

Michael Dineen O’Keeffe: Union Leader – a ‘colourful personality’

By PHILIP HART

Michael William Dineen O’Keeffe [1852-1931] was a lively character who stood out from the usual bland, staid and respectable presidents of the Thames Miners’ Union in the late 19th century. O’Keeffe was first mentioned in the press in December 1880, when fined ten shillings for damaging a table on a boat travelling between Auckland and Thames.¹ The fact that he was dancing on it at the time was viewed with amusement, the prosecutor commenting that ‘he was a splendid dancer, and suggested that he should give the Court a specimen of his performance in the Terpsichorean Art’.² O’Keeffe, who ‘had been performing for the benefit of passengers’, claimed he could ‘dance forty variations to one tune’.³

After settling at Te Aroha in 1881, his flirtation with his future wife, Margaret O’Leary, was noted several times, as was a brief mention of him ‘taking the girls by storm’.⁴ At a dance three weeks later, his ‘unmentionables’ split when he bowed too low, requiring a temporary repair.

But in picking up a handkerchief the darned stitches bursted,
And when the missing link appeared, great Caesar!
how he cursed it,
And left the Hall and Margaret, disheartened and disgusted.⁵

Despite this embarrassment, he was back a month later when he enjoyed ‘a good waltz, and spooned all the time with Margaret’. They soon ‘got the tables and chairs for the little house’ and were ‘about to go into partnership’.⁶ A month later, ‘Alphabet O’K’, a reference to his many initials, was reportedly to marry soon. He grumbled about his wedding plans being publicised: ‘Mick, you softy, you might have known that a woman cannot keep a secret. That is how it leaked out about your building the dove-cot’.⁷ He later removed this small house to Waiorongomai without his landlord’s permission. When sued for damages, he stated that, after the landlord and the mining inspector had told him not to remove it,

I consulted Mr Miller (solicitor) on the matter; he advised me not to remove it. I did not take his advice. (Laughter.)

In reply to Mr Miller, defendant stated it was quite true he told the Mining Inspector, "If he could not remove it he would make it so small that he (Mining Inspector) could smoke it in his pipe." (Great laughter.)⁸

One night, his contribution to 'a little vocalisation' was described as being 'yelled by a voice as melodeous as the sound made by sharpening a saw, the vibration, created by it, smashed two cups and put a split in the bottom of the old fryingpan'.⁹ O'Keeffe was obviously an extrovert with 'character'.

Mining at Waiorongomai

Born to a farmer in Ireland in 1852, he was 'brought up to foundry work', but may have been a coal and gold miner before arriving in New Zealand in early 1880.¹⁰ The following year, he acquired two small interests in worthless Te Aroha mines,¹¹ and had shares in several equally unsuccessful Waiorongomai claims and companies, sometimes quickly profiting through a quick sale.¹² As an example of his speedily assessing the value of his claims, he abandoned one after only 15 days.¹³ He also worked for wages.¹⁴ In mid-1883, when he took up two claims with a fellow Irishman, John O'Shea,¹⁵ a witness at his marriage,¹⁶ the local newspaper described them as prospecting 'energetically. The known reputation of the owners as miners is sufficient guarantee that the ground will be well prospected'.¹⁷ Shortly afterwards, he was referred to as 'the well known prospector'.¹⁸ Rarely did he find payable ore, and once he cut his leg badly when 'cutting a route in a very awkward place' three hours' walk from his home.¹⁹ He studied how to find silver ore,²⁰ but made no discoveries. With O'Shea, he tributed in a claim during 1885 that, for a while, produced good ore.²¹ O'Keeffe was shift boss of this party for three years.²² He was also underground boss in another mine.²³ In 1888, he won contracts to drive tunnels, but other tenders were declined.²⁴

From 1883 onwards, O'Keeffe was prominent in moves to protect the interests of mining.²⁵ In 1889, he assisted to revive an accident relief fund.²⁶

Financial struggles

Early in 1886, with another Irish miner he attempted to become a contractor, but all their tenders to make tracks, roads, and bridges were declined.²⁷ Despite his appalling spelling, for a time he was a travelling correspondent for the local newspaper.²⁸

When mining faded in 1885, he helped establish the Gordon Special Settlement to farm nearby swamp.²⁹ Receiving 150 acres, he was described as ‘the pioneer of the settlement’.³⁰ Struggling to meet the cost of fencing, draining, and purchasing animals and equipment, in March 1889 his land was liable for forfeiture because he was not ‘continuously in residential occupation’.³¹ His defence was - hard times, low wages, scarcity of work and no market for produce - and that he had complied with the regulations requiring improvements, and hoped to settle there ‘before the end of this year’. Should his section be forfeited, he asked for a refund of the cost of his improvements, rent, and survey, being ‘a poorer man than I had been before I got such land’.³² Because development had been minimal he had ceased working it and had paid only the first installment of rent, it was forfeited in 1890.³³

In December 1889, two shopkeepers sued for small debts, one of £4.2s.5d and the other of £6.11s.³⁴ He explained that he had not worked for wages since the beginning of September, and since then had been tributing for a return of ‘about £13’. His land had been ‘more a source of loss than profit’.³⁵ After failing to pay £1 a month as ordered, he was again sued; the bailiff sold two of his dairy cows but found no other possessions of value to seize.³⁶ Having sold his cattle to meet several debts of between £1 and £6, he could not meet these shopkeepers’ debts, and filed as bankrupt.³⁷ Owing £57.18s, he had no asset apart from his Gordon land, on which he owed £8.11s in rent.³⁸ After the magistrate criticised him for exaggerating his financial status when offering to be a surety for another debtor, O’Keeffe stated that the magistrate ‘made as false and deliberate a statement in Court as ever a man made, or else he made a great mistake’,³⁹ Although creditors thought otherwise and accused him of selling cattle ‘to his own mate’ just before filing. They received only 1s.3 ½d in the pound.⁴⁰

Unlike most bankruptcies, this was not the end of the story. According to his own account, after being ‘unfortunate’ and becoming bankrupt, he ‘carried his swag to the Thames, and some time afterwards, having been successful in mining, called a meeting of his creditors and paid everyone twenty shillings in the pound’.⁴¹ This unusual act was widely and favourably commented on.⁴² Although the Official Assignee had tried to talk him out of it, he wanted to ‘look any man in the country in the face’, and was later praised for providing ‘a high lesson in honour and morality’.⁴³

There was also another side to O’Keeffe, as he occasionally participated in races and rugby.⁴⁴ He liked making speeches, and was a member of a short-lived debating

society.⁴⁵ To help defend local interests, he was elected to several committees and a deputation to a visiting Minister.⁴⁶ He attended entertainments arranged to assist charities and his Catholic Church, and helped to organize a ball and to collect subscriptions for a destitute widow.⁴⁷ A supporter of Home Rule for Ireland, he collected money to relieve evicted Irish tenants.⁴⁸

Mining at Thames and the Thames Miners' Union

Within three years of moving to Thames in 1890, a lucky find earned the £1,300 that enabled him to pay his creditors.⁴⁹ He was promoted to shift boss.⁵⁰ For part of 1894, he was on the committee of the Thames Prospecting Association.⁵¹ Four years later he was granted permission to dredge and sluice a creek for tailings, but eight months later abandoned this work to tribute in a leading mine.⁵²

