

the terms on which Mr. Stark told you he had settled with Mr. Richardson?—No; because they are not the terms. My report says £17,500. I believe the terms he settled on were £17,100.

1702. These are your words—"This would be 10 per cent. over the property-tax valuation"?—Yes.

1703. You say, "He told me he had settled with the Minister on the basis of 10 per cent. over the property-tax valuation"?—Yes.

1704. Then I want to know why it was that you misrepresented to the Minister that Mr. Stark would not accept this offer, you knowing at the time that he had accepted it?—You mistake me. I wrote a letter in an official way, the same as if I had written it three days before, and as if I knew nothing about the transaction. I understood that the Minister had taken it in hand himself.

1705. Why should you write a valuation, when you received instructions to write in on the 20th, as if you had written it three days before?—Because I was not supposed to know that it was completed in any way.

1706. Then what you wrote on the 20th you knew not to be true?—No; I knew that the facts of the case were true.

1707. Was it true that, on the 20th, you knew that Mr. Stark would not accept the property-tax valuation and 10 per cent.?—Not until I got his letter, which I got about the middle of the day.

1708. Though he told you he had agreed to accept the offer?—But he did not tell me the amount.

1709. Is this evidence (question 1054) correct?—I think I made a little mistake. He did not mention it when he looked in at the door. I have confounded that with his letter, which came the next day.

1710. *Dr. Newman.*] Would you be able to tell the Committee whether you were in Auckland on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 13th?—Yes, I was; to the best of my belief.

1711. Would you have any evidence to show from notes that you could or could not have had interviews with the Minister on those dates?—No, I do not think so.

1712. *Mr. Barron.*] Were instructions to make a report given you by the Minister in detail?—Verbal instructions.

1713. Were they only instructions to make a report, or was there any indication of what it should be?—I was simply instructed to write a report on the Takapuna property. There may have been some other conversation.

1714. What induced you to put your valuation in writing?—The Minister asked me to do so.

1715. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Was this report a statement of the conversation that had taken place before—of your opinion with regard to the value of the property?—It was a report of my opinion as to its value based on the property-tax value, and given to the Minister on the 20th.

1716. The report was a written memorandum of what had taken place formerly?—Yes.

1717. At the request of the Minister?—Yes.

1718. *Mr. Holmes.*] Was Mr. Godden present at the interviews between you and the Minister?—Yes, he was.

1719. At all of them?—I do not think he was present at the first; but he certainly was on the 20th.

1720. *The Chairman.*] You wish to make a statement?—Yes; there is something I wish to point out. I asked for permission to look over the papers presented to the House; I never had an opportunity of doing so before, and I think I ought to have. I took one or two extracts, which I should like to bring before your notice. In the first place, there is a telegram from the Minister to the Under-Secretary—"Takapuna property," &c. The point I wish you to notice is this, "Who do you think should be asked to value?" The next is a telegram from the Under-Secretary to the Minister, "I have directed that one or two land agents," &c. One more, "Do I understand that Moss," &c. The point I want to show is that I was never asked to act with these men at all. I never knew about their names being mentioned. I should have been glad to be associated with them, but I was never asked to in any way. Does not this show that the matter was to a great extent taken out of my hands? The very fact of the Minister employing these gentlemen, not in any way associated with me, proves conclusively that the matter was to a certain extent taken out of my hands. Then, there is another telegram from the Under-Secretary to the Minister, "Sperrey says," &c. I maintain that the Minister was in possession of more information on the matter than I was. I was not in possession of this. Then, there is another point, in the last telegram—one from Sperrey to the Minister, "The property-tax valuation is by Seaman," &c. Now, as I am a stranger in the place, and unacquainted with the value of property, I make my valuation on the estimate of the best valuer in Auckland, and I cannot see where I was to blame. I am placed in an embarrassing position. I have to defend my reputation from what appears to be a charge of neglect and incompetency, and in doing so I have to go in distinct opposition to the head of my department.

Mr. D. GODDEN sworn and examined.

1721. *The Chairman.*] The Committee wish to know if you can give them any information as to the interviews between Mr. Brewer and the Minister for Public Works—as to the number of times that interviews took place?—I cannot settle upon the specific dates, because I took no notes; but the first was on the 7th. That I remember well. He attended with Mr. Stark in the morning, at the Star Hotel. I believe Mr. Brewer also saw the Minister in the afternoon or evening of the same day, but I cannot say for certain. Then, he saw him again on the afternoon of the 8th or the evening of the 9th, before the Minister went to Waiwera; and again, I believe, on the morning or afternoon of the 11th, when he returned from Waiwera. We left Auckland on the 12th for the Waikato, and returned on the 18th, and the Minister went to see him himself either on the 19th or 20th.