

Mr. R. McKenzie: Under the Coal-mines Act, before a lease is finally issued it has to be signed by the Governor. Now, the lease mentioned in your company's letter of the 18th May, 1904, is not signed by the Governor, consequently there is no lease in existence.

249. *The Chairman.*] You do not know of your own knowledge, Mr. Alison, whether the company has got the lease signed by the Governor or not?—I have not communicated with the secretary to the company further than to ask him to send the documents. He would not send the lease, but probably could not because, as he says in his letter of the 18th May, it was then forwarded on to the Commissioner of Crown Lands after being signed by the directors of the company. Whether it has been received back or not I do not know.

250. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] I think you said you had priority over other claimants?—Yes.

251. How do you establish that?—By our being the first applicant in the order of precedence, according to "The Coal-mines Act, 1901."

252. You said your application was on the 13th April?—I said nothing of the kind. It was on the 22nd August, 1902.

253. This application by the syndicate that I have here is dated the 4th August, 1902?—That is for 100 acres. It is the receipt for £15. The application for the 100 acres was made at the beginning of August by the syndicate. On the 22nd August the company applied for 250 acres, and eight months afterwards the syndicate applied for the whole lake.

254. You said in your statement, Mr. Alison, that there was no power to grant protection for prospecting, or to grant prospecting-areas?—I did not say anything of the kind.

255. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] I will ask the shorthand-writer to read what you did say. [The shorthand-writer here read out Mr. Alison's statement referred to as follows: "I would particularly draw the attention of the Committee to the fact that there is no provision in 'The Coal-mines Act, 1891,' by which coal-prospecting leases can be granted. If you will refer to clause 6 of 'The Coal-mines Act, 1891,' you will see how application for leases must be made. No provision is made for prospecting leases. . . . So that the Commissioner had no power under the Act, assuming Mr. Leather's statement to be correct, to grant a coal-prospecting license to the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate or any one else."]]

256. I suppose you will admit, after hearing that, that your memory is not good?—My recollection was quite right. I said that coal-prospecting leases could not be granted. You cannot find a word there about protection.

257. You said there was no power to grant protection?—I said nothing of the kind. I merely said that prospecting leases cannot be granted.

258. Do you consider that when those men applied to be allowed to prospect the ground they put in an application for the ground?—They must have put in an application for the ground, but whether correctly or not I cannot say.

259. And a Government officer took £192 15s. rent from them?—I do not know. The receipts are before the Committee and will show the amount he took.

260. You admit the Land Office took some money?—I admit everything that is shown by the documents before the Committee.

261. So that your priority of application evidently does not hold good?—You are entirely wrong in making that statement. I admit that the men made an application for 100 acres early in August, 1902, that the company made an application on the 22nd August, and that eight months afterwards the syndicate applied for the whole lake; and now they are demanding that the whole area should be granted to them.

262. You will admit that the Commissioner of Crown Lands granted them six months' protection—you heard the correspondence read?—I heard Mr. Leather make reference to that. I have not the correspondence read by him before me.

263. It was put in as evidence, that they were granted six months' protection?—I have nothing to do with what the Commissioner of Crown Lands did in granting the syndicate protection.

264. You say you applied for a lease, and you are of the opinion it has been granted. Is this a separate lease or is it an extension of your present lease?—I do not quite understand you. There is only one lease for the area marked A.

265. I understood that you had a lease of some Crown lands—200 or 300 acres?—That has no connection with this at all.

266. I will show that it has a connection. You held a lease before, from the Crown, of a coal-mining area?—Lake Hekenoa is held from the Crown Lands Commissioner, I think. The Kimihia Mine is part of an endowment, I believe.

267. What sort of an endowment?—A university endowment I think, but am not sure.

268. Did the Minister of Mines sign that lease?—I am not sure; I think not, but could easily ascertain if the Committee desire to know.

269. If he did not you do not hold any lands from the Crown at all, except this?—Except the right to mine the river-bed.

270. When did you get that right?—About four years ago.

271. What is the area?—I think there is about 100 acres.

272. You have a lease from the Crown for that, have you?—Yes.

273. And you reckon you have another lease from the Crown for another piece?—We should have.

274. Are you going to work through the same heading?—Yes.

275. Have you applied for amalgamation of those two leases that you hold from the Crown?—No. One is entirely separate from the other.

276. I think you stated that the men in the syndicate had got their information through working for the Taupiri Coal Company or in the Taupiri Mine?—Yes.

277. What did they leave for?—Mr. Leather is still working at the Taupiri Mine.

278. I think Mr. Leather said they refused to work for your company?—Mr. Rossenbeck,