

80. Hon. E. BLAKE.] You mean to say that you had an indication that the mining reserve was proposed to be proclaimed?

*Mr. Hutchison:* This map was put in before the Committee. [Map put in, marked Exhibit No. 23.] I now put in a further map showing the whole of the reserves. [Map put in, marked Exhibit No. 24.] I propose to put in that part of the petition which relates to mining reserves. The petition is printed on pages 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the report of the Committee. [Copy of petition put in, marked Exhibit No. 25.]

81. You say in your petition, Mr. Wilson, under Part A—“(i.) Whereas only 20,000 acres of land at the outside have, as the company is informed, been worked for gold-mining purposes on the west coast of the Middle Island, there has been already specially reserved, by Proclamations under clause 16, no less than 184,000 acres, and the further reserves contemplated by the Government as above stated will enormously increase the area of reserve. (j.) The population upon the west coast of the Middle Island has not increased since the date of the company’s contract, but, on the contrary, has decreased. There have not been any new large discoveries of gold, nor has the area over which gold-mining operations are carried on materially increased. (k.) Since October, 1885, prospecting has been subsidised and rewards promised for the discovery of new goldfields or the rediscovery of lost leads, and the authorities of the counties on the west coast of the Middle Island have spent large sums in employing men to prospect, but without success: for example, fifty-four men were at one time in the employ of the Grey County as prospectors. If, therefore, land had been required to be specially reserved for mining purposes, discoveries in verification of such requirement would almost certainly have been made, yet none such have been made. (l.) The mining reserves have been made in certain places to cover large coal-bearing areas which have not been proved to contain gold in payable quantities, and such reserves have been made for the purpose of defeating the right reserved to the company to exercise its right of selection over land containing coal.” Will you say where there were coal deposits within the area covered by these Proclamations?—The difficulty arose to the north of Reefton, as I think you will find detailed in the correspondence, by some people applying to the company for coal, and others applying for reserves for gold-mining.

82. Was it in connection with the inquiry on that petition that a number of circulars and other correspondence were put in, and which are to be found on pages 24 to 31 and part of 32 of the Appendix?—Yes, that is so.

83. You became aware at that inquiry of all this correspondence put in by the Government?—Yes. [Correspondence, Exhibit No. 26, put in.]

84. You say it disclosed the intention of the Government to practically reserve all that had been reserved under Larnach’s Proclamation?—Yes. Moreover, I consider this shows a clear indication of the Government’s intention to carry out clause 16 of the contract in a manner never intended by the company.

85. Well, that is your view, though I did not invite that answer. I put it to you that this correspondence conveyed to your mind, at any rate, the intention of the Government to do in detail what had been done in mass by Larnach’s Proclamation, which you knew about?—Yes, which I knew about.

86. I should like to put in a map showing the effect of Larnach’s Proclamation. It is an official document. Does this map show the reservation?—I cannot say exactly, but I think it is the map.

Hon. E. BLAKE: Is this a Government map?

*Mr. Hutchison:* Yes.

*Mr. Gully:* I may mention that we have a plan, which has been put in by Sir Robert Stout.

Hon. Mr. BLAKE: But it has not been put in as an exhibit.

*Mr. Gully:* It is on a small scale. [Map produced.]

*Mr. Hutchison:* Is it the same?

*Mr. Gully:* Yes, it is practically the same thing.

*Mr. Hutchison:* Then we will put it in. [Map put in, Exhibit No. 27.]

Hon. E. BLAKE: That shows the area covered by Larnach’s Proclamation, I understand?

*Mr. Gully:* Yes.

*Mr. Hutchison:* Yes.

87. You do not understand much about the timber claims?—No, I do not know much about them.

88. But you do know about the operations under clause 33. That came within your special province?—Yes; the correspondence will be found commencing at page 1 of the Appendix to the report of the Public Accounts Committee, 1892. I shall put the correspondence in as exhibits. [Copies of correspondence put in, being Exhibits Nos. 28 to 62 inclusive.]

89. *Mr. Hutchison:* Now, as to the matters which come under Part B of the petition, you say, “(d.) In November, 1888, it was arranged between the Government and the company that lands should be assessed under clause 33 of the contract by the Commissioners of Crown Lands, and that the company should communicate with them direct, for the purpose of saving the great and unnecessary delay of sending correspondence from Westland or Nelson to Christchurch, then to Wellington, and thence back through Christchurch to Westland or Nelson; and that, in case of the possibility of any land being required for gold-mining purposes, the Commissioner should require the application of the company to be advertised in the local papers. The Minister now requires all such communications to be sent to himself direct.” Assuming you are right in complaining of that circumlocution, did it affect the operations of the company in any degree?—It most seriously affected it, and the company wrote to the Minister of Lands. There is a letter in the correspondence asking who was to assess the values, on behalf of the Queen, of applications under clause 33, and the Minister replied to say—

Hon. E. BLAKE: It is all set out in the correspondence. We do not want a repetition of anything, as I shall have to read the correspondence.