

167. You impugn the Warden's decision in granting these applications?—No. I say if instructions are given to the Wardens to give residence-areas over any country which probably will be township land, it is unfair to the company, which should get it if you can avoid using it for gold-mining.

168. You say that the Minister of Mines or the Government should dictate to the Warden what he should grant and what refuse?—No; but if the Warden has to submit everything to Ministers—

169. No; that is not so?—The Wardens formerly submitted everything to the company, but recently received instructions not to do so. And moreover, the Commissioner of Lands has received instructions not to hold any communication with the company direct. All correspondence must come direct from Wellington, and the company is not to receive the same consideration as other people in the colony.

170. As far as the Wardens are concerned that is quite right. They are told to administer the Mining Act with the company as with other persons. On the question of regulations you admit you have been communicating with the Commissioner of Lands. Have you not communicated with the Commissioners at Nelson and Westland, and asked them to make regulations under section 33?—The company under the contract have a right to arrange with the Queen for regulations dealing with the land. The difficulty of the two months' reference, under section 33, is sending the people out of the country. Unfortunately, I used the word "regulations" in referring to the agreement with the Minister. We were put into communication with the Commissioners of Crown Lands, and instructions were received that we were to send in applications to the Commissioners, who would assess the value under the clause of the contract, and that they would be considered and referred to the Government. This arrangement we attempted to get altered to shorten the period that people had to wait while the applications were being considered. It was maintained that you told them they were being considered, and would not be made until after the mining reserves were made. Then you suddenly said you had no power to make regulations. We informed you that we did not mean regulations under the statute. You then decided that you could make an agreement; but it took you a considerable time to find out that you could, and we came to an amicable arrangement with regard to it.

171. Was it not a fact that you were communicating with the Commissioners of Lands, under the contract, and you admitted that that was the case?—We were communicating with the Commissioner, thinking we were dealing with the officer authorised by Government to deal with us. We took it for granted that he would submit the details to the Minister.

172. You have discovered that you were in error in doing so?—We never admitted so. You say so. I have introduced the question as strengthening a point in favour of arranging the contract with a view of facilitating the completion of the work.

TUESDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1892.

Mr. ROBERT WILSON further examined.

173. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] I think you said the Inangahua County people were strongly inclined to come to an arrangement with regard to the mining reserves that would facilitate both gold-mining and settlement, and were perfectly ready to have the mining reserves made?—I think I told you that when the county people had interviewed you they changed their opinion, owing to some statement which they allege you had made relative to having power of selling the mining reserves for settlement purposes; and they said at once, if you deal with the mining reserves for settlement purposes, then the land will not be locked up, and there will be no objection to the mining reserves being made.

174. It was a question of selling the timber or selling the reserves for settlement?—I think it was selling the land for settlement purposes, apart from the timber.

175. As a fact, there is no power to sell the mining reserves?—I say no, under the contract; but they inferred that there was power; and I think, if you refer to certain correspondence and articles in the *Inangahua Times*, they said that my views and yours were so far apart that the matter ought to be referred to the Law Officers to get an opinion as to the capability of selling the mining reserves.

176. You have not seen anything on the subject in my handwriting?—I accepted your statement at the last sitting that you had not told them so.

177. Has the company made any selection of timber on any mine reserve since the reserves have been proclaimed?—We applied for timber, and one of the sawmillers on the West Coast wanted an area, and I believe he was informed that he could not have it because it was going to be made a mining reserve. And, moreover, we applied for a timber area—it was near Kumara, which I think you will remember. This was referred to the Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Warden, who both reported that the land was not required for mining, and could be dealt with for timber; and then we were informed that it had been made a mining reserve, and could not be given to us, notwithstanding the report.

178. When this was made a mining reserve did you apply for the timber?—We were informed that we could not have the timber or the land, as it was a mining reserve.

179. Did you apply for the timber off that land after it was made a mining reserve?—I cannot say that I did without referring to the papers. I think we have the correspondence here.

180. Are you aware that portion of the land is now held on mining claims?—I am not aware of it. I can say the reports of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Warden stated that it was not required for mining, and we ought to have had it for timber purposes.