

case. Therefore, I ask you, how long service could you make up without counting your time as Minister of the Crown?—I served as Minister about three years, and, from Mr. Prendergast's opinion, there is a surplus of time. I imagine that the whole time would not be a year and a half. In fact, I do not base my claim in respect to that. My political opponents looked into the thing; they referred it to the Attorney-General; and it ended by their granting me a pension, for which the Governor signed a warrant.

76. Were you actively engaged in conducting the Commissionership of Crown Lands for some years before going to England?—Actively, myself; and I think I may fairly appeal to the letter of the Superintendent on that point. It is well known that the duties of Commissioner of Crown Lands were repeatedly acknowledged to be performed in a satisfactory manner.

77. I ask whether or not you or your deputy did it?—I had no deputy at all. The only time that I had—and then, in reality, I performed the duties—was on the occasion I was first in the Government. I was in New Zealand, and the whole responsibility was upon me, and I performed the duties.

78. *Mr. Oliver.*] You went Home at the end of 1867?—Yes.

79. On leave?—On leave.

80. What was leave granted for? How long a time?—Twelve months.

81. Was it competent for the Ministry to grant a longer leave?—I do not know.

82. Was it at all contemplated that you might possibly be detained at Home longer than the twelve months?—That was really the time I was supposed to be likely to be absent.

83. Had you foreseen the possibility of being detained longer, and of having to send in a claim for a retiring allowance while you were at Home?—If my colleagues supposed my time would have been longer, that question would have come up. It was supposed twelve months was sufficient. When I was requested by my colleagues to go to England on that mission, a mission to get the colony relieved of three-quarters of a million of public debt, and to convert the debentures—when they asked me to perform these duties I did not see my way to do so. They pressed me very much to go; and I said, "Very well, I must have a month to think it over." Then, among the things I had to consider, was the question of giving up my office. I said, "If there is any difficulty in respect to this I shall not go." I suppose they looked into it—your present Premier and others. I made it a *sine qua non* that I would not give up this, and I suppose they saw their way to give me leave of absence; but as to whether the law would have allowed them to give more time, I do not know. It was thought twelve months would be sufficient. It was only when I found that I could not do so, that, sacrificing my personal interests, I tendered my resignation. The Government took the responsibility of refusing to accept it. It was an ingredient part, running through the whole, that I was not to be damaged in respect of any computation of time of service.

84. Then it had been contemplated that this question might arise. Did you meet it then, or come home, that your position should not be sacrificed?—That was distinctly understood; I think the printed letters show that.

85. *Hon. W. Johnston.*] As a matter of fact, was it recognized by the House that a Minister might hold a position in the Civil Service, and did so?—Yes, it was particularly raised by Mr. Stafford on more than one occasion. Mr. Collins, no doubt, can give the House accurate information upon that. It was levelled more particularly at myself, and sometimes against Mr. Domett, and we were frequently the subject of comment on that point; but the House sanctioned it. I think there is a manifest *prima facie* incompatibility; but in the beginning such anomalies had to go on, and ought not afterwards to be thrown against an individual as if he had robbed the public. The House knew of it as well as they know of anything discussed yesterday.

86. *Mr. Montgomery.*] At what date did you return to the colony?—I think in April, 1869. The Panama line broke down, and prevented the possibility of my coming one or two months earlier.

87. *The Chairman.*] Sir William must have been here in May, because letters were addressed by him that month in Wellington?—I came by way of Melbourne; and if I had come direct by way of Panama I should have been here from six weeks to two months earlier.

88. *Mr. Montgomery.*] At the date of your arrival here, were you a Minister of the Crown?—Yes.

89. When did you go out of office as Minister?—Very shortly afterwards. As soon as the House met in June.

90. You tendered your resignation upon the 16th November?—Yes.

91. Did you wish to resign the office?—I supposed no question of difficulty had been raised about a retiring allowance, though I had no interview with any of the members of the Government. Mr. Holdsworth was appointed deputy, and I gathered it was wanted he should have the office of Commissioner; but, if I had wished to keep on, the Government would scarcely have made me resign; and I should most certainly have retained the office if the Government had intimated to me that it was necessary that I should continue the office to make up time. I did not want to stand in the way of Mr. Holdsworth.

92. I suppose Mr. Holdsworth wanted the office?—I suppose so. If I had had my attention drawn to difficulties in the way, I should not have imperilled my prospects.

93. You were receiving £650. What pension are you getting?—My pension is £325.

94. And you gave up that office, when you could have retained it if you liked?—I did; and I gave up the office of Receiver of Land Revenue also, voluntarily, thereby reducing my claim to an additional £50 per annum of retiring allowance.

95. You gave up that £650, when you could have retained it, because there was an arrangement with you and the Government?—I was contented to have my pension assured to me.

96. That was the reason?—Yes; I thought it was wished that I should resign.

97. By whom?—Well, the Government of the day who had the arrangement of the thing. I ask the Committee to consider that it was not a friendly Government, but my opponents, that gave me this pension, when we were hot from a defeat. If the Government had thrown difficulties in the way I should have retained my office.

98. That is what I wish to get out. You would have retained office had you not been assured of your pension?—Yes.