

51. It was a sort of general grant of protection, without any area being mentioned?—There was no area mentioned. We thought it was no use throwing our money away, as money had been thrown away before. The Waikato Coal-mining Company bored there twenty years ago, and some of the holes are still to be seen.

52. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] When you applied you applied for a right to prospect, did you not?—Yes.

53. You did not apply for a coal lease?—No.

54. And you were not asked to pay any rent?—No; it was left over pending our operations.

55. I suppose your prospecting right included the right to prospect for gold, coal, or any other minerals?—No; we applied for the right to prospect for coal.

56. After you had sunk the two bores did you find coal in them?—Yes.

57. Did it become generally known throughout the district that you had found coal?—Yes. You cannot keep any secrets as regards boreholes.

58. Did you tell the Commissioner of Crown Lands when you interviewed him that the area included Lake Wahi?—Yes.

59. You wanted to have Lake Wahi included?—Yes.

60. I suppose you had an idea there was coal under the lake?—Yes, we knew there was a certain amount.

61. When you applied for protection was it protection of your boring-rights that you asked for?—Yes. We applied for protection for coal-prospecting.

62. Of course, that included the works that you spent your time and money on?—Yes.

63. And the Land Board granted it?—They granted six months' extension of time.

64. When was the application put in by the other people—was it during that period?—Perhaps Mr. Alison could tell you.

65. I am asking you. Do you recollect whether it was any time within six months of December, 1902?—It was while our protection was in existence.

66. Those other applications went in?—Yes.

67. And you thought they would not be dealt with while you had the ground protected?—That is so.

68. You reckoned you were perfectly safe?—Yes.

69. I think you said that the Taupiri Company had a friend at Court in the person of Mr. Gordon. Is he a director of the Taupiri Coal Company at the present time?—Yes.

70. And also consulting engineer to the State Coal-mines Department?—Yes.

71. It is a peculiar position, is it not?—It is.

72. Would it be of any financial benefit to Mr. Gordon if he got you off this ground?—Decidedly. He could retain the position for years and years probably.

73. It would materially increase the value of his company's mine if the Company got the ground that you had prospected?—It would.

74. Do you think he used his influence with the members of the Land Board to try to cancel the protection, or with the Government to try to do you out of the ground?—Well, he was going in at one door of the Commissioner's room as I was going in at the other, when I was going in to have a little squaring-up.

75. Did you make any formal application for a coal lease between the time you applied for the protection and the expiration of the six months?—Yes, we were within a month of our time expiring.

76. It did not expire?—No.

77. What area did you apply for?—The whole area—1,300 acres.

78. Did you deposit the necessary amount of rent with your application?—Yes; £176.

79. That would be 3s. an acre on the whole area?—Yes.

80. Consequently you established a prior right of application for this ground?—Yes.

81. What is the position now? Has your application been declined?—No. When Mr. Hayes Inspector of Mines, was sent to report on the property he met me, as the representative of the syndicate, and asked me if I would point out the area applied for. I said "Certainly." I took him along the main road, and pointed out that the bed-rock was here [Place indicated on plan], and was also right round it [Indicated]. [Witness here pointed out on the plan and explained the different areas, position of boreholes, where coal was believed to be, &c.]

82. Does the area you have applied for adjoin the Taupiri Company's holding?—Yes; they have acquired all this property [Indicated].

83. Since you applied or before?—Before.

84. Do you know how much ground they hold?—I could not say exactly.

85. Have they 2,000 acres?—They have a lot more in the vicinity, I believe. Some members of the company have 6,000, I believe.

86. Under different leases?—Yes.

87. Are the company working these areas?—Some are being worked, and some are lying dormant. There are two shafts and one dip in the Taupiri Company's mine.

88. Do you know whether they have tried to amalgamate the leases?—I could not say whether it is under one lease. A good deal of their land is freehold.

89. Are there 2,000 acres leasehold?—I could not say.

90. *Mr. J. Allen.* As far as your prospecting and all that you know about the field leads you to believe, where do you reckon the bulk of the coal is?—I think the bulk is just here—under the small lake [Place indicated].

91. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] How does the question of the 100 acres come in?—The Commissioner advised us to send for a tracing. Nothing has been granted. We have simply a prospector's right.