In 1894, he obtained a Second Class Service Certificate, and two years later attended the Thames School of Mines.⁵³ At a meeting of 'experienced miners' discussing government proposals to require managers to hold certificates of competency, he defended men trained in the School of Mines because they possessed practical as well as theoretical skills.⁵⁴ Results in his courses varied greatly, partly because he attended only about half the classes, but he qualified as a first-class mine manager.⁵⁵

In 1894, O'Keeffe won election to the union's committee with the sixth highest vote.⁵⁶ As its records have not survived, his influence in its discussions is unknown but he proved prominent at meetings.⁵⁷ When unsuccessful in forcing a Waihi company to compensate the widow of a miner killed in its mine, he urged that compensation be made an issue in the parliamentary elections, to the disapproval of the president, William Henry Potts,⁵⁸ who opposed involvement in politics.⁵⁹ In 1898, O'Keeffe defeated Potts in a three-way race.⁶⁰ He was welcomed by the local newspapers as a creditable choice, because of his integrity, experience as a working miner and 'learned' qualifications, though there were doubts about his having 'the polish that some exacting critics would demand'.⁶¹

O'Keeffe emphasized the union's opinion that more good was to be effected by quiet and reasonable diplomacy in case of friction than by a policy of aggressiveness, which invariably led to ill feeling, believing that conflicts should be resolved by diplomatic or amicable arguments.⁶² A strike was 'like a fire – when once started there is no knowing where it ends'.⁶³ He was a firm supporter of the Conciliation Act and the

arbitration court, which he saw as ‘a grand thing for the working man’.⁶⁴ However, if his members were ‘forced into a fight’ he ‘should feel very much insulted’ if ‘not permitted to be the first into that fight’.⁶⁵

O’Keeffe always spoke plainly and called a spade a spade.⁶⁶ He attacked the local members of the Liberal government, which was generally supported by miners, for doing insufficient for his members.⁶⁷ He urged it to construct a railway to the Waihi mines, threatening that delay could mean defeat for local parliamentarians, one of whom was Minister of Mines.⁶⁸ He also promoted erection of a public crushing battery at Thames.⁶⁹ Critical of the local Member of Parliament (James McGowan, a future Minister of Mines), he supported the concept of a Labour Party, citing the British Labour Party as an example of the ‘intelligence and open-mindedness which the workers impart into politics’.⁷⁰

Of particular concern to O’Keeffe was that companies held excessively large areas that were often unworked and under-manned, thus creating ‘a system of landlordism’ as bad as in Ireland’.⁷¹ Such protection of large areas also reduced employment opportunities and he advocated that unworked ground be let on tribute.⁷² His criticism of the rates offered to tributers ‘hit the right nail on the head’, according to the press.⁷³ Not until mid-1900 was he able to convince the warden’s court to adopt the union’s conditions for tributing.⁷⁴ He also opposed the working of overtime, as ‘men working overtime only take the bread away from those who most require it’.⁷⁵

He argued that the contracting system enforced in Karangahake and Waihi would soon turn these districts ‘into a poorhouse of labour’.⁷⁶ ‘Contract work caused rush and hurry, and therein lay the great secret of most accidents. It opened the door to incompetent labour, killed unionism, and was undoubtedly the greatest evil which tradespeople had to contend against’, because contracts produced too little return to pay the miners’ debts.⁷⁷ Claiming not to oppose contracts as such, he objected to abuses, and wanted an agreed minimum rate.⁷⁸ Contractors should not be paid less, for otherwise managers would make the minimum wage ‘abortive by letting all the mines on contract in order to evade the award of the Court’.⁷⁹ He found the conditions attached to Waihi contracts obnoxious, and saw as a form of tyranny the ability of a manager to sack a man because he was dissatisfied with the contract.⁸⁰ He was also

very much opposed to Sunday work in mines. Disapproved very highly of it. It was a bad moral principle to lay down in a colony like this. Efforts

were being made to prevent our posterity from becoming slaves. Sunday work is against the law of God, and the law of man, and to break both is as bad as to bag gold, or steal specimens.⁸¹

To end Sunday work, he advocated payment at double time.⁸² His perseverance on this issue convinced one Coromandel mine manager to cease work on Saturday night even though it took a year of persuasion to do so.⁸³ He also sought shorter hours in wet ground, and wanted more land opened up to settlement.⁸⁴

Soon after becoming President of the union, O’Keeffe visited outlying districts to strengthen their branches.⁸⁵ After a year, he could report very satisfactory progress, as membership in outlying districts had increased from 432 to about 940.⁸⁶

Before the Conciliation Board

In mid-1899, an attempt by one Waihi company to introduce a sliding scale of wages for shift bosses based on the average monthly yield produced widespread opposition, and the union referred the issue to the conciliation board.⁸⁷ O’Keeffe told an enthusiastic meeting of members that the company’s move could be ‘the thin end of the wedge for eventually introducing the same system to the working miners’ and that the union would protest against any increase in the hours of labour, as had occurred in some Coromandel mines. The meeting unanimously supported taking the case to the board where O’Keeffe, assisted by two others, would represent the union.⁸⁸ A Waihi newspaper applauded these representatives as ‘made of the right stuff’, with ‘true grit’.⁸⁹

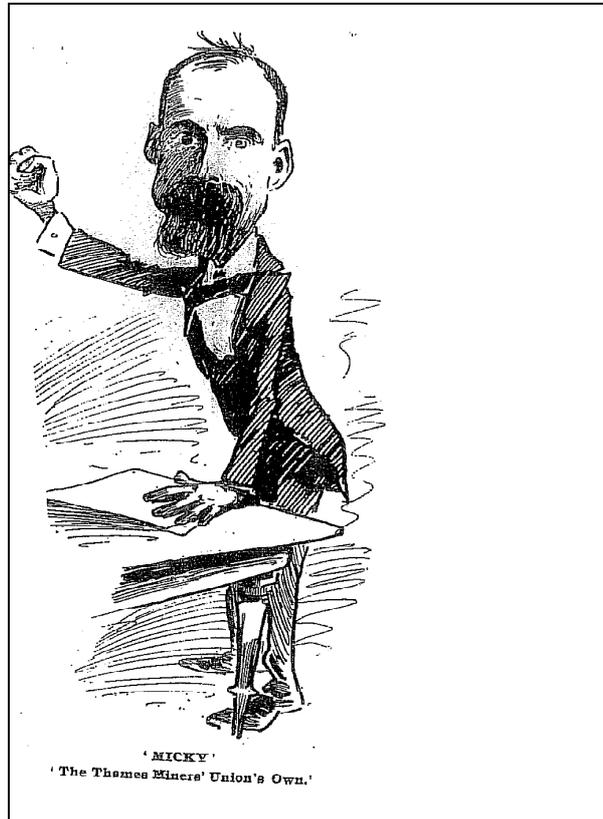
Subsequently, O’Keeffe negotiated with the board on the scale of payments, to the ‘great satisfaction’ of the miners.⁹⁰ A Waihi newspaper praised the ‘genial’ O’Keeffe for conducting the case ‘in an honourable and worthy manner’, and had ‘no hesitation in saying that an abler man would have been hard to find’.⁹¹ A Thames correspondent wondered if ‘a better man’ had ever been president of the union.⁹²

O’Keeffe was re-elected in August 1899 with 702 votes to his challenger’s 227.⁹³ One member said that ‘we never had a live president’ previously.⁹⁴ A cartoon of ‘“Micky”, the Thames Miners’ Union’s Own’ (Figure 1), showed him with intense, staring eyes; these are confirmed by a photograph of him slouching in the midst of his more formal colleagues.⁹⁵ His Irish brogue and wit were commented on, favourably.⁹⁶

Despite all his work, in 1900 his predecessor defeated him by 68 votes,⁹⁷ a result that reflected dissatisfaction with union policy. One miner claimed that the union did

not inquire into deaths in 'up-country districts', and that the rate of wages agreed to at Waihi had lowered the amount received by mullockers, who had left the union. There was a call for greater militancy.⁹⁸

Figure 1: *Michael Dineen O'Keefe*



Source: *Observer*, 26 August 1899, p. 7.

