

721. Did he say who it was?—No, he did not tell me who it was.

722. That was immediately after the decision in the Court case had reached Woodville?—I believe so: it was either then or the next day.

723. Did he say whether he was going to accept the offer or not?—No, he did not say.

724. Are you aware of any rumours or statements in Woodville that Mr. Peebles was prepared to give a bonus to any one who would transfer this section to him?—People were talking in that way at the time the drawing was on.

725. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Were you an applicant yourself for this section?—No.

726. Were you an applicant for any section in the district at that time?—No, I have never applied for a section from the Government yet.

727. Did you hear Mr. Peebles say this yourself—that he would give £150, or was prepared to do so?—He told me he would give no such thing.

728. That he would give no such thing as £150?—Yes.

729. You tell us that you heard a report in Woodville that Mr. Peebles was prepared to give something like that sum as a bonus for that section: did you ever hear Mr. Peebles himself say so?—Mr. Peebles told me at the time the section was being put up for application that, if anybody put in an application for the section with the idea that they were going to get a bonus of £100 from him for it, they were very much mistaken.

730. You heard Mr. Peebles say that yourself?—Oh, yes!

JOSEPH SOWRY sworn and examined.

[This evidence has not been revised by the witness.]

731. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—An architect and inspector, Woodville.

732. You are also a Justice of the Peace, are you not?—Yes.

733. You were an applicant for Section 1, Block XIV., in November last?—Yes.

734. Under what circumstances did you apply for it, Mr. Sowry?—Of course, as a Justice of the Peace I filled up a good number of papers, and saw a good many people who discussed the matter with me and wanted to know if I was going in for it and so forth. This was on the day before the drawing took place. I said I looked upon it as a lottery, knowing that a large number were going in for it. On the Saturday prior to the sale I went to the Woodville Post-office to get one of these forms. I had already talked the matter over with my wife several times. I met Mr. MacMaster, the Government Inspector of Lands, and he said something to me about it. He said, "Haven't you gone in? Are you too late?" I said, "It does not matter. I should not have much chance of winning a section." And so the matter rested until Monday, when I filled some more up and had some more conversation. On Tuesday, about noon, or somewhere about that time, Mr. Peebles and his son Sandy came into the office to get a declaration signed before me. Of course I have known him for a good number of years. He said, "You are going in for this section yourself, I suppose. Nearly everybody is going in for it." I said, "It is not much good; I never won anything in my life. It certainly is quite a lottery now." I must have filled up over thirty papers myself, and Mr. Hall as many. We turned out about sixty between us. Of course that is only a guess, as I have not got any record. Well, I filled up the paper and that sort of thing, and he said, "You are not going in for it?" I said, "I went for a paper on Saturday, but could not get one." He said, "I have got a paper here. You had better go in for it." I said, "It is rather late now." "Well," he said, "you might as well go in." I said, "It is rather late now, and, besides, I have never won anything in my life." At last I said, "I have a good mind to go in," and I took the paper from him and filled it up. When he was going away I said to him, "Are you going down to Napier yourself?" He said, "Yes, I am going to town to see the drawing." I said, "You might as well take it with you and save the twopence." As there was no Justice of the Peace in the place besides myself, and I could not witness it myself, being my own paper, I had to go over to see Mr. Burnett, solicitor, who certified to it. I came back and attended to some matters, and Mr. Peebles came in and said he was going by the coach that was standing outside waiting to leave for the train. I said, "What will you do about a cheque?" He said, "Never mind about that. I am just going to the bank now; I will do that for you." I do not think I had that much money in the bank at that time, quite. The amount required was £40 8s. 9d. He said, "All right; I will hand in another cheque." Well, I did not think anything more about it, really. There was one thing I omitted, though. When I went in for the section I said to Mr. Peebles, "If I get it I will come and live neighbour to you, Alick. I am getting rather tired of town life. I shall certainly come out there." He said, "I would rather have you for a neighbour than ; but I mean to have it. I am having seven shots at it." I said, "Oh! good gracious! how is that?" He then told me some of the names of his family who were in for it: he had put in the lot—sons and daughters. Well, the thing was sent away, and I thought no more about it at the time, until I heard from Mr. Haggen next day, on Wednesday. About noon, when I was going up the street, I met Mr. Haggen and another person. He said, "What about the section?" I thought he was referring to another section which I was disposing of at the time, and I said, "I am going to sell it." He said, "I thought you were in for the section." "What section do you mean?" I asked. "The section near Alexander Peebles's," he said. "Yes," I said, "I was in for it." He said, "Joseph Sowry has drawn it, but Mr. Baker has objected on the ground that some person has gone in for it who is already the holder of land, and therefore there was a protest lodged against it." But it was disallowed, because I got notice next day allowing the land to be allotted to me. Then I got another notice from the Commissioner informing me that a protest had been lodged against the issue of the license. It would not be issued until the next meeting of the Land Board. The Land Board met, and they decided not to give me the section, but they recommended the Government to withdraw it and offer again for cash. Of course I admit that I was very much surprised when I won this section. Nothing in my life ever surprised me so much. Still, I felt a little bit put out, after winning it out of sixty, that it should