

question was discussed. I wish to give evidence as to this afterwards. Did you consult the law advisers of the Crown as to the legality of making these reserves?—Everything has been done with the approval of the law officers.

9. Did you draw attention to the interpretation clause in regard to these blocks?—I do not think it necessary to draw the attention of the Solicitor-General, Mr. Reid, to anything of that sort. He is a very careful man, and I should think it would be bordering on impertinence to do so.

10. It is quite possible that it might have been overlooked?—I do not think so.

11. You stated that the company had not protested against the reserves being made. Do you wish to modify that?—I do not know of any protests being made. There is some correspondence about the reserves at Blackball and Kumara; but in the case of the other blocks notices have been sent and no answer received. The company has been silent, and if there had been a protest it would be on record. [Letter of September 24/91, read. See Appendix, pages 21, 22.] I remember that letter.

12. Do you not consider that a protest?—Yes; so far as these particular blocks. I have said so. [Letter, October 29/92, read. See Appendix, page 23.] I have said in my evidence that these letters were in existence. The first one, of course, is a general protest; the second is the one I referred to as indicating a particular block at Kelly's Ridge. That is October last, and all the reserves in the south were made before that. I understood up to that time, as far as concerns the blocks south of Kumara, that there was no protest against them.

13. I think the correspondence will show that there was a protest?—I think you sent a general protest before I saw you in Christchurch.

14. You laid stress on the point that I had stated that I had no objection to the making of reserves around gold centres. I stated that I had no objection to a reasonable amount of reserves being made around known gold centres. Is that from your memory what I stated?—It would be in the evidence, and will speak for itself.

15. You said I did not object to mining reserves around good centres. I stated that I did not object to a reasonable amount around known gold centres?—I do not wish to put any interpretation on what you said which would be unreasonable, and I do not think the Government would wish it.

16. Mr. Gordon stated that none of the land near the railway would be fit for settlement, and you state that it would have been taken up long ago if open for sale?—I say again that there are some parts which speculators and other people would buy up with a view to levying black-mail. The land would have been taken up for that purpose, and the reason why the Land Boards would not sell it was because it was wanted for mining purposes.

17. Is it not a fact that some of these lands were put up by auction?—Some of the land has been applied for and advertised for sale by the Land Board. For instance, Dr. Dermott and a syndicate behind him applied to the Land Board for the Kumara Flat. That was nice flat land, and some parts were fit for cultivation. The prospectors working there—and they had been working there for some years—came to me and said it would be a sin for any person to buy that flat, and I went down to Hokitika and put a stop to the sale of it. Had Dr. Dermott got that flat—and there was only a little gold being got at the time it was wanted—the Kumara Goldfield, which is the best in the colony, would have been purchased by a syndicate. At one time it had a population of 3,000. Over a million pounds' worth of gold has been produced, and the yield of gold last year had a value of £54,558. From 1864 to 1876, whilst the miners were working within five miles, at Callaghan's and right across the other side of the river, numerous shafts had been sunk, and it stood from 1865 to 1877, and was considered a duffer flat; and, as I have said before, people with an eye to business wanted to buy it.

18. Do you confirm Mr. Gordon's statement that none of the land along this line is fit for settlement?—Yes, I do.

19. And all the land you said that would have been sold would be held for speculative mining purposes?—I do not say that all the land could be sold. People would not go and purchase land on the mountain-tops.

20. That is low-lying land from Reefton to Brunnerton—I quote your own evidence?—I have tried some of the low-lying land. I grubbed and stumped it and brought it into cultivation at a cost of £60 an acre, and twelve months after it would not feed a goat to the acre. It is true that miners have improved some of it, but it has cost from £70 to £80 an acre.

21. You have seen the evidence taken before a Royal Commission as to the quality of this land along the line?—You have to take the evidence tendered. If you ask me as to a particular locality I could reply. If the Commission had been asked to report on particular localities their report might have been different. To put a general question as you have put it would not be fair to the Committee, and is not fair to me. Ask me as to a particular locality and I will tell you at once.

22. Is there any land in the Arnold's district fit for settlement?—Some of that land has been cleared and grubbed and put into grass, and I undertake to say that any person who has done it is a very heavy loser, and has not received back what it has cost him.

23. Is it not a fact that on the company's lands at Stony Creek and Kutuku men have cleared a great deal of ground and are reputed to be doing very well?—Some of these settlers have done very well on the Totara Flat. The land was not wanted for gold-mining purposes and was taken up years ago. The people on the West Coast have an eye to business as well as those in other parts, and they took the lands suitable for settlement. I had some of the land, and you could have had it at the upset price for years. More recently some of the land has brought a fair price; but that is land on the flat, and the company had no right of selection over it because it was selected years ago.

24. You consider, then, that certain lands on the West Coast included in the reserves would