

the Government granted 250 acres of the lake." Now, Mr. Mueller, did you not admit that Mr. Ralph had been into the office to acquire the whole area of the lake?—I do not think I could have done so. He only made application for 500 acres.

157. Mr. Alison said at the meeting that Mr. Ralph did try to acquire the whole area?—Well, if he did, well and good. That may be; I would not say it was not so.

158. If there was not some understanding, and an inducement given to us to prospect that lake with a view to taking up the whole of the lake, why did you not send us back our money and tell us that we had no protection?—You have been told that over and over again—that you could have no protection for prospecting. You were warned, too, by members of the Land Board to be sure to make your application quickly, so that nobody could forestall you. How it happened that you were too late I cannot say.

159. I will prove to you that we were not. This is the letter to us of the 3rd December, 1902: "With reference to your letter of the 22nd November asking for six months' extension of time to enable you to extend your prospecting operations, I have to inform you that the matter has been considered by the Land Board, and they have resolved to grant you the six months' extension for which you ask"—Yes; that is to say, they did not insist upon payment for the area you had applied for, so as to give you every opportunity.

160. This letter is dated the 3rd December, 1902. On the 15th April, 1903, we applied for the whole area of Lakes Wahi and Rotoiti, comprising 1,300 acres, and deposited £176?—You mean to point out that this was within the six months?

161. Yes?—You are losing sight of this: that the concession the Board made to you was that they would not deal with your application for the 100 acres for six months—not that they would give you a right to put in an application for the whole lake-area within six months. They could not do that.

162. Why did you not give it to Mr. Ralph when he went in to acquire the whole area?—I do not know what you refer to.

163. I am referring to Mr. Alison's statement?—If Mr. Ralph had applied for the whole area there would have been nothing for it but to take the money and register the application.

*Mr. Leather:* But he did not do it; Mr. Alison said he did not.

*Mr. Alison:* Will you permit me to say, Mr. Chairman, that what Mr. Leather refers to is a newspaper report. It is not my evidence. It is absolutely incorrect; I stated that in my evidence.

*Mr. Leather:* I was at the meeting, gentlemen, and I can corroborate what the newspaper report says.

*The Chairman:* Will you go on with your questions, please, Mr. Leather?

164. *Mr. Leather:*] You said, Mr. Mueller, that Mr. Meldrum probably paid the deposits for which these receipts were given?—Did he not?

165. All our deposits were posted. We did not hand them in to the Receiver of Land Revenue. They were all posted?—I did not know that. I did not know what arrangement you had with the Receiver.

166. You say that you swept all the applications clean off the board and started afresh. Then, why did you not return our deposit and tell us that that was the case?—Because you told me over and over again that you would not leave a stone unturned, but that you would work and agitate and try to get what you considered you should get—the whole of the lake. Well, as the whole matter was pending I allowed the money to lie there. You could have had it at any moment, but you would not take it.

167. You never refused our application at all, when we sent in for the 1,300 acres?—No, because that was a matter for the Minister to decide, as there was a dispute between you and the others and between you and the Board as to dates.

168. There was another applicant, a Mr. Hetherington. Was he refused any of Lake Wahi prior to the 15th April, 1903?—That I cannot say. These applications are made to another officer of the Land Office. They might be there for all I know.

169. Here is a wire from Mr. Hetherington, under date the 26th March, 1903: "Informed by Department Wahi applied for. 57 acres of Rotoiti available"?—He applied for that. That was one of the applications.

170. This was in March—a month prior to our application for the whole area?—Yes.

171. We had not applied for the whole area then. That was a month prior to our application for the 1,300 acres. Mr. Hetherington instructed his solicitor to acquire all the balance of Lake Wahi and Lake Rotoiti, but all that was available was 57 acres of Rotoiti. Who was the other part of Lake Wahi protected for? You say the Taupiri Company sent in an application for 410 acres, or something like that area?—500 acres, I believe it was.

172. I saw it advertised as 410 acres?—You know that if there is any land unapplied-for anybody can come in, and if he pays the deposit and conforms to the conditions of the Act we must take the application—it cannot be refused.

173. Mr. Hetherington says, "Informed by Department Wahi applied for." Who was the balance of Wahi protected for?—I do not know that we protected it for any particular parties.

174. Well, why could he not get it?—Why did he not take it? If he had paid the money he would have got it.

175. He was refused it?—Such a thing could not be. It cannot be refused. When land is open for application whoever comes has a perfect right to insist upon his application being—

176. Why did you not let him have it? There must have been some understanding?—I do not know what you are speaking about. He applied for an area and took it up.

177. Mr. Hetherington applied for the balance, a month prior to our application for the 1,300 acres, and was refused?—I cannot understand that. It is impossible—quite.