

65. Could they for five years?—There would be a limit. It would all depend upon circumstances. If good grounds were not shown for it there would be no postponement.

66. If what you say is right, an area of coal land might be locked up by a Land Board granting extensions of this nature from time to time without any provision in the law?—They would never do that.

67. Had you any power to leave the application over for the month?—I do not think there was any particular power.

68. You told us that the Taupiri Coal Company applied for a lease of 500 acres?—Yes; I think it was 500.

69. You cannot recollect the date, I suppose?—No.

70. You told us that it was surrounding the 100 acres, but did not include the 100 acres?—That is so.

71. Are you sure of that?—Yes. Of course, the application for 100 acres was the first. That for 500 acres was the second, and then came Mr. Hetherington's.

72. You said that the application for the 500 acres did not include the 100. Will you read this letter, please [Letter handed to witness]?—It is 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 Wahi Lake, opposite Section 48, Pepepe. Therefore, your application will have to be amended before it can come before the Land Board.” That is signed by myself.

73. Then, did not the application for the 500 acres include the 100?—They might have made that mistake, but it was put right.

74. You made a mistake, did you?—I did not know of that. The people would go to the Land Office, make their application, and make it in such-and-such a way. Then, when it would come before me for examination, I would find that they had included an area which should not be in it, and would notify them of it.

75. Did you not say just now that the application for the 500 acres did not include the 100 acres, but surrounded it?—Yes, and say so still.

76. In spite of that letter?—Many times in the Land Office applications are made under an erroneous impression and have to be amended, and this is one of them. Evidently this 100 acres was included, but I cannot remember it.

77. You have to amend your previous statement, have you not?—So far, yes. I had forgotten about that. The application had to be amended.

78. Has a lease been issued to the Taupiri Company?—Yes.

79. Do you know if it is completed by both parties?—Yes.

80. The Minister has agreed to it and the company have signed it?—Yes.

81. And the lease is complete?—It is complete as far as I know. I have done everything in connection with it that could be done.

82. Is the lease to the Taupiri Company a proper and legal lease?—A proper and legal lease.

83. Was their application for the 500 acres the prior application?—It was not this 500 acres that was granted.

84. I mean the area that has been granted?—Yes.

85. Take the amended application for the 500 acres by the Taupiri Company. Was that the prior application for that 500?—No. You see, the whole of the applications for these coal-mining areas were refused by the Minister. He refused to grant any of them.

86. That is not my question. I want to know whether the amended application of the Taupiri Company for the 500 acres was the prior application for that 500?—Yes, that was the prior one.

87. And the lease was granted in accordance with law?—No; that lease was never granted.

88. I refer to the amended application for the 500 acres?—I see what you mean now. I shall have to explain.

89. That lease was not granted?—No.

90. Will you tell us why the lease for the 500 acres was not granted when the Taupiri Company's application was the prior one?—I could not give you a proper answer to that, because it all depends upon the Minister. The Minister has a perfect right to grant or refuse.

91. That is all I want to know?—It was submitted to the Minister.

92. The application of the Taupiri Company was submitted to the Minister and was amended, was it?—No, that is just where you are wrong. When all the applications were refused and a clean sweep was made of them for the two lakes, then Mr. Hayes was sent up to go over the ground with myself; we were to inquire fully into the subject, and make what recommendations we thought proper. Mr. Hayes made a geological examination, and half of the lake was found to be non-coal-bearing. After going into the whole matter, certain recommendations were made which were forwarded to Wellington, and after a while notification reached me that the recommendations were approved of. So this land that was granted to the Taupiri Company was not granted on a proper application—it was granted them on the decision of the Cabinet in Wellington.

93. What do you mean by saying the application was not a proper one?—There was no special application made for the area. These areas were simply those recommended to be granted to these two contending parties.

94. You have said that there was no power under the Coal-mines Act to grant a coal-prospecting license. Is that so?—That is so.

95. What is your opinion, after your experience of dealings of this kind, with regard to an amendment of the law? Do you think it advisable that the law should be amended so as to provide for prospecting licenses for coal-mining areas, as the law already provides for prospecting