

through some dispute with the manager—I forget the exact circumstances—ceased to work at the mine some months ago. Up to that time he had worked there for years.

279. Were they dismissed?—Mr. Rossenbeck was discharged; Mr. Leather has not been discharged.

280. Is there a Miners' Union there?—Yes.

281. Was Mr. Rossenbeck's case considered by them—I suppose you would not know?—I do not know. I do know there was no injustice done to Mr. Rossenbeck.

282. What I inferred from your remark was that they got the information from your company by unfair means?—I say that the knowledge which they gained, they gained by being connected with the company by being in the company's employ.

283. Were they at all singular as compared with other men working for your company or any other company?—I do not say they were.

284. The information was available to any of the miners?—Yes; any miners working in Ralph's drive.

285. So that they got no advantage over your company in that respect?—All miners working there know exactly how the workings are going.

286. *Mr. Rossenbeck.*] Mr. Alison made the statement that he was not aware of our prospecting when we started, or what we were doing. Will he stand here and tell the Committee that he never received any information through the Ralph or Harris families about all our doings from beginning to end?—Mr. Ralph is a director of the company, and whenever he has any information which he considers the company should have he gives it. As to the Huntly Prospecting Syndicate, excepting by name, I know very little of it. As to who comprise the syndicate I know nothing except that Mr. Leather is one member, and I take it Mr. Rossenbeck is another. As to what they have ascertained, or what their financial position is, I know little.

287. That is not the question. You said you were not aware we were prospecting at all?—Not when the company made the application.

288. That information being very important to your company, and Mr. Ralph being a director of the company and he being informed through the Harris family, who are related to him—you mean to say that he did not inform you of everything we were doing?—I have no doubt that Mr. Ralph informed the directors of anything which he thought they should be informed of. I do not remember that there was anything special he reported, except that you were boring on that section, and he hoped you would get coal, and that was all.

289. You said you did not know anything about it?—What I said was that I did not know anything about your syndicate. Nor do I.

290. Have you any idea that Mr. Gilberd, the man who did the boring for us, acted very suspiciously on several occasions? He put a hole down a certain depth and then refused to go further—he told us he could not go any further—he was stuck?—I do not know anything of it. What you are now saying is the first I have heard of it.

Some discussion here took place as to procedure, and *Mr. Leather* said, There are several questions I would like to ask Mr. Mueller, Commissioner of Crown Lands at Auckland. When I interviewed him in the first instance we acted on his advice.

291. *Mr. J. Allen* (to Mr. Leather).] Written or verbal?—Verbal. We sent a tracing in, and it was left over. The point is this: Why did not Mr. Mueller object to our application and send it back? It was on his recommendation—

292. *Mr. Herries.*] You mean when you applied for the prospecting license?—Yes.

293. *Mr. J. Allen.*] How much ground did the tracing cover?—It was for 100 acres, but there was no survey.

THURSDAY, 25TH AUGUST, 1904.

GERHARD J. MUELLER, ex-Commissioner of Crown Lands for Auckland District, examined. (No 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you give us your evidence, Mr. Mueller, as to what you know about this petition?—I have not been aware that a petition had been presented here. What is the wording of the petition? If you want the history of the whole transaction I can give you that quite easily.

2. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] The wording of the petition is: "In pursuance of 'The Coal-mines Act, 1891,' we desire to obtain, and will, full rights in accordance with this Act, being the original prospectors of Lakes Wahi and Rotoiti, adjoining the Taupiri Company's property, for coal-mining purposes. After having complied with the demands of the Commissioner and the Land Board, they have refused to grant the full area of our application, being under 2,000 acres, which is allowed by the Act." If you make your statement of the matter as far as you are concerned, I think that will meet the requirements of the Committee?—Well, I am speaking from memory, of course. The first I heard about this business was when some members of the prospecting company called at my office for the purpose of making an application for a prospecting-area. They wanted to have a prospecting-area granted them under the Coal-mines Act. Of course, I had to point out to them that there was no provision for that in the Coal-mines Act—that no prospecting-area could be granted under that Act as under the Mining Act.

3. *Mr. J. Allen.*] Was that done by letter or verbally?—That was done verbally and also by letter. There was a great deal of correspondence on the subject, and I believe that will appear in the correspondence. I pointed that out to them. I think Mr. Meldrum was with them, but I cannot exactly say who they were. They made application for a prospecting-area, comprising the whole of Lake Wahi, and, I believe, the little lake—Rotoiti. After I had pointed out to them that I could not grant a prospecting-area, and that the only way in which they could secure the land was by taking up a lease under the Coal-mines Act, they, after consultation, came to the conclusion that they would take up 100 acres right in front of the ground where they were prospect-