

611. *The Chairman.*] We will now take the Auckland appointment. What are the circumstances attending that appointment?—I recommended the appointment of Mr. Speight myself.
612. Was it to fill a vacancy, or what?—It was considered necessary to make a change in the district agency there, and send the agent back again to Invercargill, where he had been before and had done good work. We believed that Mr. Speight was suited to the Auckland District.
613. Finding it necessary to make a change, you recommended Mr. Speight?—Yes.
614. At what salary?—£400 per annum to begin with, and the promise of an increase of salary of £50 at the end of six months should he give satisfaction to the Board, and commission of 2s. 6d. per cent. on the net increase of the business.
615. What salary had his predecessor?—£300 a year.
616. Had he the promise of £50 increase?—He had the half-crown commission on the net increase, but he had not the promise of £50.
617. Why did you think it necessary to increase the salary?—Because we could not get Mr. Speight for anything less. He has been a very successful agent in the department for between two and three years.
618. He is engaged there now?—Yes.
619. *Mr. Stewart.*] Are his duties similar to those of Mr. Driver?—Yes.
620. Is the branch as important as the Otago one?—No, not so important: it is not so large. It is very difficult to work, because it is a place where there is very keen opposition.
621. Then, do I understand the reason for the difference in the salary between the Dunedin Branch and the Auckland Branch is partly the difference in the importance of the Otago Branch, and Mr. Driver being more experienced?—I can only say, for myself, that, as far as regards Auckland, I recommended £400, with the prospect of £50 increase, as I thought he was well worth it.
622. *Mr. Mackenzie.*] What was the special consideration that induced you to make the difference between Driver and Speight?—I did not make the appointment. Mr. Driver is a man of large business experience.
623. *Mr. Stewart.*] Do you know what reason induced the Board to make a difference in the salary of Driver and Speight?—I believe it was thought that such a large sum would be too extravagant for Auckland, and evidently the Board believed that Mr. Driver was worth the money. I cannot give any other answer than that. The Board believed that Mr. Driver was a more capable man. I believe the Board considered that Mr. Driver was worth the money from his long experience as a practical business man, well known in the district.
624. Can you state generally whether the business in Auckland has increased much since Mr. Speight's appointment?—I know he helped to keep down lapses very much. He has done good service to the association since his appointment in keeping down lapses.
625. Have you had any investments in Auckland since Mr. Speight's appointment?—Yes; I think we have had two or three.
626. Do you take his recommendation?—We refer to him occasionally; but we take generally the opinion of the local valuator. He has been of service in advising that certain loans might not be desirable, and that there were others which he might recommend.
627. Do you ask him to give a report on each proposed security?—Yes, as a rule, when the Board requires it.
628. And you have found that he has given valuable opinions?—Yes.
629. Do you know whether there is any intention to appoint an agent in any other centre in the colony?—No.
630. In Christchurch?—No; we have a good officer there already.
631. What salary is paid to the man in Christchurch?—He has £450 a year. The salary was raised from £280. He has been a long time in the service. He also gets 2s. 6d. per cent. commission on the net increase.
632. Are his duties similar to those of Mr. Driver and Mr. Speight?—Yes.
633. Is the branch equally important?—I think Christchurch and Dunedin are pretty much on a par. Dunedin, from its size, should be the most productive.
634. But, speaking generally, what is the difference in the business?—The business is about equal in the Dunedin and Christchurch Districts. At least, it was until Nelson was created a resident agency.
635. Does the Christchurch agent report on securities?—Yes; he supplies information.
636. What staff of clerks has he?—He has two clerks.
637. You say you have an agent in Nelson?—Yes.
638. Over what area do his duties extend?—He has a portion of the West Coast and all Marlborough.
639. Were those places previously included in the Christchurch District?—Yes, a portion of them; but Nelson was worked principally from Wellington. Mr. Lorrie is the agent at Nelson. He gets £250 a year. He is allowed to do canvassing business, and gets 10s. per cent. for all the new business, and 2s. 6d. per cent. of overriding commission on the net increase.
640. Is he supposed to devote his whole time to the work of the Board?—Yes; he is required to do so.
641. Is he a young man?—He is about thirty years of age.
642. Does he report on securities?—We have never had any application from Nelson on which he was required to report.
643. Is there any agent at Hawke's Bay?—Yes, a resident agent.
644. Does he devote all his time to the business of the association?—Yes.
645. What salary does he get?—£175 a year, and he has a cadet who gets £50.
646. And he has an office provided?—Yes.
647. Have you any agent in Wanganui?—Yes—Mr. Quinn, who gets £175 a year.