

126. When were they first offered to the public?—About four years ago.

127. Then, within four years every section has been taken up, and practically there is a house on every section?—Yes.

128. Could that not have been done with the unleased portion of the trust estate opposite your own place, and up the Avenue?—No; because the leases had not expired. All the property on the estate was held under lease.

129. That is the reason why it could not be put in the market?—Yes.

130. The property could not have been put on the market because of the existence of these leases?—Just so. Nor was there a tremendous demand, if they could have been.

131. What other Corporation leaseholds have been let during the last five years?—There are a few on the Heads Road, from the Cemetery corner down towards the Heads. Some are let, and some have been put up for tender year after year, and are unlet now.

132. Are there some under St. John's Hill?—These are all grazing-leases.

133. Have not Russell and Bignell erected houses there on Corporation leaseholds?—There is only one block leased for building purposes. There are several sections on the Heads Road leased by Russell and Bignell, and not built upon.

134. When were they leased to them?—About two years and a half ago.

135. How many sections?—Three quarter-acre sections.

136. When were the sections under St. John's Hill leased to them?—I should say about three years prior to that. There was a particular reason for that. Some private people wanted a road there, and conditions were attached to the letting of the land that I, in my position as a Councillor, considered rather onerous. Nevertheless they guaranteed to fulfil them, and did so, and that provides a better means for the St. John's Hill people to come down to town.

137. Are you a Councillor now?—Yes.

138. Do you know why it is taking such a long time—nine months—for the Council to come to an agreement with the trustees in regard to these streets?—It is a delay caused by the employees of the Council. We cannot get the survey completed, and the Foreman of Works has then to make out his estimates. They are very busy men. I do not know whether the survey has been handed to the Foreman of Works yet.

139. Nine months is a long time?—It is too long.

140. Have you tried to hurry them up at all?—Several times I have pulled the strings in vain.

141. What is the real cause of the delay?—My own impression is that the Foreman of Works is overburdened with work. I fancy he looks upon this as a work of supererogation, and thinks borough work must be done first.

142. Does not Mr. Atkins do work for the borough?—Yes.

143. Could he not be asked to do work when the other employees are engaged?—I do not know. That is a matter for the Council.

144. Do you get a salary as well as a commission?—No. I get an allowance of £15 per year for rent, and a commission of 5 per cent. on the rents collected. I also charge for stationery and postage-stamps and little expenses of various kinds.

145. Do they all appear in the books?—Yes, everything. I do not keep a petty-cash book, but every penny is shown in the cash-book and ledger.

146. *Mr. Elliott.*] Is your commission 5 per cent. on the rents only?—Yes.

147. Not on the fees?—No.

148. So your income would be about £60 a year?—That is it. It varies a little.

149. Do you get any commission on disbursements?—No.

150. *Mr. Hogg.*] Is there any debt due on the buildings now?—There is a present expenditure going on which when completed will be a debt of £550.

151. Are the buildings mortgaged, or do the trustees operate by a bank overdraft?—By bank overdraft. We cannot mortgage.

152. At the end of the last financial year had you a surplus or deficit in your accounts?—We had a balance in hand of £137 ls., and the salaries were due.

153. Then, for the last year you had no interest to meet?—The bank charges and interest amounted to £1 Os. 6d.

154. Then the revenue for the last year, at all events, was applied to educational purposes?—Yes. It has always been so applied. It is never used for any other purpose.

155. Is the whole of this endowment leased at the present time?—It is let. During the past few years the trustees have had in view the subdivision of the property into 5-acre blocks. It is obvious they could not do that while long leases were in existence, and, therefore, they let the land on short leases so that they would all fall in together. Some of the leases will be falling in at the end of this month and some at the end of the year.

156. Then there is no idle land on the estate: it is all producing revenue?—Every rood of it.

157. I suppose you have applications from the tenants occasionally to have their leases varied, and the terms extended, and so on?—Yes.

158. Who determines these applications?—The trustees.

159. In Wellington?—Yes.

160. Who are the local trustees?—Rev. T. B. Maclean and Mr. Beckett.

161. Then, when applications are made by the tenants for concessions of any kind, you do not deal with them here, but you send them to Wellington to be dealt with?—That is so. The local trustees will be there and give their views.

162. Now, have the trustees any interest, either directly or indirectly, in these lands?—No.

163. I see you lease a small portion?—I am in possession temporarily. I had a long lease, and when it fell in I occupied, with the permission of the trustees, that portion of the lease which could not be let owing to the Borough Council refusing to have a building erected without a road. I am liable to be called on at any time to give up possession. I pay a rent of £9 per year.