Although no longer president, O'Keefe continued to defend miners' interests.⁹⁹ In early 1901, after Waihi unionists sought increased wages and voted to take the Waihi Gold Mining Company to the conciliation board, 12 union officials and activists were dismissed.¹⁰⁰ More men were dismissed as the manager obeyed his English directors' instructions to cut costs.¹⁰¹ After considerable controversy, the manager offered to reinstate the dismissed men on condition that the union withdrew its wage demands.¹⁰² An 'immense meeting' unanimously rejected this and went on to demand all Waihi companies be cited before the board in order to obtain a new wage scale.¹⁰³

When the board first met, the companies asked that every company in the Hauraki district be required to appear and be bound by the new award. As conditions varied, Union leaders argued for hearings in each locality and for different awards in different

places. The companies responded by raising the spectre of foreign capital being scared away if all mines had to pay the rates that the more profitable Waihi mines could afford.¹⁰⁴ This might not have concerned O’Keeffe, who called foreign capitalists ‘Christ-killers’ solely interested in extracting ‘boodle’.¹⁰⁵

When the board first met, at Waihi, Potts presented the union case.¹⁰⁶ O’Keeffe, who sought to prove that Thames mining was dangerous and unhealthy because of gas and the use of compressed air, joined him.¹⁰⁷ One question provided unintended amusement:

“Well to avoid any misunderstanding ... will you state whether it was half-past eleven in the morning or half-past eleven in the afternoon?” A smile passed over the faces of those present, but Mr O’Keeffe was too much in earnest to notice the slip, and resumed the examination.¹⁰⁸

Describing how gas drove air from the lower workings, he said that ‘if a workman should happen to be caught in the gas he would lie down (laughter) and sleep the sleep of death’. He insisted that compressed air was ‘injurious to health’.¹⁰⁹ The Thames miners, ‘in order to keep the peace’, had ‘refrained from causing trouble by asking for a higher rate. The present trouble had been forced upon the miners’.¹¹⁰ Opposing classifying men into such categories as ‘inexperienced’ and ‘aged’, he claimed that an old miner ‘does not hardly exist. He is dead before he gets old’. A miner was old at 50.¹¹¹ Increasing wages would not ‘be to the detriment of the small struggling companies’, whose conditions would be improved because, ‘when the present dispute was settled, and the award made, matters would quieten down’.¹¹²

Under cross-examination by Frederick Daw, manager of the Crown mine at Karangahake, O’Keeffe had to admit to limited geological knowledge, despite having cited geology as a cause of danger to Thames miners. He ‘declined to go into the question of geology ... for if he did he would keep them there until Christmas’, and ‘declined to go into the question of the formation of peculiarities of gases in mines’. Compressed air, he claimed, had the moisture taken out of it and ‘was polluted, and therefore rendered dangerous’. When questioned about ‘the constitution and peculiarities of certain gases’, he sidelined his lack of scientific knowledge through wit:

You cannot answer the question? - No I am no chemist. If I were I should not be in the witness box, but would be drawing £1500 a year, the same as you are. (Laughter.)

How about ventilation in the Crown mine? – Oh it is good.

Plenty of ventilation? – Plenty of ventilation! Why there is so much ventilation that it blows the hair off, and every man in the Crown mine is bald-headed (Loud laughter).¹¹³

His ‘prompt and peculiar answers’ to Daw ‘simply convulsed those present’ and his last sally about every man being bald ‘simply “broke up” Court, mining and Press representatives, and audience, and for a minute nothing but shouts of laughter could be heard’.¹¹⁴ Even Daw ‘chuckled’, for he had ‘but a slight ring of hair left on his cranium’, to which O’Keeffe had pointed.¹¹⁵

In reply to an attorney for the English-owned mining companies, he claimed that it was

an opportune time – it was a beautiful time – to ask for an increase because it could not affect the companies. He thought a time of depression a good time to ask for an increase ... He thought an increase of 20 per cent. on all wages would give a great impetus to the mining industry. He would not include mine managers and superintendents in the increase – he would take it off their salaries. (Laughter.) He thought it would be a great advertisement for the colony. The Stock Exchange jews and others would be attracted to New Zealand and its splendid gold mines. The Union only wanted a fair day’s work – but it appeared to him the higher the increase of pay the better it would eventually be for the goldmining industry.

He went on to say that boys’ wages should be increased because ‘this was God’s country’ and ‘not old Ireland’. If increasing their wages caused the closure of some tailings plants ‘he would still be in favour of the increase, as the effect would be to abolish slavery’.¹¹⁶

His performance brought him to the attention of the wider public, the *Auckland Observer* devoting four of its seven cartoons on the hearing to him.¹¹⁷ A Thames newspaper noted his dramatic posturing and intense, staring eyes.¹¹⁸ The *Observer* wrote that now ‘the whole province’ knew the ‘comic questioner’.¹¹⁹ It published a poem praising ‘the marvellous O’Keeffe’, whose wit made the poet ‘laugh the livelong day, and very far into the night’ because of his ‘sublime’ and ‘very lively’ remarks.¹²⁰ To the *Observer*, he was more than just a comic Irishman; it cited his paying his creditors as showing a ‘sense of honesty’ that put to shame some leaders of Auckland society.¹²¹ He was high in the miners’ estimation because of being ‘a sterling and able man, and as full of dry humour as they make them’.¹²²

O’Keeffe assisted the union case at Coromandel also.¹²³ During the hearings, the companies had offered to raise the wages at Thames by sixpence a day and in the ‘up-

country’ by fourpence, but the union’s leaders now wanted a general scale for the Hauraki district.¹²⁴ The board’s decision increased the pay of some men, to their ‘great satisfaction’, and but reduced others’, who were ‘not so pleased’.¹²⁵ The Waihi Company increased discontent by replacing wages men with contractors.¹²⁶ In other districts also, the workforce was reduced for a variety of cost-cutting reasons.¹²⁷ The Waihi branch determined to resist the contract system, and like other branches rejected the award because they received little benefit.¹²⁸ As the executive was divided, it resolved to ballot the members. Rejection would mean that the award would be referred to the court for a binding decision.¹²⁹ O’Keeffe argued that this ‘unfair and unsatisfactory’ award should not be accepted, even if Thames miners would benefit, for ‘it would be ill-becoming for the parent branch of the union to accept an award which outside branches thought was unsatisfactory’.¹³⁰ Only Thames miners accepted it, narrowly; everywhere else it was overwhelmingly rejected.¹³¹ The *Thames Star* warned that the court ‘very seldom made any very great alterations in the awards’, but the union was determined.¹³² The companies also rejected the award, unanimously, and the Waihi Company heightened tensions by dismissing more men.¹³³

