

of the correspondence and everything in connection with it, as far as I know, is set out in the documents I have put before the Committee.

174. Do you remember a meeting of shareholders of the Taupiri Company which was held at the Chamber of Commerce, Auckland, on the 19th January?—Yes.

175. Do you remember making the following statement attributed to you in the paper: "Mr. Alison then proceeded to explain that in 1902 a syndicate called the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate made application to the Crown Lands Commissioner for 100 acres of Lake Wahi. Mr. Ralph received information that the application had been made. A meeting of directors was called, and the company applied for the whole area of the lake, some 1,250 acres, and after much pressure the Government granted 250 acres." That is the newspaper report?—It is not necessarily correct. The pressure that was brought to bear upon the Government was simply this: The company applied for some 400 acres, but could not get that 400 acres granted to them. They have been endeavouring to obtain the lease of that area for a considerable time; but through the interference of the Huntly Prospecting Syndicate and a mistaken sympathy having been extended to them by the Department and the Minister of Mines, the company has only recently received intimation that it is to obtain some 230 acres.

176. Was it vital to your company to acquire this portion of the lake—the portion allotted?—The company did not apply for 400 acres of Lake Wahi simply out of philanthropic feeling towards the Government. Of course, it was a business transaction on the part of the company.

177. Do you not consider it is just as vital to the syndicate to have that much cut off?—I have no doubt the syndicate would like to absorb the whole of the Taupiri Coal Company; but that has nothing to do with the business before the Committee.

178. Are you aware that Mr. Ralph, on a second occasion, after you had kept the borer longer than you agreed to, went into the office, and his application was again refused?—I know nothing of it. Any applications in connection with the Wahi Lake were made not by Mr. Ralph, but by the company itself.

179. But Mr. Ralph was the representative of the company?—He was one of the directors.

180. Was it ever suggested by your company, through Mr. Gilberd, that the syndicate should ask for a bonus from the Government for finding coal, and the Taupiri Company would support the request?—There is not a particle of truth in it, as far as I am aware.

181. You are not aware that Mr. Gilberd approached us in that way?—I never heard of it. Mr. Gilberd was simply engaged to carry out certain boring, and I have never heard him make or of his making a suggestion in regard to this bonus question.

182. If your company were the original prospectors, how is it that you have not worked such a large area here at all?—We make no profession with regard to original prospecting at all. Ours is simply an established coal company that is working its ground, and desires to have a sufficient area to enable it to continue its working.

183. If this area were all workable and coal-bearing how long would it take your mine to work it out?—It will take a good number of years, I hope, in view of what it has cost the company. The area that we have secured, with the Wahi Lake area, will last, we estimate, at least twenty-five or thirty years.

184. If all this area is a good coal-bed, as some surmise, will you or I see it worked out?—Probably not—I hope not; but a business man must look ahead. You did not look far enough when you were making your application or there would have been no difficulty as far as your syndicate is concerned.

185. Have you and your company always kept within the Act—the Coal-mines Act?—In what respect?

186. Have you kept to the letter of the law?—In acquiring areas of land?

187. Yes?—Certainly. If we do not comply with the law we are very soon informed that we are not in a legal position.

188. Are you aware that the Taupiri Coal Company won from under the Waikato River a considerable amount of coal which belonged to the Government before they ever applied for the ground?—You are surely very hard up for something to ask questions about. You knew that Ralph's Taupiri Company worked under the Waikato River to enable them to get across the river.

189. Are you aware that the first tracing you sent in to the Department was for 410 acres round here [Place indicated on map]?—Something like that—400-odd acres.

190. Did the Commissioner say that it was protected for the Huntly Syndicate?—The Commissioner was not consulted when the first application was made. What the company did was simply this: an application was made for a given area, and it was afterwards found out that it overlapped.

191. *Mr. J. Allen.*] The reply was that Mr. Rossenbeck had already applied for a coal lease?—This is the letter, dated the 26th August, 1902: "In reference to your application of the 22nd instant on behalf of the Taupiri Coal-mines (Limited), I have to inform you that Mr. Rossenbeck has already applied for a coal lease for that portion of the Wahi Lake opposite to Section 48, Pepepe Parish. Therefore your application will have to be amended before it can come before the Land Board."

192. *Mr. Leather.*] Had your company spent any money prior to our starting work on this lake-shore?—In what way?

*Mr. Leather:* In boring along the lake [Place indicated on plan]?

*Mr. R. McKenzie:* On the ground that you applied for, *Mr. Leather*?

*Mr. Leather:* Yes.

*Witness:* The intervening land between Lake Wahi and the company's workings belonged to other owners, and negotiations were pending at the time with regard to that area. Arrangements were made, and then, in anticipation of the business becoming known, application was made for this portion of Lake Wahi [Indicated].