

42. But you said that no one on behalf of the City Council had approached him in regard to this matter?—I never made a statement of the kind.

43. Mr. Hislop states that he did not approach Mr. Macdonald before this date?—I never said anything of the kind. Mr. Macdonald, as you can see, was approached on behalf of the Council. From a letter of Mr. O'Shea's of November, 1906, he had been approached long before that.

44. And you suggest that the plan which Mr. Macdonald forwarded to the Government was forwarded without authority?—I do not indeed. How do you mean?

45. I mean that he was not authorised to write the letter?—I have said so several times.

46. Can the Mayor confirm or deny the statement made by Mr. Kensington in evidence that in the interview of the 29th April with the Under-Secretary the Mayor mentioned the area as being four or five perches?—I never mentioned an area of four or five perches to anybody in my life, because I knew the thing was perfectly impossible. I knew the total area of that section, and to say that 4 perches was to be obtained was perfectly absurd; it is insane.

47. If it was insane and absurd to suggest such a thing, is it not singular that the owner of the land should suggest it to the Government?—You ask Mr. Macdonald. His knowledge of plans and areas is not, perhaps, as great as my own. I have had experience dealing with them since I was sixteen years of age. In Mr. Haggitt's office I had the whole of the plans of the Southern Trunk Railway to deal with, and I have been accustomed to them ever since, and I would certainly never make such a mistake. I never saw that plan before I saw it in the Chief Clerk's office in June last. If those initials on that plan are "A. B.," then I think they are the initials of the draughtsman in the City Engineer's office, but I am not quite sure. The plan would be obtained by Mr. Macdonald. The Engineer and everybody knew on the 29th, and would be quite justified in giving a copy of the plan to him. Negotiations had been going on by the officers with Mr. Macdonald for months.

48. Assuming that the date on the plan has been put there by the Engineer's Department, it is rather a coincidence that the date should appear there the same as the date of the interview Mr. Kensington has related?—The coincidence is a coincidence with the date on which Mr. Kensington says he saw Mr. Macdonald and myself. If he only saw Mr. Macdonald, then it is a coincidence with his visit.

49. But then, as a matter of fact——?—As a matter of fact, I do not think it is any good pursuing this. I never saw that plan until I saw it in the Chief Clerk's office. I am speaking according to my memory. There is no reason why I should say I had not seen Mr. Kensington if I believed I had seen him; and I ask the Committee to give me credit for stating what I believe to be true. If I had seen Mr. Kensington, I should say so at once, and I should not be ashamed of it. If I had known that the piece of land once acquired by the Council would have helped in our negotiations—I do not know that I would have gone myself, but I would have asked one of the officers to go. I should not have hesitated in going if I had thought that I should be more useful than one of the officers.

50. At a meeting of the City Council on the 18th June did you not state that Mr. Macdonald had paid the city the sum of £675?—No.

51. Then the newspaper reports are stating what is incorrect?—I have nothing to do with newspaper reports. What I did say was that £652 had been paid by Mr. Macdonald, and that in addition to that he had given us the piece of ground free of cost.

52. And at the same meeting you said that the exchange of land would have been a fair one without the payment of £675: is that correct?—Not quite correct. It is an abbreviated report. What I did say was that it would be perfectly absurd that Mr. Macdonald was to give £652 besides 4 perches—that in my opinion 4 perches of his land were worth a great deal more than the 6 perches obtained from the Government, and that no person would have thought of giving £652 together with 4 perches of very valuable land.

53. This is rather an important point: Can you tell us if it is not correct that, when Mr. Macdonald had received the title to the 6·55 perches, he mortgaged that, together with the 12 perches, for £2,400?—Yes.

54. And the mortgage was prepared before the title was actually issued?—Yes, necessarily; but the money was not paid. The whole arrangement had been made. When I say that these things took place, I do not know it of my own knowledge; but I am pretty sure that none of the mortgage-money was paid over until the whole thing was completed. But I had nothing to do with it personally.

55. You have made reference to the widening operations. Under the agreement of the 11th October, which was signed by Mr. Macdonald and yourself as Mayor, and witnessed by the Town Clerk and a Councillor, and sealed with the Corporation seal, what would the widening operations have cost the city?

*The Chairman:* I do not know that that is a question we would care to go into at the present time.

*Witness:* It would take only one moment to answer it: It would have cost £20 less than what it has cost. That is what the City Engineer estimates.

56. *Mr. Fisher.* You have stated that you knew Mr. Macdonald was concerned on account of the area he thought was to be taken?—Yes; not of the size of the area. He was concerned on account of the land being taken being part of his land, and I gathered from my conversation with him in the beginning of July that he was under the impression that a very much larger area was going to be taken than I knew was wanted.

57. Then you said that on discussing the amount to be paid by Mr. Macdonald for the 6·55 perches you discovered that he was under the impression that he had to give four or five perches to the city? You got the letter of the 29th June from the Commissioner of Crown Lands?—I did