

37 *Mr Massey* ] And you were a member of Parliament at the time?—Yes.

*Mr Myers*: There is now the other charge, No. 1

38 *The Chairman*.] Yes. Have you anything to say in regard to that, Mr Major?—Yes, I have to say this that I was well within my rights, both legally and morally, in making that sale, and that I was of the opinion then, and I am still of the opinion, that I was doing something commendable in the interests of the State and to the particular settlers who happened to acquire the land. I was concerned in the sale of two estates, one previous to my becoming a member of Parliament, that of Mr Livingston, near Hawera, and I then received a commission from Mr Livingston for selling to the Government. The land was good land, and the Government acquired it at, I think, £20 an acre, and every acre to-day would sell for from £55 to £60. Mr Bayly's land was sold by me at less than its value at the time, as the documents in the Deeds Registration Office at New Plymouth will show. The neighbours there realized that he was selling at less than its value. Had he not sold to the Government I would have sold it to some syndicate, and that syndicate would have made a profit out of the settlers to whom they sold it, so that the settlers would not have been able to obtain it at anything like the price or upon the same terms as they were able to acquire it from the Government, and the Government got good value. I was doing good, and there was nothing surreptitious, nothing hidden, and nothing secret about it. The people in Hawera knew it. I have brought my ledger with me, which shows an entry against Mr Livingston for commission and a credit entry for it. There is no entry so far as Mr Alfred Bayly is concerned, and no entry so far as Mr Symes is concerned.

39 *Mr Myers*.] Have you your books here?—Yes.

40. Do your books show when the property was put into your hands for sale?—I do not know that. I have only brought my ledger with me.

41 Can you say how long it was in your hands for sale prior to its acquisition by the Government?—No, I could not tell you that.

42. Was it in your hands for a considerable time?—I could not tell you that.

43. Had you not been trying to dispose of the property to other people?—That I am not sure of.

44. Was it not your suggestion, and not Mr Bayly's, that the property should be offered to the Government?—That I do not know

45 I am asking you this because it is to lay the foundation for Mr Bayly afterwards. Were you not trying for a considerable time to sell this property privately, and was not the proposal to sell to the Government an afterthought and suggestion of yours?—No, I think not. I could not answer positively upon that, for the reason that my memory will not serve me.

46. Were you a member of the House when Mr Symes made his speech that I have referred to in regard to this Clandon Estate?—What date?

47. The 9th October, 1905?—Yes.

48. Do you know that he complained about this purchase, and said the country had paid £2 10s. per acre too much for it?—I may have known of it at the time, but it is completely obliterated from my memory, and if I had known it I had forgotten it until you read it.

49 Would you mind telling me at what price you were offering this estate to private people before offering it to the Government at £12 10s.?—It was offered to the Government at less than it was likely to be offered to any one else, because I submitted very many properties to the Government at different times, and I knew the difficulty there was in dealing with the Government. Mr Barron, the Chairman of the Land Purchase Board, is a prince of pessimists, and, no matter how good the land is, he always undervalues it.

50 That does not answer my question, Mr Major. Are you able to say at what price you were offering this land to private people before it was offered to the Government at £12 10s.?—I am quite sure of this: that it would not be offered to any person at a lower price than it was offered to the Government.

51 Are you able to tell me, "Yes" or "No," at what price you were in fact offering this property to private people before you offered it to the Government at £12 10s.?—I cannot tell you what price. I can only answer the question this way: that I am sure, in offering the land to any other person than the Government, it would not be offered to that third person at a lower price than it would be offered to the Government.

52 That is the best answer you can give—you do not actually recollect?—No, I do not, but I recollect sufficient of the general position to recollect that.

53. Was it ever in your hands, as far as you can recollect, at a less price than £12 10s. per acre?—No, I think not. It may have been at a higher price, but never less.

54. You have no records here to show that is your memory?—No. I may not have a memory for the actual details, but I have a memory for a general summarizing of the position, and I am certain upon that point.

55 When trying to sell the property for Mr Fred. Bayly, were you trying to sell it as a whole or in subdivisions?—As a whole. I could have sold it in subdivisions, but he wanted to deal with it *in globo*, and that was the reason he thought he could sell to the Government as a whole.

56. You had tried to sell it as a whole previously, but did not succeed?—No, I have no recollection of trying to do so.

57 Do you know that Mr Fred. Bayly was about to cut up the property, not being able to sell it as a whole, before offering it to the Government?—That I would not be sure of. The matter was discussed, but nothing definite was arrived at.

58. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward*.] I understood you to say just now, in reply to Mr Myers, that you had offered a good many properties to the Government?—Yes.

59 How many do you suggest you had offered?—Half a dozen.

6—I, 14,