

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 4TH AUGUST, 1904.

T. F. GREY, Acting Under-Secretary of the Defence Department, examined.

1 *The Chairman.*] Mr. Grey, the Committee are desirous of ascertaining why Captain Clark's papers were delayed from last session until June of this year before they were submitted to the Imperial Government?—I can give you no information beyond the offer made to Captain Clark. The matter was taken out of our branch of the service and handed over to the Treasury in December, as will appear from the file.

2. *Mr. Taylor.*] Would there be any correspondence between you and the Treasury in reference to it?—No, I think I took these papers down to Mr. Heywood myself, about the 23rd March.

3. Can you remember what you said to him?—I would probably ask him to get the offer sent to Captain Clark as soon as possible. [File referred to.]

4. The offer was made by the Treasury, you think?—Yes, probably.

5. You did not make the offer?—No. The offer appears to have been despatched by the Imperial Pay Branch on the 30th March of this year. That is carrying out the Ministerial instructions of the 23rd March.

6. You say that from December to March the matter was not in your hands?—Practically.

7. From whom can we get information as to what became of this matter during that lapse of time?—From the papers on the file.

8. *Captain Clark.*] You said that about the 20th December you finally dealt with this matter and handed the whole of these things to the Treasury. You took no further action from that date?—In December the Treasury Department took over all the accounts in connection with Contingent matters from the Defence Department.

9. Some time in December?—Yes.

10. And yet you said a little while ago that about the 23rd March you took the papers to Mr. Heywood to give instructions to him?—Yes. Your matter had not been finally dealt with in December. All the Contingent matters were taken over by the Treasury in December.

11. Why was mine not taken over?—On the 9th December I wrote a minute to the Minister about your claim. That came back on the 23rd March of this year. They had not dealt with your matter in December because they did not have the papers.

12. So my matters were not finally dealt with by your office?—You do not understand. Your petition was not dealt with by the Treasury, because it had not the petition before it until March of this year.

13. You said that my petition or my case was not referred to with all the other Contingent matters at that time: Why was my matter hung up?—It was before the Minister at the time, or in the hands of the Private Secretary.

14. *Mr. Hardy.*] I understand you to say that the matter was in the hands of the Premier's Private Secretary?—Yes.

15. And it remained there from the time when it was dealt with by Parliament?—Yes.

16. How long would that be?—My minute is written to the Minister on the 9th December. It lay for the Minister's instructions, and the date is the 23rd March.

Right Hon. the Minister of Defence: As Minister I would like to draw a distinction. The matter was left with the Minister, not with his Private Secretary. It remained with me. Mr. Grey probably did not understand that when he answered the question.

Mr. Hardy: I put the question to the witness, and he presumed that it was left with the Minister's Private Secretary.

Right Hon. the Minister of Defence: Yes. He would send it up to the Secretary and get it back from the Secretary, but in the meantime he would not know whether the Secretary had charge of the papers or whether they were locked up in the Minister's room. After the papers left him he would not know what became of them.

17. *Mr. Taylor* (to witness).] Did you have occasion frequently to go and see the Minister's Secretary about the matter between December and March?—That I cannot say.

18. Can you say you went once or twice, or did not go at all?—I cannot say from memory.

19. Did you cover the document with a letter when you sent it up to the Minister?—No, the minute is sufficient.

20. Did you carry it up to the Minister's office?—Probably a messenger would take it up.

21. It would be just put in an envelope?—Yes.

22. You do not know which of the Minister's Secretaries had the document?—No.

23. Then, your reply was misleading?—Which reply?

24. *Mr. Hardy.*] I asked you whether it was with the Minister, and you said you presumed it was with the Minister's Private Secretary. We want to get at the cause of the delay that has occurred.

Right Hon. the Minister of Defence: I think I can give you the information better than any one else. I suppose you have seen the papers and know the position in which the matter stands. As far as the Defence Department is concerned, we are only the means of communication—the responsibility for payment rests with the Paymaster for the Imperial Government.

Mr. Hardy: Mr. Heywood said he would have paid the claim if the Minister had sanctioned it.

Right Hon. the Minister of Defence: The position he takes up is this: I will pay it on your order, if the Imperial Government does not recognise it yours will be the responsibility.