

40. What of this other place—the long strip shown on the plan: is she assessed for that?—Yes, she is still assessed for that. It is Crown land, and she is occupying part of it, and there is a little shed on it.

41. Would she be prepared to buy that?—That was put into the Act last year, and we wrote to the Secretary for Crown Lands stating that she had just learned through these proceedings of the Act of last year, and that she had a right to apply for the land. In reply to our letter on her behalf Mr. Kensington wrote as follows: “Department of Lands, Wellington, 28th August, 1908.—GENTLEMEN,—In reply to your letter of the 15th instant, regarding Mrs. Williams’s claims to the Crown land fronting Wellington Terrace, I have to inform you that, although the provisions of section 29 of ‘The Reserves Disposal, &c., Act, 1907,’ do not direct the Government to notify Mrs. Williams or any other persons, yet I very much regret that the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wellington; did not advise her of the purpose of that section, and if through this omission she has lost any rights which she might otherwise have been able to establish, no doubt the Government will endeavour to preserve such rights by including a clause in the next Reserves Disposal and Enabling Bill, if not this session, then in the session of 1909, preserving and continuing her power to lodge such an application as was prescribed in section 29 above mentioned.—I have, &c., WM. C. KENSINGTON, Under-Secretary.—Messrs. Brown and Dean, 5 Lambton Quay, Wellington.”

42. Was she still anxious to buy this land?—Yes.

43. I want to know the value of it. You say the Crown is the seller, and you can give me the answer if you like?—It is assessed altogether disproportionately to the other piece, and yet the other (the 6·5 perches) is more valuable land, because the back part of the land which Mrs. Williams had the right to apply for is absolutely useless and there is no reason why it should be assessed at a higher rate than the 6·5 perches.

44. What is it assessed at?—It is assessed, as shown on page 3 of the correspondence, &c., at £375, and the other land (6·5 perches) at £652. The only available piece of land is in front, and is valued at more than twice the amount per foot frontage of the other piece.

45. *Mr. Remington.*] You see that the 12 ft. 6 in. frontage, according to the valuation made in 1907, is £30 a foot?—Yes, and there is no sense in it. If you go to the back of the Wairarapa Farmers’ land you could see that no one could make any use of the back part at all.

46. Then, in your opinion, the £30 asked for that in May, 1907, with the valuation of £652 arranged for this larger section, shows no comparison in value?—Absolutely none.

47. If that is worth £30 a foot, this is worth more?—Yes, certainly.

48. *Hon. Mr. Hislop.*] Can you say, as a matter of fact, that in assessing for rating purposes, prior to the time when the new system came into force, the ground was considered not to be assessed, but only the value for the house?—All I can say is that we believed it was.

49. And since the coming into force of that system you have not paid rates?—We have not, apparently, since 1902.

50. How many windows in this house overlook this piece of land?—Two, I think.

51. Is there only one?—There may be only one.

52. There would be no difficulty in putting a window into the back?—It would not seriously injure the value of the house.

53. Can you suggest to the Committee any use this piece of ground could be put to under the present law and by-laws?—It could be used for anything like a factory building.

54. A building 37 ft. by 46 ft., with the walls off?—It would not be a bad-sized workshop.

55. Are you prepared to give £25 a foot for it now?—I think so.

56. When you were instructed to see the Government was there a price mentioned?—No.

57. This price was only mentioned to you?—Mrs. Williams said that before this action was taken she would have given £25 a foot for it, but that now in consequence of litigation she would not.

58. That was a mere statement made to you?—Yes, that is all.

W. H. MORTON, City Engineer, sworn and examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you know what this inquiry is about?—Yes.

2. Will you tell the Committee shortly, in your own words, what you know about this transaction?—I know nothing about the land transaction at all. I have some plans showing the wall as constructed.

3. That is the late construction?—The work as actually constructed. My own knowledge about the land transaction is only what every member of the public knows. [Plan of retaining-wall produced and explained.]

4. To whom did the land belong when this wall was constructed?—I understood it belonged to Mr. Macdonald.

5. You had no interference in the negotiations except as Engineer?—I had nothing to do with the transaction regarding the piece of land which I understand you are inquiring about.

6. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do you remember the negotiations between the Council and the owners of that section on the corner of Woodward Street from the beginning?—I remember something with regard to the negotiations with Mr. Macdonald to obtain a piece of land which was necessary for the carrying-out of the work shown on this plan.

7. Did you come to an arrangement with Mr. Macdonald to obtain the corner piece of land?—I did not—not myself. A plan was prepared showing the piece of land required for the construction of the wall. Negotiations were not in my hands.

8. Can you remember when you got instructions to go on with the work?—The matter was on for a very long time. Members of the Council were continually asking when that work was to be