

1308. What was the nature of those instructions?—That I was to go and see Mr. Stark, and endeavour to arrange compensation for the property taken, on which the unemployed were set to work.

1309. Did you carry them out?—Yes.

1310. Did you try to arrange terms with him?—No, I found the claim was too big. I visited the property, and had interviews with the owner.

1311. [Letter from the Minister read.] Did you carry out these instructions?—I did not try to arrange compensation, because Mr. Stark asked me to represent certain facts to the Minister.

1312. Did you convey these to the Minister?—I had not time, because the Minister came up to Auckland.

1313. Do you know what date he arrived in Auckland?—About the 6th or 7th of January.

1314. Did you call on him immediately after his arrival?—Not immediately, but as soon as I had an opportunity.

1315. You tried to see him?—I called one day, but he was engaged, and I sent to Mr. Stark to come down next day.

1316. Did you see him and put before him all the information at your disposal?—Yes, together with Mr. Stark's plans.

1317. What was this information?—I told him the conversation I had with Mr. Stark. I pointed out particulars on the plan; that Mr. Stark's claim was for £20,000, and that I had called at the Property-tax Office and got the property-tax valuation—£15,600. The Minister then had some further conversation with me about the propriety of taking the whole property.

1318. Did you call on the Minister with Mr. Stark?—Yes.

1319. Not by yourself?—No.

1320. Did Mr. Stark go into the room with you?—Yes.

1321. Did you not see the Minister by yourself before Mr. Stark called on him?—No.

1322. You took him in with you?—Yes.

1323. Did you then state the value of the property?—No.

1324. Did you give the Minister no information?—Not at that time. I said that the claim was a large one, and that it would be a very difficult one to settle.

1325. Did you say that in the presence of Mr. Stark?—Yes. I did not say in his presence that it would be a difficult matter to settle; I said that afterwards privately to the Minister. Mr. Stark had just gone out, and I remained about two minutes after him.

1326. What information did you give the Minister then?—I told him that the land appeared to be very valuable, and that the piece taken out practically spoiled the whole property, and that Mr. Stark would make a large claim for this particular piece; and I said I thought it would be advisable to take the whole of the property instead of only this small piece.

1327. You expressed your opinion that it would be advisable to take the whole?—Yes.

1328. The claim was for how much?—£20,000.

1329. Did you state what you thought the property was worth?—No; I was not in a position to say what it was worth.

1330. Did you express an opinion with regard to the fairness of the claim?—I said I thought it was a high one, and the Government should get the property for less. I was not in a position to fix any amount.

1331. Did you say it was worth £20,000?—Certainly not: I had no knowledge of its value.

1332. What inquiry did you make before this?—I made no particular inquiry before—I only went over one day to see Mr. Stark; because I saw at once that the case was one for a Compensation Court, and I did not know that the Minister was coming up. I thought I should have plenty of time to get particulars.

1333. How many days was the Minister in Auckland before you called on him?—I should think about three days. I called as early as possible.

1334. At any rate, on the 7th—that was the first occasion?—Yes.

1335. What was your object in taking Mr. Stark with you?—Because I thought he could explain better his loss and damage, and place the case fairly before the Minister.

1336. Did you make any inquiries after this?—Yes; I went over again.

1337. Acting on instructions from the Minister?—I do not remember whether I had instructions from the Minister or not.

1338. What did he say when you remained behind?—Just then some one came into the room, and I do not think he said anything. I received no instructions as far as I can remember, because I anticipated seeing him again several times.

1339. Before the Minister went to Waikato, did you say that the land should be taken into the Court?—I do not think so.

1340. Did he ask you to make further inquiries?—I do not think he did. I left the room almost immediately.

1341. Had you an interview with him between the time you met him with Mr. Stark and his departure for the Waikato?—I do not think so. I may be wrong, but such is my impression.

1342. Were you making inquiries at this time?—I went over to the North Shore and made some inquiries—not officially—some time previously. The reason I did so was because I took a fancy to the place, and thought I should like to live there.

1343. When did you make these inquiries mentioned in your letter?—Between the 7th and the 20th.

1344. So that all this time you were making inquiries?—No, not all the time. A great many had been made previously to this. I made inquiries about Hammond's property before Mr. Stark's was taken by the Government.

1345. You say in your letter, "My idea is that Mr. Stark should be offered £17,500." Did you express that opinion before you committed it to writing?—Yes; that was my idea.