

been at Huntly. But it seems very inconsistent when the Inspector informed us before the report was made that it was the intention of Ministers to subdivide the area in dispute. The Government are not justified in subdividing this area, as they have not proved that there is more coal in the property than would be sufficient for the life of one mine. The Taupiri Company's directors stated at a meeting that they had forty years' coal in sight, and that should be sufficient, without their trying to secure a portion of that which justly belongs to the syndicate. If the Right Hon. the Premier is consistent with his Monopolies Bill he must necessarily grant to the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate that which they are justly entitled to, and encourage competition as he is doing with the State Coal-mines at present. All we ask is that honourable members should look at this case from the point of equity and justice and uphold precedents.

3. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Who is Mr. Hetherington?—A gentleman who is interested in this area. He has also several small properties outside.

4. Is he a member of your syndicate?—Yes. There was a test case to see if Mr. Hetherington could get the same privileges as the Taupiri Company, but he was not granted the same privileges.

5. Do you mean that Mr. Hetherington was put up by you to test the matter?—Yes.

6. You stated that you applied to the Land Board for six months' protection?—Yes.

7. Will you give us the date of that protection? Have you got the protection notice, or any papers connected with it?—Yes. This is a letter from the Lands and Survey Department dated the 3rd December, 1902.

8. What does it say?—W. L. Meldrum, Huntly.—Huntly Coal-prospecting: In reference to your letter of the 22nd November asking for six months' extension of time to enable you to extend your prospecting operations, I have to inform you that the matter has been considered by the Land Board, and they have resolved to grant you the six months' extension for which you ask."

9. What was the date of your application for protection? That is what I want?—This is a memo. about the protection: "Editor, *Star*.—Kindly insert in *Star* the following notice, to appear, first, Tuesday night, 17th; second, Tuesday following, 24th: 'Notice.—This is to certify that we, the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate, have applied for protection of lease of Wahi Lake, Huntly, *re* provisions of section 4 of "The Coal-mines Act, 1891."—G. ROSSENBECK, W. L. MELDRUM.' Both insertions, 17th and 24th, sent to Mueller—one on the 18th, one on the 25th."

10. What month was that in?—February, 1903.

11. That was after you received the letter from the Department?—Yes.

12. You must have made application to the Land Board for protection. Have you got your letter?—Yes. It seems that there had been some point raised, as the Taupiri Company had not seen the advertisement regarding the protection in the newspaper, and Mr. Mueller wrote us. I can produce the letter: "Department of Lands and Survey, District Office, Auckland, 10th February, 1903.—Mr. G. Rossenbeck, Huntly.—Coal lease, Wahi Lake: With reference to your letter relative to above, I have to request you to comply with the provisions of section 4 of 'The Coal-mines Act, 1891,' by advertising twice, at an interval of one week, in some newspaper circulating in the district, and furnish copies of advertisements for record in this office. If this request is not complied with within two weeks from this date the application will be considered as lapsed."

13. What did you do subsequent to that?—On the 18th and 25th the advertisement appeared in the *Star*.

14. Have you got a letter from the Land Board saying that protection had been granted to you?—This letter reads: "Department of Lands and Survey, District Office, Auckland, 3rd December, 1902.—W. L. Meldrum, Huntly.—Huntly Coal-prospecting: In reference to your letter of the 22nd November, asking for six months' extension of time to enable you to extend your prospecting operations, I have to inform you that the matter has been considered by the Land Board, and they have resolved to grant you the six months' extension for which you ask."

15. The 22nd November was when you wrote, was it?—Yes.

16. Then you got an answer, dated 3rd December, stating that your application was granted?—Yes.

17. Then it was upset afterwards—there was a doubt about it?—No.

18. What did the Commissioner say?—A point was raised by the Taupiri Company applying for the whole area on the second occasion, when they were told again that it was protected.

19. I understand all that. I want to know what the Land Board did then. They told you to advertise?—We complied with their request.

20. What communication had you with the Board prior to that letter of the 10th February, 1903, which you read just now?—The letter asking for protection.

21. There was none since the letter of the 3rd December, 1902?—No.

22. Did you write any letter between the 3rd December and 10th February?—No; I am almost certain, because we set to work at once and got the advertisement inserted. This is a letter from the Department, dated the 30th October, 1902: "Mr. G. Rossenbeck, Huntly. Coal-boring operations: In answer to your letter of the 25th instant relative to boring for coal, Wahi Lake, I have to inform you that the question of extension of time will be considered by the Board at its next meeting on the 28th November. I should be obliged if you will forward some short account of the work in progress, as at present there is not sufficient information to frame a recommendation to lay before the Board."

23. Then you applied on the 22nd November, 1902?—Yes.

24. You got an answer, dated the 3rd December, and you received another letter from the Department, dated the 10th February, 1903, regarding some formalities?—Yes.

25. You complied with the request in that letter. What letter did you get after that from the Department dealing with protection?—Here is a letter dated the 30th April, 1903: "In reference to your application on behalf of the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate for a coal-lease under the Wahi Lake, I have to inform you that the matter has been considered by the Land Board, when it