

Mr. G. Hunter,
M.H.R.
14th Sept., 1877.

75. What do you consider Mr. Williams' services worth?—I suppose they would be worth £500 a year; but he has never received any regular pay for acting as superintendent and taking charge of the estate. It would not be possible to get a more competent person to teach the Natives.

76. Have the trustees ascertained what is at the present time the value of the estate?—I believe you have some good evidence before you on that point. I presume you have considered the evidence taken by the Committee of the Legislative Council.

77. That appears not to have been accepted by the trustees?—It was simply got for the information of one of the trustees?—Mr. Stokes procured that information at the request of the other trustees. He is a resident in the district, and as he was always coming backwards and forwards, and at the instance of his fellow trustees, obtained reports as to the value of the estate, that information was put before us.

78. I see Mr. Johnston and Colonel Herrick consider that £1,500 a year would be a fair rent for the first seven years, and that £2,000 should be the rent for the next seven years?—That was their opinion.

79. Messrs. Birch, Williams, and McHardy, consider that a rental of (£1,000) one thousand per annum would be a fair rental for a term; and a rental of (£1,800) eighteen hundred per annum for the second term of seven years; lessee to bind himself, during the first term, to put up about ten miles of fencing, and to expend (£500) five hundred pounds in sowing grass seed?—They stated so.

80. I suppose with these opinions before them, the trustees, at the expiration of the present lease, will see that a proper rental is obtained for the property?—They will do what they consider best for the interests of the estate as they have always done.

81. Mr. Murray.] It has been proposed to let Mr. Williams have the property for a thousand pounds a year?—Nothing has been proposed by the trustees. The whole matter is still under their consideration.

82. Do you think Mr. Williams has a preferential claim to a new lease?—I think he has; but so far as he is concerned he is indifferent about the matter. He, too, felt it a matter of public duty to do what he has done; he was assisted by his relatives, who lent the trustees money at a low rate of interest which enabled the trustees to erect buildings. However, he is perfectly indifferent as to renting the estate again. He is a man of means, and is perfectly independent. He has done a great deal of good in the district, and I know he is held in very high estimation by the people in the neighbourhood.

83. How long have you been a trustee?—From the commencement of the year 1853.

84. In what way have the accounts of the trust been kept?—The accounts have been kept by Mr. Williams, and rendered to the trustees.

85. What check was there upon the accuracy of those accounts?—He had only to account for the rent. The old accounts were all gone into at the time the Commission sat in the year 1875.

86. Mr. Williams states that he has been in the habit of reimbursing business expenditure out of the rental, and handing over the balance, if any, to the trustees; but he seems to say there never was a balance to hand over, and that as a matter of fact there is still a balance due to him?—That may be, I believe. He has always spent more than he realized from the estate.

87. Who regulated his expenditure; under what authority was it made?—Under the authority of the trustees, but it was left to Mr. Williams. There was only the rental, and he made that go as far as he could and supplemented it himself.

88. Did the trustees leave the management of the estate and its funds in his hands?—He has rendered annual accounts and vouchers to the trustees. Mr. Stokes took a more active part in the management of the estate than the other trustees, because he was constantly going backwards and forwards to his station, he living in the same province.

89. He rendered accounts of the money which had been expended?—Yes; every year accounts and vouchers were put before us.

90. Was there any estimate of the expenditure put before the trustees before the money was expended?—No; everything was left to Mr. Williams, he had only the rent to deal with.

91. It cost Mr. Williams more than the estate produced?—You have his evidence on that point.

92. Do you know the amount of the balance still due?—It is not very much, I am sure. He has not occupied the estate for the purpose of making money out of it.

93. Perhaps you do not feel in a position to answer this, but I should like to put the question: What do you think is the annual value of the property at present?—You have much better evidence on that point than I can give. I could not say myself. I have not been over the property sufficiently to express an opinion.

94. The Chairman.] I said just now I thought Mr. Stokes had got this valuation made for his own information, and you seemed to think differently?—Certainly; because I had been in communication with him before he obtained the valuation.

95. Then, this paragraph in the evidence of the Bishop is incorrect. "I may state that the trustees had nothing to do with the valuation that has been made. The Hon. Mr. Stokes, as he was about to go to England, thought he should like to have an estimate of the value of the property, and he obtained these of his own accord, and they were forwarded to the other trustees?"—That is correct and not correct. We had nothing to do officially with settling the valuation, but it was at our instance that Mr. Stokes got it.

96. Mr. McLean.] You have been perfectly satisfied up to the present time with the management of the estate by Mr. Williams?—We are much more than satisfied. We recognise that Mr. Williams has made great sacrifices with a desire to improve the estate and to benefit the Natives.

97. You are satisfied that the estate has been largely improved by his exertions?—That is manifest.