

TUESDAY, 12TH JUNE, 1888.

Mr. W. S. REID, Solicitor-General, examined.

24. *Mr. Bell.*] You have seen a copy of the evidence given before the Committee by Sir Robert Stout?—I have.

25. Did you act on behalf of the Government in settling the form of the contract with the company?—I did.

26. Do you remember the 11th clause?—Of course, I have referred to the printed copy of the contract and the papers on errors since I had notice to attend this Committee.

27. Can you say whether the 11th clause was drafted by you or by Mr. Travers?—By Mr. Travers, and submitted to the Government.

28. Was it approved by you in the form in which Mr. Travers submitted it to you?—It was.

29. Was there no alteration it?—I could not exactly say. No alteration that I remember. I recollect, since refreshing my memory, and looking into the file of papers, that there were some words put in to the effect that “if in the opinion of the Government land should be available,” &c.

30. Then some alteration in the clause was considered by you?—Yes.

31. I assume you received instructions from the Government with respect to the 11th clause?—The clause came in just in the ordinary way, by a reference from the Public Works Department, to be settled; and it was settled in the ordinary way. I had, of course, to do with the prior draft.

32. I understand that the 11th clause was not in the contract originally?—No.

33. The separate draft was submitted to, and approved by you?—Yes.

34. Coming from the Public Works Department?—Yes.

35. So that in that way your special attention was called to the provision made in the 11th clause?—Yes.

36. Can you say, if you remember, whether any question was raised at that time as to the validity of such clause?—I do not remember. So far as I am aware, no question was raised.

37. Either by you or by the Government?—Certainly not by me. I do not know whether there was by the Government.

38. Were you informed at the time that the 11th clause was to provide land for allocating to the company?—It came with a letter that had been sent to the company, accompanied by the draft-clause submitted by Mr. Travers, with a direction to peruse the clause, and, if I approved, to agree to it in that shape.

39. What letter was that?—The letter of the 20th or 21st February. I am not sure which.

40. Is it the letter of the 13th February?—I thought it was the 20th February. I am not sure as to the date, but it was about that time. [File of papers handed to witness.] This is the letter.

41. To whom is it addressed?—To Mr. J. E. Nathan. It is a draft-letter. It is marked by Mr. Knowles as having been sent on the 20th February. [Letter read.]

42. Who is it signed by?—It is signed by Walter Johnston. It was a copy of that letter that came to me with the clause.

43. Can you refer to any other letter?—Yes.

44. Which?—It is a letter of the 21st February, addressed to Mr. Travers. [Letter read.]

45. I understand that that was referred to you in the usual way?—Yes, with the clause.

46. Has your opinion at any time been asked as to the effect of that clause?—It has not.

47. At no time?—At no time.

48. By no Minister?—By no Minister.

49. Do you remember the question being ever raised in any way by Sir Robert Stout to yourself?—At no time.

50. Was the first suggestion of its invalidity the receipt of Sir Robert Stout's evidence?—It was.

51. Were you ever consulted as to the limit of five years?—No.

Mr. SHORTT examined.

52. *Mr. Bell.*] You are a clerk in the Public Works Office?—I am.

53. Do you produce certain files of papers in the Public Works Department?—I do.

54. Are these files connected with the preparation of the Wellington and Manawatu Railway contract?—Yes.

55. Are there other matters recently connected with the contract on that file?—Nothing since 1883. The last paper on the file is dated 12th October, 1883.

56. There would be no inconvenience in leaving these files here in charge of the Committee?—No inconvenience if they are kept according to the stipulation that Mr. O'Connor has made.

THURSDAY, 14TH JUNE, 1888.

The Hon. JOHN BRYCE examined.

57. *The Chairman.*] You have been summoned to give evidence in this case?—That is so.

58. I presume you have gone through the papers relating to this case. Will you be good enough to make such statement as you think requisite in regard to this matter?—Why I am here, I think, may be explained in this way: During the recess the Minister for Public Works, in his official capacity, sent me a report of the evidence taken before the Committee last session, stating that he sent it to me for my information, because in all probability I would this session be called