

775. Fifty shillings was what you thought you would get on an average?—That was the lowest all-round average we estimated it at.

776. Did you make any estimate what you thought the Government would have to pay for the other portion?—I estimated it at £8,500 for the sale of the residence and the portion that they wanted.

777. What did you estimate that the residence would bring, with the two acres?—I cannot say distinctly; but I know the amount was made up to £21,000, and I believe it was in the way I have stated.

778. Has property in that neighbourhood generally advanced in price?—Yes—during recent years.

779. From what cause?—The progress of the district and its special position. Devonport is an exceptionally well-situated district.

780. Would the depression have had much effect on the land there?—The land is not depressed in value, but the demand is so much less.

781. You say Mr. Philcox bears you animosity?—Yes.

782. You have ascribed to this the fact that he has asserted that you pressed a sale of land on Mr. Roberts?—There is a strong animosity on the part of Mr. Philcox in connection with matters connected with the Devonport Ferry Company. At the last meeting of the company it was so noticeable that it became the talk of the city.

783. Was there any feeling of opposition to your appointment as Reviewer?—I do not know of any. A large number of people complimented me upon the position, and expressed their satisfaction at my being appointed.

784. Did you make any sort of application for the position?—I did not, neither directly nor indirectly.

785. Have you any knowledge of the property adjoining Mr. Stark's?—The opposite allotments have been sold; but there is no comparison between the two properties.

786. Do you know the prices at which they were sold?—From £1 10s. to £2 5s. per foot, I believe.

787. Was that a genuine sale?—Yes.

788. How long is it since the sale?—Within the last twelve months, I should say.

789. Would you consider it a fair value?—Yes.

790. What would be the relation between this property and that of Mr. Stark's in point of value?—The general value of one against the other is that Stark's is worth double what the other is. The former has an uninterrupted sea-view which cannot be equalled.

791. Should it not have been anticipated in 1884 that this would be a desirable place for residence?—Yes: I know a great number of people have said they would like to have it cut up for that purpose.

792. Is Mr. Stark a good business-man?—Yes.

793. Is there any reason why he should have offered this property at so low a price?—Only that he was going away, and that he probably made it on the impulse of the moment, and without due consideration.

794. Was any value attached to the neighbouring properties about that time?—Yes; they had been selling fairly per foot.

795. Were these properties near Mr. Stark's?—Vauxhall, which was the nearest, was sold, and brought from about £1 to £2 10s. per foot.

796. Did Mr. Stark know that?—Yes.

797. Then what induced him to offer his property at so much less?—I cannot answer that question at all.

798. Was yours a genuine offer to him?—It was.

799. You are a large land-speculator in the neighbourhood?—We are valued somewhere about £30,000 for our property at present, I think.

800. It was not an unusual thing for you to offer such a sum?—£16,000 is an unusual offer to make for any property; but we have speculated more largely than all the other people in Devonport put together.

801. It has been stated that your offer was a bogus one, made for the purpose of increasing the value of property?—If such a statement has been made it is utterly devoid of truth. I would not allow myself to be a mere means of making an offer for a property for such a purpose for Mr. Stark or any one else.

802. *The Chairman.*] Do you know that Mr. Stark refused to act as a Reviewer?—No, I do not.

803. Do you know Mr. Brewer?—I met him for the first time on the passage down to Wellington.

804. You never knew him before?—No.

805. It is given in evidence that Mr. Stark wanted to raise the assessment from £15,600 to £16,000: is that a usual thing?—I have never heard of it.

806. Is it usual to ask for an increase in the valuation?—I should think not. I would not do so.

807. From what you know of Mr. Stark should you think that he would be likely to do so?—I do not know. Possibly, having received an offer of £16,000, he would think that was the value he ought to put on it.

808. Where was the Assessment Court to sit?—I do not remember.

809. Have you any reason to think that Mr. Stark would have appealed against the valuation as excessive?—Not that I know of. I never heard anything of the kind with reference to appeals from him.