Before the Arbitration Court

In August 1901, O’Keeffe was re-elected president with a majority of 43 votes over Potts, receiving especially good tallies in outlying districts.¹³⁴ He was returned to office when mining at Thames was ‘about as dull as it could be’ and the mining depression was intensifying.¹³⁵ An *Observer* cartoon showed Potts placing on O’Keeffe’s back a heavy swag labelled ‘Miners’ Dispute’ and wishing him ‘luck of it’.¹³⁶

When O’Keeffe, who led the union case, complained that a solicitor was assisting the employers, whereas the union had no solicitor ‘and no talented men’, the judge, Theophilus Cooper,¹³⁷ raised a laugh by responding ‘I’m not so sure of that’.¹³⁸ In his opening address, O’Keeffe made what a newspaper headlined as ‘Some Startling Assertions’. He claimed the Waihi Company’s manager was trying ‘to strike terror into the miners’ by dismissing 150 union members after the board hearing at which some had given evidence.¹³⁹ Increased wages he suggested would not frighten away foreign capital or be an excessive burden. As for ‘the struggling companies’, he pointed to the excessive salaries of their supervisors, some of whom ‘were not worth twopence, and could not tell the difference between a gad and a crosscut saw. They were no good except to breed mischief’.¹⁴⁰ Denying that miners could live on less money, he stated

that many families lacked 'sufficient house room to observe the dictates of common decency; their children have not sufficient food to eat, not sufficient warm clothing to cover them day or night'. All men dismissed should be given 'a valid reason', and unless preference was given to unionists the union would be destroyed and forced off the goldfield and prominent members of the union would be 'stigmatised' as 'agitators – everything short of anarchists'.¹⁴¹ All those discharged by the Waihi Company for asking to be paid the union rate should, he believed, be reinstated, and, as the union had paid their wages 'from the time they were locked out', its expenses should be recouped.¹⁴²

When witnesses at Karangahake were questioned on hazardous and unhealthy conditions there, he gave evidence about his experiences 'in nearly all the mining camps on the Peninsula'. He repeated that compressed air was 'injurious to health'. At Thames he had experienced gas and temperatures so hot that he 'wore no clothing except trousers and boots without any socks. The mineral water affected the boots, and he had seen the sole and upper parted in less than a fortnight'.¹⁴³ 'Thames was the worst hole he ever put his foot in to earn a day's pay'.¹⁴⁴ He had been preaching 'peace' to the militants of Waihi, not because he was 'afraid of the superintendents, but he wanted to protect the wives and children who might have suffered' in a large strike. An extra shilling a day 'was a fair wage', but the managers 'had combined' to force the men to compete for contracts.¹⁴⁵ Ignoring reality, he continued to argue that mining was at its most flourishing.¹⁴⁶ Despite continually being over-ruled, he asked about managers' salaries.¹⁴⁷

In his closing address, O'Keeffe argued that the owners' representatives had 'failed to show why the miners should not receive their just demands' and cited examples of their witnesses agreeing that the union demands were 'reasonable'. The Waihi contract system was 'a most one-sided and pernicious system, favouring only the companies and doing incalculable harm' to the miners, while directors and managers 'swallowed up the cream of the returns, while the balance was spread over an army of toilers who won the gold'.¹⁴⁸ He called for

a healthy readjustment whereby the workers may obtain their proper share of the results of their toil in conjunction with the protection of the law against tyranny, injustice, and coercion. If any mine is worth working then the labourer is worthy of his hire, but if it is not then let it be shut down before any man is compelled by circumstances to forfeit his independence, his right to live, and his right to fair treatment.

He concluded by thanking his opponents for ‘the gentlemanly manner in which they have treated us’, and thanked Judge Cooper for his ‘kindly and courteous manner’ and ‘fair play’.¹⁴⁹

Responding to the award

Despite O’Keeffe’s strong advocacy, the award fixed wages at levels below those set by the board, and legitimised the policies of the Waihi Company.¹⁵⁰ As the *Observer* commented, if the union had been content with the board’s award, ‘they would at least have had a moderate increase all round. But, in grasping at the shadow, they have lost the substance’. The hearing had produced ‘overwhelming’ evidence that British capital would no longer be provided and mines would close if the increases had been granted.¹⁵¹ Employers and newspapers moralised about ‘the folly of going to extremes’ and argued that the award would save the industry.¹⁵² Most miners expressed ‘general disapproval’ of the outcome,¹⁵³ while O’Keeffe, was ‘characteristically candid:

“What do I think of the award,” he queried, in answer to our representative’s question. “Well I can hardly say, I don’t know whether I am awake or dreaming. It is an award that I think the Arbitration Court will be sorry they gave, for it is unfair to the miners. In Coromandel it has reduced the pay of the men, and it is anomalous, and I think altogether that it is award that those responsible should be ashamed of. My the devil floiy away wid the mimbers av the Board for putting their fists to such a statement.”

“What do I think of the award? Haven’t I said what I think of it,” he continued in answer to another query. “What can I say except that I think it a most disgraceful one, and one that never should have been. D---n the award say I, and there you have my opinion!”¹⁵⁴

This final comment caused much hilarity in the press.¹⁵⁵ O’Keeffe told a union meeting that the award was ‘unjust and unfair’, and indeed ‘a pre-arranged affair’ with the judge legitimising the actions of the Waihi Company. He concluded by urging members ‘that this defeat, great as it is, should not dishearten us ...and be again ready for battle when this two years penal servitude has expired’.¹⁵⁶ Privately he was so disheartened that earlier the same day he had applied to be a mining inspector.¹⁵⁷ His members passed a ‘hearty vote of thanks’ to him and the others who had fought the case.¹⁵⁸

O’Keeffe’s attacks on the judge amused some and horrified others.¹⁵⁹ At an interview with the Minister of Mines, James McGowan, O’Keeffe called for Cooper’s

removal as chairman of the court. ‘The miners had no confidence in him, and they thought’, as he did, ‘that influence of the Auckland companies had something to do’ with his decision. Cooper, formerly ‘solicitor for the companies cited’, had been ‘hand in glove’ with the companies’ solicitor and ‘had not been an impartial judge’ and as such should be removed. McGowan was ‘sorry to hear’ this ‘very serious charge’, for Cooper had been ‘actuated by the highest motives’ and had done his best to decide on the basis of the evidence presented. After praising Cooper’s ‘ability and legal acumen’, he insisted that the courts should be free ‘from anything approaching political influence or interference’.¹⁶⁰ Newspapers also deplored the demand, one condemning O’Keeffe’s ‘cool impertinence, bad taste, and reckless assertion’, plus ‘want of respect for a Minister of the Crown, and utter disregard for the institutions of the country’.¹⁶¹ This newspaper commented that whilst O’Keeffe’s ‘utterances are usually not taken seriously’, in this case he deserved ‘a stiff lecture’ from McGowan.¹⁶²

