

1583. Do you know if he is going to remain there?—I think not; I think he is travelling through America.

1584. *The Chairman.*] With reference to your appeals against the valuation, did you make many objections to the valuation put on property in Devonport?—We made several.

1585. To many of Seaman's valuations?—Yes; we lodged several.

1586. Can you remember what month it was in that the objections were lodged?—No; I cannot remember.

1587. About what time was it?—Shortly after Mr. Seaman made his valuation.

1588. When was that?—I do not remember: somewhere in October, I think.

1589. Mr. Seaman, in writing to the Property-tax Commissioner, said that the objections of Alison would not be defended. That was on the 15th. Can you explain that—that is, why you withdrew or on what grounds you withdrew?—I saw Mr. Seaman, and told him that I intended to appeal. He replied that as the district was being formed into a borough it would not affect the local rating; that there would be no valuation. It was not until some five minutes before the case came on that I withdrew the appeal. It was only after consultation with others.

1590. Do you consider that you were much overvalued?—Not a very great deal. There were differences of £25 and such amounts, which on several properties would make a respectable sum.

1591. Then you withdrew your objection because you expected the valuation to be reduced, not because you were satisfied that there would be an alteration in the valuation altogether?—Respecting that matter I would like the Committee to express their opinion as to whether there were any grounds, of any character or in any respect whatever, for reflection on my position or my action as one of the Board of Reviewers. I would like this Committee to establish my position in that.

*The Chairman:* That has no reference to the question I put to you.

1592. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] We cannot go outside the order of reference, Mr. Alison; but you have told us that Stark, on one occasion, said to you that the property would never be sold without its passing through your hands: I want to know, when it was sold by Stark himself to the Minister, whether you, as a land and commission agent, felt in any way aggrieved at that?—No; I did not feel aggrieved, inasmuch as he carried out the transaction himself; if it had been done through any other agent I should have felt aggrieved.

1593. You do not think you had sustained any wrong or injury?—Not as he sold it himself.

1594. Did you not receive any consideration?—No.

1595. In that or any other transaction?—These transactions between Stark and me were in October. Two months after the offer was made I bought him out.

1596. Then you received no commission, directly or indirectly?—No. I was not entitled to any; but if he had acted through another agent I would have said that he had treated me very badly.

1597. Then by selling himself you were satisfied?—Yes.

1598. Is that a rule in this kind of business?—I did not feel hurt because he sold for himself.

1599. *Mr. Peacock.*] I understood you to say in your evidence that it was by your representations to Mr. Stark that the purchase by Ross was made to fall through?—Yes.

1600. That you suggested to him that he, Ross, was offering too small a price, and that Ross insisted on conditions with regard to the mortgage which gave him an opportunity of withdrawing: Now I understand you to say that at the time Stark said he would only sell the property through you—that is, the sale to Ross having fallen through, you were promised that it would not be sold but through you?—That is not the right evidence.

1601. What was it, then—when did the occurrence take place when he said he would only sell the property through you?—He said that he would not deal with the property without consulting me.

1602. You have been made aware that, five months subsequently, that is, in December, Stark did make an offer to Mr. Kingsford of the said property, the same lot?—I had no knowledge of it, being seriously ill at the time. I could have no knowledge of it; I could not attend to Mr. Stark's business or the business of any one else.

1603. Assuming this statement to be correct that the property had been offered on these terms—£3,500 for the five acres and buildings, and £4,000 for the ten acres—would you have insisted on getting commission from him if Kingsford had accepted the property?—I have no doubt he would have given me a commission.

1604. Could you have claimed it?—If he offered it to Kingsford and Kingsford accepted, I have no doubt he would have given me a commission, after the promises which he had made to me.

1605. Do you feel satisfied that the property was in your hands, so that you could have enforced a commission?—No; it was only a man's word: it was merely a verbal promise.

1606. *Mr. Cowan.*] Did you think that you had it sufficiently in your hands to warrant a demand for commission if it had been sold?—As he sold himself I did not think of it.

1607. Did you ever discuss with Stark the increase of value that attached to his property through the Government wanting possession of it?—Yes; Stark often said to me that he would not sell the property unless he got a big price for it—that the Government wanted it, and he would require a big price.

1608. Did he say the price for which he would sell to the Government?—No; he said he would want a long price.

1609. Was this prior to your offer of £16,000?—Yes; it was prior to the offer of £16,000 that he made mention about it.

1610. Can you remember the date of your offer to Mr. Stark through Messrs. Cochrane?—I saw Mr. Cochrane and asked him for the date; I think it was in August.

1611. 1885?—Yes, 1885.

1612. Do you know whether your offer influenced the Property-tax Assessor?—I have no knowledge of it at all, none whatever.