

243. On Weston's pully do you suggest that that was a fraudulent overcharge?—It is not the proper thing.

244. If you adopt the schedule rate at £2 15s., do you mean to suggest that a mistake was not made by the clerk, who omitted to notice that it was not a contract item?—I could not say how it had been made.

245. You do not expect a Government contractor to be infallible, although you claim to be infallible yourself?—No, I do not claim to be infallible myself.

246. With regard to the pick-handles, that is a little more than the contract rate?—Yes.

247. Do you suggest that that might be a mistake made by the clerk?—Of course it might.

248. That is, the 1s. 6d.?—Yes, the 1s. 6d.

249. Then the picks (15th July), that is the same kind of error?—Yes.

250. And the crosscut saws; what is the error?—I saw Mr. Gellatly myself about these cross-cut saws.

251. And you agreed to his price?—Not at all.

252. What did you reduce them to?—From 19s. 6d. to 17s. 11d. They were reduced in the Head Office.

253. Why?—Because that was the schedule rate.

254. Is not the difference of 1s. 7d. made up by the handles supplied with the saws?—I do not think so; if so, they ought to have been shown.

255. All I want to know is whether it is not possible that these handles were extra?—I cannot say.

256. Can you say they were not?—I could not say.

257. Can you ascertain whether they were or not?—I can find out.

258. Are you aware that ironmongers do not keep tents in stock?—No.

259. Do you know whether there is a difference in the charge for tents as between Wellington and Dunedin?—I believe there is a difference in price.

260. Do you know the reason of that?—One is 6ft. in the weft; the other is 3ft. The 3ft. is the best. Giving a seam 3ft. apart instead of a 6ft. makes a stronger tent.

261. Can you give any reason why the Wellington price is higher than the Christchurch price?—I do not know, except they have to pay more rent.

262. Or is it that some sailmaker has a monopoly in this article?—There is only one sailmaker who gets higher prices than at Christchurch or Dunedin, and he gives best quality.

263. Do you know that the tent which you produce of inferior quality was paid for at a higher rate than the tent which the branch firm at Dunedin supplies according to contract to the branch here?—I cannot say.

264. How is it that tent was not examined here before it went up?—It could not be.

265. Will you explain why not?—There were a number of men going up on a certain day. I saw Mr. Bridson, of Briscoe and MacNeil's, and told him they were wanted in a great hurry. They were to be at contract price. There was a batch of men from the Labour Bureau going up on the same day. We were all very busy. There were the earthwork quantities to be taken out, and I asked them to supply the goods at once.

266. Can you explain why some officer of the department did not see and examine them?—Captain Turner examined them.

267. Was any complaint made at the time delivery was taken in Wellington?—No.

268. Why not?—Because delivery was not really given to us until they were on the ground.

269. The contract provides for delivery in Wellington, does it not?—I could not possibly do so. The men were going up at once. The tents were required in a great hurry. I had to go at night to get them. Whether they keep them in stock I do not know.

270. Had they to call some one to provide them at a pinch?—I suppose so.

271. You did not see them until after they were on the ground?—No.

FRIDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 1895.—(Mr. A. SAUNDERS, Chairman.)

Mr. J. A. WILSON sworn (recalled).

The Chairman announced that the Committee had decided to admit the questions relating to cement proposed by Mr. Menteath.

1. Mr. Menteath.] There are two or three items for cement in the voucher, for instance, in exhibit No. 23. (To the witness:) There are 12 casks of Portland cement which were obtained on the 27th of February; at what price?—4s.: £8 12s. 3d.; they were obtained by the Lunacy Department for the Mount View Asylum.

2. There are six casks at the same price (Exhibit 24)?—Yes, there were six casks obtained also by the Lunacy Department, also for the Mount View Lunatic Asylum.

3. Now, will you look at the schedule and say what the price is as per schedule?—3s. 9d. in Wellington; that is, for New Zealand Portland cement. The cement that has been used at the Asylum I take it was English cement, which is not included in the contract.

4. Is there anything to show that?—The price would show it; it would show it approximately, as if under the contract the rate would presumably be checked. It was in casks instead of bags, which conclusively points to the fact that it was English cement.

5. Is not English cement a contract line?—It is not a contract line. We do not ask for English cement; as a rule we use no cement except what is of New Zealand manufacture, unless for special works where the New Zealand cement has been found not to answer.

6. Then, if you saw "cement" in any Government voucher, you would be inclined to think that it was New Zealand, because you do not use the English as a rule?—Yes; unless it is in casks.