

403. *Sir R. Stout.*] And you therefore say that the Minister or person in charge would have no authority? Well, we will take it in that sense, and we will come to other applications sent in, and the applications sent in were not agreed to: is that true?—Yes; when I got these applications I said, as to the delay—

404. You made no complaint to the Government?—I simply left it on their shoulders.

405. You made no complaint; you sent in no other applications, and did not even complete the applications sent in?—The company were being blamed for stopping settlement on the West Coast, and the whole of the blame was entirely due to the Government.

406. We may put it like this: Whatever the reason, good or bad, might be, these were some never completed, and you sent in no applications with this letter of 1892?—I simply wrote to the persons—

Hon. E. BLAKE: The answer must be as to the fact.

*Witness*: Very well.

407. *Sir R. Stout.*] Now, is it not a fact, or do you know, that many people put in applications who have been living on the land since?—I do not know, but very probably they have.

408. Do you know where the Blue Spur is, now called Dyer's Selection?—Which proved, I believe, to be a failure.

409. He was in the possession of the land. I think your company collected the rents?—No; we do not collect rents. Before you leave that I would like to explain one thing with regard to the proposals I made to the Government for dealing with applications under clause 33 on the basis of there being no reserves, which I maintain would have been a solution of the whole difficulty; and these proposals are contained in my letter to the Inangahua County Council, and submitted to the Minister. I maintain that the whole of the difficulty would have been got over as to section 33. The miner would have got his land and been secured just as he is to-day, and the people would have been settled on the land.

410. It would not have been settled. You will see that by the mining laws, which you are not acquainted with. I can show you the Act—giving fifty acres in Otago—which was allowed on the goldfields for selection under the Act of 1886. [Act here referred to, but Sir R. Stout's reference was challenged.]

411. Well, now, about this boundary question at Tadmor; how many applications were put in and how many refused?—You can get that from the particulars given to you. They are given in detail.

412. What do you say is the main range; you mean to say that it is the range running to the east of Nelson?—I say, on the question of the main range height has nothing to do with it; it is the structural formation.

413. What is the range to the east of Nelson?—I think the simplest way would be to refer to the geological model in the Museum. You will see distinctly how the range comes from the east of Otago to Mount Cook, and runs by Pelorus Sound to Cook Strait, and comes out in the North Island, and that is why I say it is geographically the main range of New Zealand. The simplest way, and probably the only way, would be to refer in the way I say to the model.

414. What is the geographical formation of the east range?—Slate.

415. And what on the west?—You find pieces, intrusions of the older rocks.

416. Suppose a person knows nothing about geology, would the main range not be the highest range, and that which was snow-clad?—If you take it on that basis, then there is a strong argument that it is the main range. It is practically a question of the geological formation—as to what range is referred to in the contract. It is the boundary that was taken as dividing these lands, and upon that turns the whole question.

417. That is what you raise about the Tadmor?—It is merely a point of definition. We were blamed by the whole of the population of the Tadmor for locking up these lands.

418. Hon. E. BLAKE.] It was not a question that was to bar money damage?—We were told we must select a block before we could do anything.

419. *Sir R. Stout.*] Is there anything else you complain of?—There are a lot of things that we complain of that you will not let us bring in.

420. As to the timber, you do not know that of your own knowledge?—No, but from my reports.

421. You have not inspected there?—No.

422. The delays you complain of are therefore as to the mining reserves and section 33, and the delay to grant the extension. Now, as to this grant of extension, have there not been continual negotiations with the Government for a modification of the contract since 1892?—Yes.

423. I understand the only thing my friend objected to going in are these letters.

*Mr. Hutchison*: Excuse me, I never objected.

*Sir R. Stout*: These are the letters. [Exhibit No. 79 put in.] I think the correspondence is complete.

*Mr. Hutchison*: If anything has been left out it can be supplied.

Hon. E. BLAKE: Yes.

*Sir R. Stout*: That gives all the negotiations for the extension of the contract.

424. *Sir R. Stout.*] I ask you, could you have completed the contract, I mean constructed the railway, in the time mentioned in the contract?—We could not have completed the whole of the line, even from east to west, and that was known and repeatedly stated—that we must in the ordinary course of events, if we had the capital so that we could have gone on, have taken five years, even with very good luck.

425. But did you not say before the Committee that you could finish it in three years?—No, I think not.

*Sir R. Stout*: I know it was said. I am speaking from memory, but I think it was stated. Here it is (question 331, page 19, Public Accounts Committee Report, 1892): "How long