

of rumours I heard that the Government were going to make large reserves on the Coast. That will be seen on page 18 (Exhibit No. 3). I wrote this letter on hearing rumours in the district that they were going to make large reserves for mining purposes. Well, I had been all over the district, and I could see no necessity for any of these further reserves. There were no rushes, no increase of mining. I then wrote to the Minister that letter of 6th October. The Minister for Public Works (Mr. Seddon) afterwards came down to Christchurch, and so I arranged to meet him with Mr. Scott to discuss this question of mining reserves.

63. Where did the interview take place?—At Warner's hotel, Christchurch; and I pointed out to Mr. Seddon that Mr. Scott had received a letter from the Chairman of the Inangahua County.

64. That is Exhibit No. 5, page 16?—Yes. There are certain suggestions here in the event of the Government not making reserves. The company agreed to make certain proposals to them, dealing with the lands which they might probably require for mining purposes. On the 16th of February I replied.

65. You had replied?—Yes, I had replied to this letter by mine of the 6th February (Exhibit No. 6). The company sets out there that they would be quite willing to try and meet the local bodies in every way possible, and to facilitate the dealing with the lands for settlement, and at the same time allow for all lands required for actual mining purposes.

66. These two letters (Exhibits Nos. 5 and 6) were the basis of conversation between Mr. Alan Scott, yourself, and the Minister for Public Works, Mr. Seddon?—Yes.

67. Then, what was said that is not mentioned in the correspondence referred to?—We discussed the matter, and I proposed that we should agree to deal with the western lands on the basis already proposed. But he would not agree to it. He said he had determined to make his mining reserves. I then said to him, "If you will undertake only to make reasonable reserves for the development of the gold-mining industry round the known centres, the company will not in any way object to such reserves being made"; and I pointed out in my letter to the Chairman, and also to Mr. Seddon, that it was absurd to say the company objected to reserves that were actually required, because the prosperity of mining meant so much to the company as it would mean prosperity to the railway by the traffic it would produce. Then Mr. Seddon said he would make certain reserves, and that he would give me due intimation of what he intended to make, and would give the company the plans, so as to allow us an opportunity of objecting to portions if we did not think it was desirable to make them. The letter of 10th July (Exhibit No. 7) was practically his reply to the interview.

68. Now, I should like to put in a table of Proclamations made up to 1892. Can you tell me how many acres were comprised in those Proclamations?—I believe there were between 160,000 and 180,000 acres to July, 1892.

69. When the company presented their petition?—Yes.

70. Then we may take it generally that you objected to the Proclamations?—Yes, because on making inquiries I could not hear of any increase in mining.

71. Hon. E. BLAKE: What do you mean by "objection"?

*Mr. Hutchison:* As indicated in the correspondence.

*Witness:* My reason for objecting was this: I made inquiries in the district, and I found there were no new rushes, nor was there any increase of population; and, in fact, the official mining reports published showed not only a decrease in the output of gold, but also a decrease in the number of men employed in the district. There was evidence also to show that in the old days when there were thirty thousand to forty thousand miners on the West Coast, when the place was overrun with miners and was being prospected, the lands that were worked on during the whole of that time did not amount to more than 1,000 acres a year.

72. Hon. E. BLAKE.] In what period of years?—I suppose I can get that from the Mines Reports, which shows a gradual falling-off of the gold. In the early days there was an enormous quantity of gold obtained from the gold-mines and river-beds, which were practically Nature's sluice-boxes, and, of course, gold was then more easily obtained. If, therefore, you take the amount of gold obtained then as compared with to-day, and see the difference in the amount of land used, the position is simply preposterous.

73. *Mr. Hutchison.*] What, then, do you consider to be the effect of the Proclamations that were made upon your scheme of settlement?—When the contract was altered clause 33 was put in to enable the company, or, rather, to enable the Queen, to deal with the lands on the West Coast without the company having to make selection of a B1 block.

74. In practice what did you find was the effect of the Proclamations?—The effect when those people were applying for land was this: When we submitted them for assessment we were told that a lot of this land was going to be made mining reserve, and that the Government declined to deal with this until they had made the reserves.

75. Hon. E. BLAKE.] Were these refusals made in writing?—Yes.

76. *Mr. Hutchison.*] They will be under clause 33?—It comes under the action of clause 33. Of course there was dissatisfaction. The company was blamed for locking up the lands. People could not get lands for settlement, and many people left the district because they could not get land. It was not the company's fault in any way that this settlement did not go on. It was in the interests of the company to have got settlement.

77. Besides the land that had been proclaimed for gold-mining purposes up to the time of your petition to Parliament in 1892 had you had any intimation of other reservations being intended?—Yes; the ones that were given out as intended to be made far exceeded those that were made.

78. How did you know they intended to make further reservations?—They submitted a map, which was published under the proceedings of the 1892 Committee.

79. Then, in 1892, you had reason to apprehend that a large area was going to be locked up, as you say, from settlement?—Yes.