

back: how came you to send this if you had nothing to do with it?—I said to Scott, "That is what you had better write." He was always coming to me to know what he should do.

590. Why should you be a sort of adviser-in-chief if you had nothing to do with it?—It was the easiest way to get rid of him to advise him.

591. This is the note you wrote: "I beg to give you notice that it is my intention to abandon Run 93A, as I cannot make anything out of it at the rental." Now, Mr. Ritchie, had Mr. Scott ever attempted to make anything out of it at the rental?—Well, he had.

592. How?—I was willing to pay him fifteen or twenty pounds, and he knew it.

593. Surely that was nothing "at the rental." Is this statement true or not—the statement you made Scott sign?—I did not make Scott sign it.

594. You wrote it for him?—He asked me what he should do. I said, "Write something like that.

595. Yes. Now, was this something correct?—Yes.

596. I will read it: "I beg to give you notice that it is my intention to abandon Run 93A, as I cannot make anything out of it at the rental"?—Yes, nobody could make anything.

597. Is that correct?—How correct?

598. When you asked Scott to sign that statement, was that asking him to sign a true statement?—I think so.

599. You really say you think so?—Yes. It would take a much cleverer man than Mr. Scott to make anything out of the run.

600. That is not the question, as you know very well. Had Mr. Scott ever attempted to make anything out of it at the rental?—I do not suppose he would have gone into it if he did not.

601. Did you ever imagine for a moment that Mr. Scott was going to run sheep on that run—was to be a runholder?—I have said so already. I said we did not want anything to do with it.

602. That is not the question: did you imagine that Scott was going to be a runholder, and run sheep on this country?—I cannot say what I imagined.

603. There is no use beating about the bush. Is not this the fact: You wanted the use of the land for a few months; Scott was to take up the run; you were to pay the rent; and as soon as you had done with the run he was to abandon it: and you expected the Government would let him abandon it. Did not you expect that to happen?—I hoped so.

604. Now, Mr. Ritchie, you saw Mr. Scott again about this rabbit question, and you indorsed this on this telegram?—Yes.

605. Now, why should you put this indorsement, "What time might be gained by appeal, and at what cost?" What interest was it that Scott was to gain time in an appeal?—I suggested that as a reply to Messrs. Perry and Perry. When they asked—I think it was Perry and Perry—I suggested, before giving an answer *re* appeal, that he might ask that question.

606. What interest was it to him?—I do not know.

607. Was it not in your own interest this telegram was to be sent?—Certainly not.

608. If not, why did you go to Mr. Haggitt and take his opinion?—I do not think we did.

609. Did you not do that?—I do not think so.

610. Did not your company get an opinion in writing about this very appeal?—I have no recollection of it.

611. Has it not been charged in your books?—I could not swear. It can easily be found out. I certainly did not go to Mr. Haggitt.

612. Do you mean to say you did not see the opinion?—Not that I know of.

613. Did Mr. Henderson tell you of it?—Not that I know of.

614. Were you charged for the opinion?—I cannot tell. We do not get our accounts so promptly as that.

615. You do not know whether you are charged for it or not?—Not in the least.

616. Now, I understand you to say, Mr. Ritchie, that all that Mr. Scott was to do was to apply for the run, and that you were to pay the rent?—The first half-year's rent.

617. If so, why charge it to Mr. Scott in your books?—I do not know. I did not instruct them to charge it to Scott in our books.

618. How does it come to be charged in the books of the National Mortgage and Agency Company against Mr. Scott if you were to pay it, and not Scott?—I am afraid you will have to ask the book-keeper. I do not know.

619. Then, he would make it without instructions?—Yes; but the whole thing was in Scott's name, and he assumed it was a payment made to his account, as in many instances it is done.

620. Then, he assumed that the company had nothing to do with it—that it was not to be debited against the company?

*Mr. Haggitt*: There is the warrant to the book-keeper to make the entry. [Document produced.]

*Sir R. Stout*: That is not a warrant to charge Scott.

*Mr. Haggitt*: Ask Mr. Ritchie what it is.

621. *Sir R. Stout*: What is it?—That is the authority of the manager at Christchurch to the book-keeper at Christchurch as to how the money is to be charged.

622. Charged in the books down here?—Passed down in the books here, because it is a Dunedin transaction.

623. If that was the true agreement, how was it the book-keepers did not know the true agreement, and a false statement appears in the books?—I do not know. What is your suggestion.

624. My point is this: Would you keep from the book-keeper what was the agreement between you and Scott?—So far as I am concerned, nothing passed between me and the book-keepers.

625. How can your books as a public company be audited, if they are false?—I do not know, I am sure.