

extraordinary character that I cannot charge my memory. They never seemed to get at the true bearings of the thing at all; so that I should not like to answer what it referred to.

774. Will you state when the plans, upon which the New Plymouth Harbour Board are now proceeding, were submitted for the approval of the Governor in Council?—On the 28th September, 1880.

775. Then, if the New Plymouth Harbour Board, prior to that date, expended large sums of money in the purchase of plant for the execution of this work, would that be in excess of their authority under the Harbours Act?—I should imagine so.

776. Clause 148 of the Harbours Act declares that no land shall be reclaimed from the sea or in a harbour without the authority of the Governor in Council. Are you aware that the New Plymouth Harbour Board have reclaimed certain lands?—Only at the root of the breakwater, I think.

777. Should they have reclaimed any land from the sea except in immediate connection with the breakwater, would that be outside their authority?—I should imagine so.

778. And they have not, within your knowledge, made any application for such authority?—It would have come before me if they had.

779. Are you aware of the amount of Sir John Coode's estimate for the breakwater on the revised plans?—Looking at Sir John Coode's report, I see it is £285,800.

780. And are you aware that the Harbour Board were restricted in their borrowing powers to £200,000?—Yes, I understand so—that is, for the present.

781. Then who is responsible for recommending works for the approval of the Governor, the estimated cost of which is so much in excess of the money authorized to be borrowed for construction?—Well, I scarcely know how to answer that. Such plans, as a rule, pass through my office, and through me to the Minister, with a recommendation; but it refers more to the kind of work than to the estimates. I do not make myself responsible for recommending that the work will cost any more or less than the sum named.

782. Then you do not recognize any official responsibility in that particular?—I do not.

783. When the plan which was approved by the Governor in Council on the 28th September, 1880, was forwarded to your office by the New Plymouth Harbour Board, did they forward any letter or application at the same time?—As far as I can remember, the plans were first sent down to me with a letter from Mr. Rees; but without any official letter from the Harbour Board. That is as far as I can remember.

784. And can you remember the purport of Mr. Rees's letter? Did he make application, on behalf of the Board, for the approval of the Governor?—I cannot remember the terms of the letter of Mr. Rees; but the Harbour Board were advised that this letter was out of order, and that they should forward an official letter from the Board, asking for approval.

785. *Mr. Pitt.*] You are aware that the Board dispensed with Mr. Rees's services as engineer?—Yes.

786. Do you know the foreman of works now in charge of the breakwater?—No.

787. Have you ever seen him?—No.

788. At all events, probably you are aware he is not a professional man—that he merely came out as overseer?—I believe Mr. Rees brought him out to the colony to act as clerk of works or foreman.

789. In your opinion, is it prudent to have a work like that carried on under such a man, without a competent engineer in charge of the works?—I should not recommend such a plan being pursued.

790. *Mr. Fulton.*] Have you had any means of forming an opinion as to Mr. Rees's capacity as an engineer, from work that he has executed there?—Of course I can tell you my own experience of Mr. Rees. He was in the Public Works Department for several years on railways, roads, and other works; but beyond that I have no knowledge of his capabilities.

791. Have you had any means of forming an estimate as to the correctness of his calculations and estimates?—No; I cannot say that I have. I am not aware of Mr. Rees's experience or history, beyond what I have had to do with him in the Public Works Department.

FRIDAY, 5TH AUGUST, 1881.

Mr. JAMES McKERROW examined.

792. *The Chairman.*] You are Surveyor-General of the colony?—Yes.

793. And you are acquainted with the Provincial District of Taranaki, and the character and quality of the land there?—Yes.

794. Can you inform the Committee how much open land is available for sale there at the present time?—There are only about 10,000 acres of open land; but, of course, there is a vast quantity of forest land. The open land is known as the Parihaka Block.

795. What is its value?—From £2 to £3 per acre.

796. Then, when that has been disposed of, practically all the open land available for settlement will have been sold?—Yes.

797. The rest of the land being bush land, do you anticipate that it will be sold by the Crown freely?—Yes; I anticipate that about 100,000 acres of bush land behind the Waimate Plains will be sold. This district is now being surveyed and opened by road-lines, and it is likely to be sold within the next two years, at an average price of £2 per acre. One-third of this area, however, will be offered for sale on the deferred-payment system, the proceeds being receivable over a period of ten years. The other forest lands in the Taranaki Provincial District are generally in very rugged country, the settlement of which is proceeding at a comparatively slow rate, and they cannot be expected to realize more than about £1 per acre.

798. Can you state what extent there is of what you term "rugged bush land"?—Yes: including the confiscated territory and Crown lands proper, there will be about 560,000 acres of bush land.