity could perhaps lead to the building of an industrial complex around it, as bauxite smelting from Weipa in North Queensland [see Title 192] is already being done. What were the future plans for extending hydro-electricity? I was also asked to investigate the commercial situation with regard to large gemstones for carving, like jade, green stone and opalite.

I found many, although by no means all, answers at the Geological Survey in Lower Hutt, at the Department of Electricity in Wellington, at the DSIR Chemical Division in Petone and at several private companies to which I had introductions from London or from Sydney. I flew back through Sydney, Perth and Johannesburg to London. In Perth I came across a Wild-West nickel rush of armed prospectors, anxious to stake their claims for nickel ores. A long ban in West Australia on pegging claims was suddenly removed, and all available helicopters had been chartered by mining companies who had organised their own military operations. The right end for my mineral quest!

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