

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WELLINGTON.

MONDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 1901.

NORMAN HOWARD MAXWELL DALSTON examined on oath.

1. *Dr. Findlay.*] You are general manager of the New Zealand Midland Railway Company?—Yes.

2. At the instance of the Commission you have prepared certain returns?—Yes, which I now put in [Exhibit No. 1].

3. What are they?—The first is a return of the total sums realised by the Receiver from the sales of land granted by the Crown to the company; the second, a return of the total sums realised by the company from the sales of land granted by the Crown, with a list of the lands unsold attached. There is also a summary of the two returns showing the amounts realised by the Receiver and the company from the sales of land granted by the Crown.

4. You made up these returns from the books of the company?—Yes.

5. And you swear to their accuracy?—Yes.

6. They are a faithful statement made up from the books and papers in your possession?—Yes.

7. *Mr. Bell.*] How do they compare with the return put before the Committee in 1900?—They are practically the same as the return in the proceedings of the Committee of 1900, with the addition of some further sales made by the Receiver.

8. Between the date of the return to the Committee—page 126 of Parliamentary Paper I.—11—and the present date there has been realised a further sum of £10,000?—Yes, somewhere about that.

9. Have you estimated the value of the unsold land?—No, I have left a blank column in each case. I thought it was a question for the Commission to determine. I do not know the value.

10. You have not put down the B1 value?—I have shown the total B1 value of each B1 Block. I have debited the company with the B1 value of the land granted to it by the Crown, and I have shown what that land realised, and I have left a column for the value of the land still unsold.

11. *Dr. Findlay.*] These unsold lands have been producing little or no revenue?—Very little revenue.

12. Not since they were granted?—No.

13. The question may be put in this way: These lands were granted some years ago, and you have had the advantage of an income from them since the date of the grant, and they are now worth so-much, looking at the total amount obtained from the Crown by the company and the areas unsold?—The value will not amount to very much.

14. Will you consider that question, as the Commission may require the information later on?—I will do so.

15. *Mr. Bell.*] You received rents from some lands prior to the sale of them. For instance, the Marlborough lands certainly produced some rents?—In very few cases.

16. We may still have the information?—Very well.

17. *Mr. Fraser.*] We have to estimate the difference between the B1 value and the present value of the unsold sections. You have given a detailed return of the several unsold sections, but there is no B1 value to each section: have you got such a thing?—No, I am afraid not, in regard to the Westport, Ahaura, and Cobden Town sections.

18. *Mr. McKenzie.*] In this return we wanted the survey numbers of the blocks and sections, so that we can look them up: can you give us these numbers of the unsold sections where the surveys are completed?—In regard to Canterbury lands, I have given the survey districts and descriptions of the sections.

19. But of the land in Westport, for instance?—I can only give you the number of the section as granted to us. That is taken from the Governor's Warrant.

20. That is not material: we want to find out which are the £10 sections and which are the £7 10s. sections?—You can only find that out on the ground. It is possible the Government officers can give the information. We were granted so-many sections at so-many pounds per section, and I cannot tell where the £10 or £7 10s. sections are.

21. *Dr. Findlay.*] How do these sections sell now?—The Westport sections are realising about £10 a section on the average.

22. *Mr. Bell.*] You have other returns which you are preparing at the request of the Commission?—Only one other return at present, which the Commission requires before we leave Wellington, and I am endeavouring to get it finished as soon as possible.

TUESDAY, 12TH FEBRUARY, 1901.

ALEXANDER CHRISTISON FIFE examined on oath.

23. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Accountant for the New Zealand Government railways.

24. In your position as accountant for the Government railways you wish to hand in certain returns this morning?—Yes [Exhibits 2 and 3].

1—H. 2.