

try. I am not going back to what has been done some years ago, except to mention that I think the government will not approve of giving any man or any company four or five hundred square miles of land in any province. Now it is a fact that leases or sales have been made of those large amounts, and I hope, if the conditions under which they are granted are not complied with, that the government will cancel them at once in the interests of the country. We all know the scarcity of coal and fuel in the Northwest, and we want to see that country settled by people who are happy and prosperous. Whatever affects the Northwest affects the whole Dominion; I know certainly that the prosperity of the Northwest affects British Columbia. There are many hon. gentlemen here who know more about the Northwest than I do, but I may say that some time ago the number of acres that any one could take up was 320, a reasonable area, but now it has been increased to 2,560; why, I do not know. It is too much to be allowed to any one. In the Public Accounts Committee a few days ago, an officer of the Interior Department stated that a man named Colwell had put in 325 applications, nearly all under bogus names. If there is a law to punish a man for doing a thing of that kind I do not know, but any law that may exist to prevent it should be enforced, and the man should be heavily punished. The officer dealing with him should have informed the authorities of what this man was doing. Fortunately, he only got 3,000 acres of land. It is a monstrous thing that a speculator doing anything like that should be allowed to go free. The officer who gave his evidence said that this applicant got bell boys at the Russell House to sign applications, and that he bought them off afterwards for \$1 each. My sole object in bringing up this matter is my desire to preserve the fuel and timber of that country for the public. We know there are millions of acres of coal mines still to be taken up, and great discretion and commonsense should be exercised to prevent them falling into the hands of a favoured few. They should be kept for the benefit of the population settling in that part of the Dominion.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—I shall be very glad to call the attention of the Minister of the Interior to the observations made by my hon. friend. I am not myself sufficiently familiar with the working of the Act, because we have not had any experience in this part of Canada, and, therefore, I asked the minister to give me his views so that I should not incorrectly make any statement to the House, or any statement that was not in accordance with the views of the department. I wanted the department to be responsible for the statement which is as follows:

The regulations for the disposal of coal mining lands at one time limited the area which might be acquired by one individual or company to 320 acres, but experience clearly showed that such an area was not sufficient to enable the person acquiring the same to successfully carry on coal mining operations as a business enterprise, and, in the large majority of cases, it was found necessary for a number of applicants for coal lands to combine and work their properties together, in order to acquire a sufficient area to justify the expenditure necessarily incurred in opening up a mine and installing expensive machinery for the economic handling of the output.

After careful consideration and inquiry, it was decided that four sections of 640 acres each would secure to an individual or company desiring to invest the large amount of capital involved in opening up and equipping a mine, a sufficient area for the purpose, but that a less area would scarcely justify such a large expenditure. The larger the area acquired and the larger the output of coal, the greater will be the chance for successfully carrying on the business, and the greater will be the profits derived therefrom, so that two or more lessees might, with advantage, unite with the view of establishing a larger business enterprise. The coal is found in seams so that, in many cases, a very large part of the area acquired under lease does not contain coal, as the applicant leases not only the coal seam, but also the balance of the quarter-section, half-section or section through which it passes.

The object of the regulations is to have the coal measures, the property of the Crown, developed, and a sufficient quantity of coal mined to meet all requirements; as well as to secure to the Crown the revenue derived from the rental and royalty specified in such regulations. As the coal mining rights are leased under certain conditions as to rental, royalty and operation, and as these conditions must be met by the lessee, it makes no difference who may submit the application for a lease, or in whose name such lease may be issued, so long as the lessee complies fully with the conditions of the regulations and the provisions of the lease which are the same in all cases. When the rental and royalty are paid and the conditions of the lease as to operation are strictly complied with, the