

86. Speaking generally, you say, as the officer charged with these duties, that you did not buy more land than was necessary for railway purposes?—No, with that sole exception before mentioned; and the purchases and compensation were the very best terms that could be made.

87. These observations apply to the Belgrove Section and the whole of the West Coast sections?—Yes.

88. You had nothing to do with the Springfield purchases?—No.

89. You mentioned that there were some small claims at the Jackson's end: what is the position of these claims?—Agreements were made in each case with the claimant, and under them a certain amount, equal to about 75 per cent. of the compensation sum, was paid on their signing a deed of release and agreement to transfer. The remaining 25 per cent. was held over until the survey of land and the completion of the transfer. So far as I can recollect, there are four properties here in regard to which there are claims agreed to, but not finally paid off. One is that of Mrs. Evans.

90. There is a letter before the Commission from Mrs. Evans, in which she states, "I am writing in regard to land purchased from me by the Midland Railway Company, which has never been paid for. The area purchased from me was 6 acres, through which the line now runs, at £10 per acre—£60; £40 was paid at the time the line was constructed, and £20 has been owing ever since": what do you say about that?—I cannot recollect the exact details, but the letter bears out what I have said.

91. There may be, as she says, about £20 owing?—Yes.

92. What are the other cases?—One is in connection with a section beside Mrs. Evans's, and which then belonged to a man named McLoughlin.

93. Where does he live?—He lived then at Mr. Bruce's place.

94. Do you recollect about the amount due?—No. It was a small area, and is not a large sum.

95. It is a similar claim to Mrs. Evans's?—Yes.

96. And the next case?—Is that of Mrs. Jackson's, in regard to a section below the accommodation-house. The line goes through it.

97. Is that a similar claim?—Yes; it does not involve a large amount.

98. Was she paid £30 on account?—Yes. Then, there is Mr. Charles Clark's land near the Poerua Railway-station.

99. Do you remember what was paid to Clark?—It was paid in Christchurch, where he lives. The amount was about £75, and there would be about £25 still to pay. There were one or two sections—I forget their numbers—on the Jackson's line between Stillwater and Kokiri which belonged to Mr. Joyce. We had settled for other similar sections on a uniform basis of £15 per section. We cut off the frontage, and took some land. Mr. Joyce was offered the uniform price agreed to by others, but he would not accept it. He never took any action. The matter has simply been dormant.

100. So far as you know, that amount has never been paid?—It has never been paid, and has never been claimed, so far as I know.

101. You do not know whether it is one or two sections?—No; I would have to look the matter up.

102. Does that exhaust the unpaid claims?—Yes.

103. If there are any others that you recollect you will supply them to the Commission later on?—Yes, I will check any statements I make.

104. Then, the Commission want the area of land given by the Government on which the railway is constructed, each of the sections of railway to be shown separately: have you got that?—I suppose the Crown will give that.

105. I pass on to the fourth head, which is important—"The actual cost of construction of each of the sections of railway, showing items in the following order: (a) grading, (b) bridging, (c) tunnelling, (d) buildings and stations, (e) permanent-way, (f) fencing, and (g) rolling-stock, &c. The Commission will accept contractor's tenders, including schedules, for any work let by public competition, and also any additions to or deductions from any contract let by public tender." I am going to ask you to lead up to this by stating to the Commission what you know of these English contracts: you know the work done by the English contractors?—Yes.

106. Who were they?—McKeone, Robinson, and Avigdor.

107. Can you say whether these contracts were let by competition or not?—They were let in London. Nos. 1 and 2 contracts were let in London, and No. 3 contract was arranged, I presume by instructions from London, by Mr. Wilson in the colony, and confirmed from London. It was made really by the directors.

108. And confirmed in London?—Yes, because we got the printed documents out afterwards.

109. In effect, it was really let in England?—Yes, although it was arranged here.

110. Was that third contract let after the English contractors had started work here?—Yes.

111. This No. 3 contract, was it let by competition, do you know?—No, it was not.

112. You do not know whether the first two were let by competition or not?—No; I take it for granted they were not let by public competition.

113. I understand you have got all these contracts, with their schedule rates?—Yes.

114. So that the Commission may know how far that copy can be relied on, will you state how you come to have it?—It was a copy I had for administration, for my own reference.

115. It was supplied to you?—Yes.

116. As a copy of the contracts for administration purposes?—Yes; and in order to make out the certificates, &c.

117. You have no reason to doubt its accuracy as a copy?—No.

118. That applies to the three contracts?—Yes.