Although some unionists deplored his remarks, others praised their ‘manly and outspoken President’.¹⁶³ The *Observer* commented that O’Keeffe was ‘such a droll and inveterate joker’ that it was ‘scarcely safe to take seriously his demand’. As he had previously praised Cooper’s ‘strict impartiality’, it was ‘difficult’ to regard the demand that he be removed ‘as anything else but one of those dry and caustic jokes for which he is famous the goldfields over’. It warned against political control over the court, and considered his demand ‘an utterly preposterous and unworthy one – that is, if it is not an audacious joke’.¹⁶⁴ Citing this interpretation, the *Thames Star* considered it ‘not a bad joke in itself’ to accuse O’Keeffe of making a joke, for ‘all who have the honour of Mr O’Keeffe’s acquaintance know that unnatural seriousness characterises all his official utterances’.¹⁶⁵ While a Waihi delegation told McGowan that they repudiated O’Keeffe’s attack, Karangahake miners asked that Cooper be removed.¹⁶⁶ While some of the Union executive believed the statements had been ‘made without due consideration’, O’Keeffe insisted that he had made the statement deliberately after giving the matter serious consideration. By eight votes to six, his attack was censored, but with the rider that he had ‘voiced the views and sentiments of a majority of the members’. O’Keeffe accepted the verdict was against him and resigned.¹⁶⁷

Standing for re-election, he defeated Potts in every district.¹⁶⁸ As the Waihi branch had nominated Potts, O’Keeffe was ‘especially gratified at obtaining a majority’ in an area, ‘where he least expected it’.¹⁶⁹ ‘Well pleased’ with the result, he considered it showed that most miners ‘fully endorsed his sentiments’.¹⁷⁰

Conflict and disillusionment

Increasing conflict with an increasingly independent Waihi branch marked his last term as president.¹⁷¹ When, at a meeting there, O’Keeffe defended his attack on Cooper, the chairman called him to order, as this was not the subject of the meeting. ‘Upon which Mr O’Keeffe said the Chairman wanted to shut his mouth, this he declined to do, and said he would shut his mouth for no man. (Applause.)’ He repeated that Cooper ‘was not an impartial judge’ but ‘hand in glove with the mining companies’, on whose behalf he had acted for 20 years.¹⁷² His attempts to heal the rift with Waihi, the largest branch, failed, and it formed its own union in 1902.¹⁷³

After moving to Coromandel, he did not stand for president, but was elected to the executive, again receiving more votes than Potts.¹⁷⁴ At the last annual meeting he chaired, he said he had ‘discharged his duties to the union honestly and faithfully, and to the best of his ability’, before again attacking the Cooper award. He

spoke in strong terms against the Court’s decision. His advice to the members was to buckle themselves together, canvass for all they were worth for new members, and prepare for another squabble. He also strongly advised the union to become a political body, for until it did so it would never, in his opinion, have any influence.¹⁷⁵

At a well-attended farewell social, speeches were made about his ‘splendid work’. O’Keeffe thanked them ‘in a temperate, well-chosen speech’, wishing ‘every prosperity to the Union’.¹⁷⁶ Thereafter he had little involvement in union affairs and did not again seek election.¹⁷⁷ While he did consider contesting the 1902 general election,¹⁷⁸ eventually he actively supported another union leader who stood against McGowan, but the candidate was unsuccessful.¹⁷⁹

Life after the union

From mid-1902 until April 1907, O’Keeffe worked with a small number of mates on some Coromandel fields.¹⁸⁰ After managing two Ohinemuri mines, he managed one at Wakamarina in Marlborough before once more returning to Ohinemuri.¹⁸¹ From 1915 until 1921, he managed mines and prospected at Wakamarina.¹⁸² After prospecting for a time near Karangahake, which he found too physically exhausting, he returned to Wakamarina, where he worked for the remainder of his life.¹⁸³ His services were ‘dispensed with’ two years before his death at the age of 79.¹⁸⁴

As with many other once-famous miners and prospectors, no obituary was published, for his prominence had ended 30 years before his death. But at the height of

his union involvement, he had expressed, in his own special way, the views of most of the organised miners of the Hauraki district. A genuinely popular leader, his efforts, though largely unsuccessful, were greatly appreciated by the rank and file.

Endnotes

- ¹ Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1879-81, entry for 9 December 1880, BACL 13736/39a, Archives New Zealand, Auckland Office [hereafter ANZ-A].
- ² 'Resident Magistrate's Court', *Thames Advertiser*, 10 December 1880, p. 2.
- ³ 'Thames Jottings', *Observer*, 8 January 1881, p. 162.
- ⁴ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 7 July 1883, p. 248.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, *Observer*, 28 July 1883, p. 12.
- ⁶ 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 1 September 1883, p. 12; 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 29 September 1883, p. 8.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 3 November 1883, p. 16; 'Waiorongomai', *Observer*, 1 December 1883, p. 12.
- ⁸ 'Resident Magistrate's Court', *Te Aroha News*, 18 October 1884, p. 2.
- ⁹ 'Te Aroha', *Observer*, 22 September 1883, p. 16.
- ¹⁰ Marriage Certificate Michael O'Keefe, 2 November 1884, Marriages, 3678/1884; Death Certificate of Michael Dineen O'Keefe, 14 May 1931, Deaths, 1615/1931, BDM; Passenger List of 'Earl Granville', arrived in Auckland on 4 March 1880, Microfilm 287469, folio 17, Mormon Archives, Hamilton; Assisted Immigrants to Auckland, Social Security Department, SS Im, 15/373, IM 5/4/33, no. 399; M.W.D. O'Keefe to Secretary, Board of Examiners, 12 January 1897, Mines Department, MD1, 97/239; M.W.D. O'Keefe to Minister of Mines, 19 October 1901, Mines Department, MD1, 06/458, ANZ-W; *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, Christchurch, 1902, p. 473; *Thames Star*, 11 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹¹ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-8, folios 155, 202, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.
- ¹² Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Licensed Holdings 1881-7, folios 8, 28, 118, 132, BBAV 11500/9a; Transfers and Assignments, BBAV 11581/1a, no. 46; BBAV 11581/2a, no. 588; BBAV 11581/3a, no. 41; BBAV 11581/4a, no. 480, ANZ-A; *New Zealand Gazette*, 1 June 1882, p. 800, 16 November 1882, p. 1733, 31 May 1883, p. 722.
- ¹³ M.W.D. O'Keefe to Warden, 9 September 1882, attached to Te Aroha Warden's Court, Notices of Marking Out Claims 1882, no. 157, BBAV 11557/2a, ANZ-A.
- ¹⁴ For example, Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1881-4, no. 38 of 1882, BBAV 11221/1a, ANZ-A.
- ¹⁵ Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-88, folios 288, 289, BBAV 11567/1a, ANZ-A.
- ¹⁶ Death Certificate of John O'Shea, 17 May 1942, Deaths, 1212/1942; Marriage Certificate of Michael O'Keefe, 2 November 1884, Marriages, 3678/1884, BDM.
- ¹⁷ *Te Aroha News*, 30 June 1883, p. 2.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 August 1883, p. 2.
- ¹⁹ Waiorongomai Correspondent, *Te Aroha News*, 22 May 1889, p. 2.
- ²⁰ M.W.D. O'Keefe to Minister of Mines, 3 September 1885; Under-Secretary, Mines Department, to M.W.D. O'Keefe, 14 September 1885, Mines Department, MD1, 85/1095, ANZ-W.
- ²¹ *Te Aroha News*, 7 February 1885, p. 2, 21 March 1885, p. 2, 15 August 1885, p. 2, 16 October 1886.
- ²² Declaration of J.T. O'Shea, 2 March 1892, Mines Department, MD1, 92/687, ANZ-W; recollections of John O'Shea, *Te Aroha News*, 28 November 1940, p. 5.
- ²³ Declaration of D.G. MacDonnell, 17 May 1892, Mines Department, MD1, 92/687, ANZ-W.
- ²⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 4 April 1888, p. 2, 9 June 1888, p. 2, 18 August 1888, p. 2, 4 December 1888, p. 2.
- ²⁵ For example, *Te Aroha News*, 8 December 1883, p. 3, p. 7; *Waikato Times*, 24 February 1885, p. 2.
- ²⁶ *Te Aroha News*, 13 February 1889, p. 2, 27 February 1889, p. 2, 4 May 1889, p. 2.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 February 1886, p. 7, 20 March 1886, p. 7.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* 4 February 1914, p. 2; for an example of his spelling, see letter from 'Figfuludal (alias Michael W.D. O'K)', *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 October 1885, p. 7, 31 October 1885, p. 2, 14 November 1885, p. 7.
- ³⁰ *Waikato Times*, 7 September 1886, p. 2; letter from James Munro, *Te Aroha News*, 14 January 188.

- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 5 March 1887, p. 3; Malcolm Robertson to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, 16 March 1887, 17 March 1887; M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, 17 March 1887, 6 April 1887; A.P. Etheridge to M.W.D. O'Keeffe, 4 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.
- ³² M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Crown Lands Board, Auckland, 12 March 1889, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A.
- ³³ Memoranda, March 1889, November 1889, July 1890; M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Thomas Humphries, 22 February 1890; Thomas Humphries to M.W.D. O'Keeffe, 4 March 1890, Lands and Survey Department, BAAZ 1108/103a, ANZ-A; 'Resident Magistrate's Court', *Te Aroha News*, 5 February 1890, p. 2, 1 March 1890, p. 2.
- ³⁴ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1889-1896, no. 112 of 1889; Judgment Summonses heard on 10 December 1889, 4 February 1890, BCDG 11221/1c, ANZ-A; 'Resident Magistrate's Court', *Te Aroha News*, 11 December 1889, p. 2, 5 February 1890, p. 2.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 December 1889, p. 2.
- ³⁶ Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Civil Record Book 1889-1896, Judgment Summons heard on 10 December 1889, BCDG 11221/1c; Home Warrant Book 1883-1928, plaints 101, 112 of 1890, BBAV 11498/1a, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 25 January 1890, p. 2, 1 February 1890, p. 2.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 February 1890, p. 2, 22 February 1890, p. 2, 1 March 1890, p. 2.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 March 1890, p. 2.
- ³⁹ 'Police Court', *Ibid.*, 5 October 1889, p. 2, 1 March 1890, p. 2.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 March 1890, p. 2; Supreme Court, Bankruptcy Register 1887-92, p. 278, BBAE 5639/1a, ANZ-A; *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 19 November 1891, p. 249.
- ⁴¹ *Cyclopedia of News Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 473.
- ⁴² *Mercantile and Bankruptcy Gazette*, 15 February 1894, p. 70; Auckland Star, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Sentinel and Miners' Journal*, 1 February 1894, p. 2.
- ⁴³ *Observer*, 15 June 1901, p. 6.
- ⁴⁴ *Te Aroha News*, 15 December 1883, p. 2, 29 December 1883, p. 2, 28 August 1889, p. 2, 4 September 1889, p. 2.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21 June 1884, p. 2.
- ⁴⁶ *Waikato Times*, 6 December 1884, p. 2; *Te Aroha News*, 14 November 1885, p. 7, 3 July 1886, p. 2, 24 July 1886, p. 3, 17 July 1889, p. 2, 20 July 1889, p. 2.
- ⁴⁷ Letter from 'Figfuludal (alias Michael W.D. O'Keeffe)', *Ibid.*, 15 December 1883, p. 2, 29 August 1885, p. 2, 10 October 1885, p. 7.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 15 December 1883, p. 2.
- ⁴⁹ *Observer*, 15 June 1901, p. 6.
- ⁵⁰ Declaration of J. Williams, 19 April 1892, Mines Department, MD1, 92/687, ANZ-W.
- ⁵¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 3 May 1894, p. 2, 3 September 1894, p. 3.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 28 January 1898, p. 3; Kuranui Caledonian Gold Mining Company, Tributers' Book 1898-1913, p. 20, School of Mines Archives, Thames; *Thames Star*, 16 June 1899, p. 2, 17 June 1899, p. 2, 21 November 1899, p. 2, 14 September 1901, p. 4; 'Thames Notes', *Observer*, 24 June 1899, p. 20; Bank of New Zealand, Thames Branch, Gold Purchase Register 1899-1932, entries for 12 September 1899, 14 November 1899, 14 July 1900, 25 August 1900, 8 September 1900, 19 October 1900, 31 May 1901, 29 June 1901, Bank of New Zealand Archives, Wellington.
- ⁵³ Memorandum of 5 October 1892, Mines Department, MD1, 92/687, ANZ-W; *New Zealand Gazette*, 11 February 1897, p. 454.
- ⁵⁴ *Thames Advertiser*, 22 June 1896, p. 3.
- ⁵⁵ Thames School of Mines, Register of Attendance, 1897 and 1898, folios 139, 140, 143, 151-153, 162-164, 169, 172, 175, 176, 182-184, School of Mines Archives, Thames; *New Zealand Gazette*, 3 February 1898, p. 193; *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 March 1898, p. 357; *Observer*, 17 August 1901, p. 8; M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Minister of Mines, 19 October 1901, Mines Department, MD1, 06/458, ANZ-W.
- ⁵⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 16 July 1894, p. 3, 15 August 1894, p. 3.
- ⁵⁷ For example, see *Ibid.*, 29 June 1896, p. 3, 3 May 1897, p. 3, 2 August 1897, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 14 June 1898, p. 2, 1 August 1898, p. 4.
- ⁵⁸ For his biography, see *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 865.
- ⁵⁹ *Thames Advertiser*, 2 November 1896, p. 3.
- ⁶⁰ *Thames Star*, 15 August 1898, p. 1; *Thames Advertiser*, 13 August 1898, p. 3.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Editorial, 15 August 1898, p. 2; reprinted in *Thames Star*, 15 August 1898, p. 1.
- ⁶² *Thames Advertiser*, 17 February 1899, p. 4.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4 September 1899, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 February 1899, p. 4; *Coromandel County News*, 25 September 1899, p. 3.
- ⁶⁵ Letter from M.W.D. O'Keeffe, *Thames Advertiser*, 18 March 1899, p. 4.

