

ence you will find I stated before the Committee in 1892 that it was imperative that we should have the extension of time in order to be able to finance.

259. I am dealing with the question of the extension of time. You admit that this delay in regard to the Abt line did not interfere with your construction work?—It interfered in this sense, that we could not raise the money until we got an extension of time.

260. The delay had nothing to do with the Abt system?—No.

261. Then we can strike the Abt system out?—Before you leave that point I would like to say one thing. We have claimed all along that we have had delays in the contract which were beyond our control. I would also point out that we had very difficult surveys to run through before deciding on the route. In one case we had to run four or five trial lines, and this time was counted in our contract.

262. No doubt. I am not saying that you had no difficulties to contend with. One has only to go over the track to see the enormous difficulties there were in getting the railway across the alps. Now, I come to this question of the reserves. Do you say the Government have done wrong in proclaiming the Buller reserves?—There may be parts of the Buller reserves that may have been fairly taken. I do not say that the Government—

263. I am going to deal with the Buller reserves?—There are objections to the Government interfering with them. We know that men have been working the river-flats in these reserves, but I do not raise the question of these reserves now. I said long ago, when we were discussing this question, that reasonable reserves of land might be made near the known gold centres, and that if land were taken from time to time (as required), in order to meet the development of mining, the company would never raise a single objection.

264. You admit that some of the reserves are properly made?—No doubt.

265. Can you give details of those improperly made?—I think there are expert witnesses who will be able to do so.

266. You can give it now?—No.

267. Your company does not know?—I do not say so, but I do not consider myself sufficiently expert.

268. Surely your company has formulated something with regard to the reserves in Buller?—I think, at the proper time, you will probably get the lot.

269. Then you have no information?—I will have it put in.

270. Then we are left in this position: that until the arrival of your expert evidence, which will say whether the reserves were proper or improper, the company does not know?—I think you ought to show why you took the reserves.

271. But you charged us with breach of contract?—I maintain that you made the reserves in an improper manner.

272. Why?—Because the same contract says distinctly that these reserves were to be made from time to time as required for *bona fide* mining.

273. No; the contract says, "is likely to be or may be required." Do you mean to say that your company has not formally told its shareholders that these special reserves in the Buller district have been improperly made?—It is purely a question of evidence. You say you have made reserves; and we maintain, without proper evidence of their being required.

274. But, Mr. Wilson, that is not the question. I wish to know which reserves you considered improper in the Buller district?—I assure you the result of our inquiries and investigations will be made to you at the proper time.

275. Hon. E. BLAKE: You mean to say that, so far as you know, the company is not in possession at this moment of a list of reserves that they think were improperly made?—We have got evidence from mining experts which we shall submit to the Court when the question arises.

276. Sir R. Stout: Particulars were asked some time ago, and I understood they were to be supplied?—If you are going to attack those particular reserves, it is important that the other side should have time to meet it.

Mr. Hutchison: We are attacking all, and I presume we are fully justified in referring to the Buller reserves.

277. Sir R. Stout:] Did not you say you had no objection to the Buller reserve?—I said I had no objection to the reserves being made around a known gold centre, and in a reasonable amount.

278. Did you not pick out the Buller reserve?—No; I picked out the Kumara reserve. I remember saying that I did not object to the reserves made around Kumara, which was a known mining centre.

279. So far as the Buller reserve is concerned, you do not mean to say that that would have to be reserved for the railway?—If the railway were made up the Buller Gorge.

280. Do you know that they are on the sea-coast?—That is at Westport. If you can show that these are gold-bearing, as the company always said, they would not object.

281. I mean all the Buller reserves in the Buller mining district?—I was referring to the reserves on the Buller River. You mean here [witness indicated the reserves on the map].

282. I mean on the sea-coast. You say in your evidence that all that country was cut up, and difficult for settlement. You will find evidence of the fact that there is very considerable mining there. You mean to say that all these reserves might have been used by the railway?—I do not say that they could be used by the railway; but they passed away from our power of sale.

283. You admit that these reserves would not be affected by the railway?—It depends upon what you mean.

284. Could they get any traffic?—You see, the traffic comes by the coast, and if we had picked the mining reserves—

285. How could the railway be worked?—It does not follow that the railway would not bring produce in from the coast.