

136. I do not know that it is worth while pursuing the matter further. When you wrote this letter of the 11th January you had the instructions?—Yes, evidently.

137. But they were mislaid?—Yes.

138. *The Chairman.*] Were the applications for a prospecting-area from both companies for the same ground?—There was no application for a prospecting-area; the applications were for coal-mining leases, and covered a great deal of the same ground.

139. Did they cover the whole of the ground?—Yes. The prospecting association's application covered the whole of the ground, but their's was the last application put in.

140. *Mr. Leather.*] Will you kindly inform me on what date the Taupiri Company sent in their application for this area marked A on the map?—It was by letter from Mr. Sherff, on the 29th December, 1903.

141. Will you please look at the papers and find out when we sent in for the whole area—for the 1,300 acres?—Cannot you find it?

142. The date of the receipt is the 15th April, 1903. That covers the 1,300 acres?—Yes, but that was all disallowed.

143. Were we told that it was disallowed and had our money sent back to us? Can you show any letter that you sent us saying that everything was wiped off and that our money was returned?—No, that was not done. You wanted to leave the money until the matter was settled by the Wellington office. You told me over and over again that you would prosecute it and prosecute it until you got what you wanted.

144. Have you got there our first application, with the cutting from the Auckland paper?—I do not see it. The applications are filed in the application-books.

145. The application was on the 4th August, 1902?—I have not got that here.

146. There is a letter from us applying for 100 acres of Lake Wahi for coal-prospecting purposes, and an advertisement with it notifying that we, the Huntly Coal-prospecting Syndicate, had applied for 100 acres of Lake Wahi for coal-prospecting purposes. The cutting was forwarded to your office along with the application?—That may be, but you could get only one explanation about the affair if you did do that: that was that no prospecting licenses could possibly be granted under the Coal-mines Act.

147. Have you got your letter pointing out that you could not grant such a thing?—I have told you and those with you over and over again. You were three times before the Land Board, and the Board told you they could not do it.

148. You say you could not do it, but you understood that we were going to bore and prospect?—So I did.

149. And you promised certain conditions if we did bore?—What were the certain conditions?

150. Here we are: "In reference to your application for a coal-mining lease under the Wahi Lake, I have to inform you that the Land Board have resolved to adjourn consideration pending the result of boring operations, which the Board understand are now in progress. Please inform the Board at your earliest convenience if you decide to go on with the matter"?—Yes, is not that right? You took up 100 acres on coal-mining lease, and the Board very kindly gave you an opportunity of prospecting, and, in case it should turn out badly, so as not to mulct you in the expense of £15, they adjourned consideration of the application.

151. Did I not point out to you at the first interview we had that this property had been bored previously by the Waikato Coal Company and had been proved barren?—You might have done that.

152. I did, and that was the very reason why we wanted to prospect the ground first. Here is a letter from your office, dated the 30th October, 1902: "In answer to your letter of the 25th instant, relative to boring for coal, Wahi Lake, I have to inform you that the question of extension of time will be considered by the Board at its next meeting on the 28th November. I should be obliged if you will forward some short account of the work in progress, as at present there is not sufficient information here to frame a recommendation to lay before the Board." Our secretary then sent you the result of the boring?—Yes; well?

153. He gave you all the particulars so that you could frame a recommendation. Then here is a letter to you from the syndicate, dated the 22nd November: "Having received yours of the 19th November, I, on behalf of the syndicate, beg to thank you for same. I now wish to inform you of the result of boring operations to date on Section 48, which has not been too satisfactory. We therefore request you to grant us a further extension of protection over lake-area."?—All this I brought before the Board. They were very anxious to meet you in every possible way, and they did everything they possibly could. If they had done more they would have travelled outside the Act.

154. Did not Mr. Ralph, within twenty-four hours of our first application being put in, come to the office to acquire the whole area?—I cannot say that. The dates of the applications are given in the report to the Mines Department, which Mr. Elliott has.

155. I suppose you would believe Mr. Alison if he were to state that Mr. Ralph did so?—Yes, why should I not?

*Mr. Alison:* I never said so.

*Mr. Leather:* Mr. Alison stated, "Mr. Ralph received information that the application had been made. A meeting of directors was called, and the company applied for the whole lake-area."

*Mr. J. Allen:* Is this a newspaper extract?

156. *Mr. Leather.*] I have two; one will corroborate the other, and in addition I was at the meeting. This is the other newspaper report of what Mr. Alison said: "The decision to acquire the rights under Lake Wahi was made after it became known that the Huntly Exploring and Boring Syndicate had carried on operations on Lot 48, adjoining the lake. After much pressure