-
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 May 1899, p. 2.
- ⁶⁷ For example, *Ibid.*, 26 April 1899, p. 3, 1 May 1899, p. 2.
- ⁶⁸ Letter from M.W.D. O’Keeffe, *Ohinemuri Gazette*, 3 September 1898; reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 6 September 1898, p. 1.
- ⁶⁹ Letter from M.W.D. O’Keeffe, *Thames Star*, 25 October 1898, p. 3, *Thames Advertiser*, 26 October 1898, p. 4.
- ⁷⁰ Letters from M.W.D. O’Keeffe, *Ibid.*, 30 November 1899, p. 4, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 April 1901.
- ⁷¹ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1898, p. 4.
- ⁷² Letter from M.W.D. O’Keeffe, *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 30 November 1899, p. 4; *Coromandel County News*, 25 September 1899, p. 3; *Thames Star*, ‘Warden’s Court’, 5 June 1900, p. 2, 4 August 1900, p. 4.
- ⁷³ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 October 1898, p. 2; editorial, *Ibid.*, 1 November 1898, p. 2, reprinted in *Thames Star*, 1 November 1898, p. 4.
- ⁷⁴ ‘Warden’s Court’, *Thames Star*, 5 June 1900, p. 2.
- ⁷⁵ *Thames Star*, 10 May 1901, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ⁷⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1898, p. 4.
- ⁷⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 27 September 1901, p. 3.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11 May 1901, p. 3.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ⁸⁰ *Thames Star*, 11 May 1901, p. 4.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10 May 1901, p. 2.
- ⁸² *Thames Advertiser*, 3 August 1899, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ⁸³ *Coromandel County News*, 25 September 1899, p. 3; *Thames Star*, 3 August 1900, p. 2.
- ⁸⁴ *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1901, p. 6; *Thames Advertiser*, 21 December 1898, p. 4.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 October 1898, p. 2, 15 February 1899, p. 3, 17 February 1899, p. 4; *Thames Star*, 1 May 1899.
- ⁸⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 31 July 1899, p. 3.
- ⁸⁷ *Thames Star*, 19 June 1899, p. 1, 20 June 1899, p. 2, 20 June 1889, p. 2, 21 June 1889, p. 2, 27 June 1889, p. 2, 29 June 1899, p. 4; *Waihi Chronicle*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 5 July 1899, p. 2.
- ⁸⁸ *Thames Star*, 6 July 1899, p. 2.
- ⁸⁹ *Waihi Chronicle*, 5 July 1899, reprinted in *Thames Advertiser*, 8 July 1899, p. 2.
- ⁹⁰ *Thames Advertiser*, 4 August 1899, p. 2, 5 August 1899, p. 3, editorial, 7 August 1899, p. 2; *Thames Star*, Waihi Correspondent, 4 August 1899, p. 4, 7 August 1899, p. 1.
- ⁹¹ *Waihi Chronicle*, n.d., cited in *Thames Advertiser*, 9 August 1899, p. 2.
- ⁹² ‘Thames Queries’, *Observer*, 15 July 1899, p. 20.
- ⁹³ *Thames Advertiser*, 8 August 1899, p. 3, 9 August 1899, p. 3, 10 August 1899, p. 4.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 December 1899, p. 4.
- ⁹⁵ Cartoon, *Observer*, 26 August 1899, p. 7; photograph, *New Zealand Graphic*, 23 June 1900, p. 1180.
- ⁹⁶ For example, *Waihi Chronicle*, n.d., press cutting in scrapbook, p. 23, William Wallnutt Papers, 84/173, 923N, Waihi Museum; ‘Thames Queries’, *Observer*, 15 July 1899, p. 20.
- ⁹⁷ *Thames Star*, 6 August 1900, p. 2, 7 August 1900, p. 4, 8 August 1900, p. 2, 9 August 1900, p. 1.
- ⁹⁸ Letter from ‘A Miner’, *Ibid.*, 21 September 1900, p. 2.
- ⁹⁹ For instance, letter from M.W.D. O’Keeffe, *Ibid.*, 5 September 1900, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1901, p. 3; evidence of William Guilder, *Thames Star*, 22 April 1901, p. 3; Jeremy Mouat, ‘The Ultimate Crisis of the Waihi Gold Mining Company’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 26, no. 2, October 1992, p. 185.
- ¹⁰¹ *New Zealand Herald*, 12 September 1901, p. 6.
- ¹⁰² *Thames Star*, 28 February 1901, p. 2, 1 March 1901, p. 2, 4 March 1901, p. 2, 7 March 1891, p. 3, 8 March 1901, p. 2, 9 March 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁰³ Waihi Correspondent, *Thames Star*, 11 March 1901, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁴ See editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 3 April 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Observer*, 11 January 1902, p. 5.
- ¹⁰⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 20 April 1901, p. 3, 22 April 1901, p. 6, 24 April 1901, p. 6, 25 April 1901, p. 3, 26 April 1901, p. 6, 27 April 1901, p. 3, 29 April 1901, p. 6, 1 May 1901, p. 6, 2 May 1901, p. 6, 3 May 1901, p. 6, 4 May 1901, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 9 May 1901, p. 3, 10 May 1901, p. 6; *Thames Star*, 9 May 1901, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 May 1901, p. 2.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 11 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹¹¹ *Thames Star*, 10 May 1901, p. 2, 11 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, 11 May 1901, p. 4; *New Zealand Herald*, 11 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹¹³ *Thames Star*, 11 May 1901, p. 4.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

- ¹¹⁵ *Observer*, 2 August 1902, p. 4; for cartoon of this exchange, see *Ibid.*, 18 May 1901, p. 12.
- ¹¹⁶ *Thames Star*, 11 May 1901, p. 4.
- ¹¹⁷ 'The Mining Dispute – Gleanings from the Conciliation Board Evidence', *Observer*, 18 May 1901.
- ¹¹⁸ *Thames Star*, 16 May 1901, p. 2.
- ¹¹⁹ *Observer*, 25 May 1901, p. 15.
- ¹²⁰ S. Gee, 'The Board at the Thames', *Observer*, 25 May 1901, p. 23.
- ¹²¹ *Observer*, 15 June 1901, p. 6.
- ¹²² *Ibid.*, 17 August 1901, p. 8.
- ¹²³ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 May 1901, p. 6, 17 May 1901, p. 3, 20 May 1901, p. 7, 22 May 1901, p. 6; *Thames Star*, 18 May 1901, p. 1, 23 May 1901, p. 4, 24 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1901, p. 3.
- ¹²⁵ *New Zealand Mines Record*, 16 June 1901, pp. 493-495; *Thames Star*, 10 June 1901, p. 2, 11 June 1901, p. 2, 12 June 1901, pp. 2, 4, 17 August 1901, p. 2; *Waitekauri Age*, n.d., cited in *Thames Star*, 20 June 1901, p. 2; Mouat, 'The Ultimate Crisis', p. 185.
- ¹²⁶ *Thames Star*, 20 June 1901, p. 3, 24 June 1901, p. 4, Waihi Correspondent, 27 June 1901, p. 2; Mouat, 'The Ultimate Crisis', pp. 186-87.
- ¹²⁷ *Thames Star*, 24 June 1901, p. 4, 25 June 1901, p. 4, 29 June 1901, p. 2, Waihi Correspondent, 27 June 1901, p. 2.
- ¹²⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 22 June 1901, p. 6, 24 June 1901, p. 6, 27 June 1901, p. 5, 2 July 1901, p. 5; *Thames Star*, 24 June 1901, pp. 2, 3, Waihi Correspondent, 27 June 1901, p. 2, 8 July 1901, p. 2, 22 July 1901, p. 4.
- ¹²⁹ *Thames Star*, 22 June 1901, p. 4.
- ¹³⁰ *New Zealand Herald*, 1 July 1901, p. 6.
- ¹³¹ *Thames Star*, 4 July 1901, p. 4.
- ¹³² *Ibid.*, 24 June 1901, p. 2; *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1901, p. 6; *Thames Star*, 9 July 1901, pp. 2, 4, 11 July 1901, p. 2, 19 July 1901, p. 4.
- ¹³⁴ *Thames Star*, 5 August 1901, pp. 2, 4, 6 August 1901, p. 3, 7 August 1901, pp. 2, 4, 9 August 1901, p. 4, 10 August 1901, pp. 2, 3.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 August 1901, p. 1.
- ¹³⁶ Cartoon, *Observer*, 17 August 1901, p. 14.
- ¹³⁷ For his career, see *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2, pp. 272-3.
- ¹³⁸ *New Zealand Herald*, 7 September 1901, p. 3.
- ¹³⁹ *Thames Star*, 9 September 1901, p. 2.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, *New Zealand Herald*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14 September 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 10 September 1901, p. 6.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14 September 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Thames Star*, 14 September 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁴⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 17 September 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1901, p. 6, 19 September 1901, p. 6.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 September 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Thames Star*, 28 September 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1901, pp. 2-3; *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1901, p. 6; Mouat, 'The Ultimate Crisis', pp. 187-8.
- ¹⁵¹ *Observer*, 12 October 1901, p. 3; for a cartoon version of its opinion, see *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁵² Editorials, *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1901, p. 4, 8 January 1902, p. 4; *Thames Star*, 5 October 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁵³ *New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1901, p. 6; *Thames Star*, 1 September 1902, p. 4.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁵⁵ 'Our Telephone', *Ibid.*, 8 October 1901, p. 4; cartoon, *Observer*, 12 October 1901, p. 12; *Coromandel County News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 31 October 1901, p. 3.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 October 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁵⁷ M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Minister of Mines, 19 October 1901, Mines Department, MD1, 06/458, ANZ-W.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Thames Star*, 21 October 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁵⁹ For an example of the former, see poem 'Good Times Ahead', *Thames Star*, 28 October 1901, p. 4.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 January 1902, p. 4.
- ¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Auckland Correspondent plus editorial, 4 January 1902, p. 2; editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 8 January 1902, p. 4; *Evening Post* (Wellington), n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 9 January 1902, p. 2; *Coromandel County News*, n.d., reprinted in *Thames Star*, 14 January 1902, p. 1.
- ¹⁶² Editorial, *Ibid.*, 4 January 1902, p. 2.

- ¹⁶³ Letter from Alexander Whitley, *Thames Star*, 4 January 1902, p. 2; letter from 'Not a Miner', *Ibid.*, 6 January 1902, p. 3; letter from John Seymour (treasurer of the Thames Miners' Union), *Ibid.*, 6 January 1902, p. 4; letter from 'A Miner for 20 Years', *Ibid.*, 7 January 1902, p. 3; 'Notice to Correspondents', *Ibid.*, 9 January 1902, p. 2; 'Our Letter Box', *Observer*, 18 January 1902, p. 24.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 January 1902, p. 3; see also 'Michael O'Keeffe Doesn't Want Much' (cartoon), p. 13.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Thames Star*, 9 January 1902, p. 2.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 11 January 1902, p. 1, 14 January 1902, p. 1.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1902, p. 2.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1902, p. 4, 17 March 1902, p. 3, 18 March 1902, p. 3, 19 March 1902, p. 2, 20 March 1902, p. 1, advertisement, 21 March 1902, p. 3.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Observer*, 8 March 1902, p. 5; *Thames Star*, 19 March 1902, p. 2.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 March 1902, p. 2.
- ¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1902, p. 2, 14 February 1902, p. 1, 21 February 1902, p. 1, 19 February 1902, p. 2, 27 February 1902, p. 4; Waihi Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 10 February 1902, p. 6.
- ¹⁷² *Thames Star*, 21 February 1902, p. 1.
- ¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1902, p. 4, 26 June 1902, p. 4, 1 September 1902, p. 4; Mouat, 'The Ultimate Crisis', p. 188.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Thames Star*, 26 June 1902, p. 2, 14 July 1902, p. 2, 5 August 1902, p. 1, advertisement, 8 August 1902, p. 2, 6 September 1902, p. 2.
- ¹⁷⁵ Thames Correspondent, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 July 1902, p. 6.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Thames Star*, 8 September 1902, p. 4.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1902, p. 2, 15 October 1902, p. 2, 22 November 1902, p. 6, 20 July 1903, p. 2.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 April 1902, p. 2, *Ibid.*, 'Our Telephone', 24 April 1902, p. 4, 29 September 1902, p. 3, 10 October 1902, p. 2, 13 October 1902, p. 2; *Observer*, 29 March 1902, p. 4, 10 May 1902, p. 4, 18 October 1902, p. 3.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Thames Star*, 23 October 1902, p. 1; *Coromandel County News*, 11 November 1902, p. 3, 28 November 1902, p. 3; *Observer*, 6 December 1902, p. 7.
- ¹⁸⁰ For example, Agreement between M.W.D. O'Keeffe and Thomas Millett and Hauraki Gold Mining Company, 15 July 1902, Hesketh and Richmond Papers, MS 440, box 65, 1380/H, Auckland Public Library; Joseph Dyer to Minister of Mines, 22 June 1903, Mines Department, MD1, 03/691, ANZ-W; 'Obadiah', 'Shares and Mining', *Observer*, 15 August 1903, p. 10; Inspector of Mines, Thames, Letterbook 1903-6, p. 102, 20 April 1904, YZAB 1240/3, ANZ-A; memorandum of discussion between Minister of Mines, M.W.D. O'Keeffe, and John Carroll, n.d. [26 May 1905?], Mines Department, MD1, 06/12, ANZ-W; *Thames Star*, 3 October 1905, p. 4, 30 April 1907, p. 2.
- ¹⁸¹ Company Files, BADZ 5181, box 244 no. 2433, ANZ-A; *Te Aroha News*, 15 October 1910, p. 2; *Thames Star*, 13 October 1913, p. 4; Mike Johnston, *Gold in a Tin Dish: The search for gold in Marlborough and Eastern Nelson*, Nelson, 1992, p. 494; M.W.D. O'Keeffe to Ohinemuri County Council, 2 September 1914; Inspector of Mines to Hugh Poland, 10 July 1915, Inspector of Mines, Waihi, BBDO A902, S117, ANZ-A; Inspector of Mines to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 22 December 1914, Mines Department, MD1, 1915/387, ANZ-W.
- ¹⁸² For example, Johnston, *Gold in a Tin Dish*, pp. 523-4; Inspector of Mines, Reefton to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 11 August 1916, 24 September 1916, 4 February 1917, 4 July 1917, 24 April 1918, Mines Department, MD1, 16/646, ANZ-W;
- ¹⁸³ Matthew Paul to Under-Secretary, Mines Department, 21 October 1921, Inspector of Mines, Waihi, BBD0 A902, S116, ANZ-A; Johnston, p. 514; Report of Inspector of Mines. Reefton, May 1925, September 1925, January 1926, October 1926, December 1927, May 1928, November 1928, Mines Department, MD1, 12/110, ANZ-W.
- ¹⁸⁴ Report of Inspector of Mines, Reefton, February 1929, Mines Department, MD1, 12/110, ANZ-W; Death Certificate of Michael O'Keeffe, 14 May 1931, Deaths, 1615/1931, BDM.