

rates that have been mentioned, you think still that Mr. Stark would have got as full an amount in the Compensation Court as he has now?—I think so, because the Court, as a rule, leans towards the side of the claimant more than towards that of the Government; and it would be compelled to take the present value of the property.

1152. Would any Court not take into account the fact that the present value was less than when the offers referred to were made?—My impression is that the Court would have awarded an amount fully equal to that the Government have paid.

1153. Even if the Court were aware of offers being made, when property was higher in the market, at a lower rate, would they not have considered that a misleading value?—Possibly; but it has to be proved that property was higher.

1154. *The Chairman.*] When did Mr. Le Bailley and others buy?—I do not know the dates.

1155. Was it subsequently to the offer made to Ross?—I could not say. I could not say exactly when they bought; but I understand that it was within the last three years. I do not look upon the offer alleged to have been made to Mr. Ross as a genuine one, because he would have accepted it.

1156. *Dr. Newman.*] Did you ever hear of it before?—Only from Mr. Mays.

1157. When you made your report of the 12th April, were things pretty flourishing?—Yes; I think so. There are not quite so many sales as there had been. I am informed that there is generally a dull season of the year for land sales.

1158. When you drew up the report, you thought the property was worth £20,000?—No; I did not say so. Mr. Stark claimed £20,000; I did not value it at that.

1159. How do you explain the fact of your statement that land was high in April, when you say the present is a time of great depression: does not this mean that property has gone down?—I mean that there are not many sales at the present time.

1160. Then, property is not worth so much as it was before?—That does not follow; but people have not so much money to speculate with.

1161. But, if properties are not so saleable, they are surely not so valuable. Did you ask Mr. Mays what he considered was the value of the property?—I am not quite sure whether I did or not. I cannot tax my memory with all these conversations.

1162. You had a conversation with Mr. Mays about the value of the property?—Yes.

1163. Did he give you any information as to the value of it?—He gave me the information about the offer to Mr. Ross.

1164. Did he not give you information as to his own idea of the value of the property?—I do not think so.

1165. Is it not your custom to ask these sort of questions?—If the case had been taken into a Compensation Court I should have called him as a witness.

1166. You say you spoke to him about the value of the property: what did he give you as the value of it?—I do not think he fixed any sum as the value of the property as a whole.

1167. Did you see what it was valued at in the books of the Town Council?—No; I merely got the property-tax valuation from the property-tax office.

1168. Is it not your usual custom to find that out?—Yes; if you were going into Court.

1169. But, if you are drawing up a report?—Sometimes.

1170. Should you be surprised to find that the whole was valued at £3,500?—I should; and should think that the Assessor would be very much to blame.

1171. Are you aware who it was that valued it?—I have not any idea.

1172. You say that property in the neighbourhood was worth £500 an acre: have you anything to justify that?—Nothing more than what I have heard.

1173. Has any land been offered for sale in these parts?—I cannot tell.

1174. You have given it in your evidence that land in the neighbourhood was sold at £900 an acre. Can you tell me any sale at that price?—My evidence was all hearsay evidence, and I was not able to verify it.

1175. Not when you took two or three weeks to draw up a report?—I did not take that time.

1176. When the Government requested you to draw up a report, did you not make an effort to verify your evidence?—No; I did not go and ask these people if what I had heard was true, because I looked upon the matter as virtually settled; but I got the best information I could as to the value of the property. I did not look upon my report as in any way likely to affect the sale of the property.

1177. Your report of the 12th was in support of your previous valuation?—To a certain extent.

1178. You have heard a good deal of discussion about this sale?—I have.

1179. Have you heard from land agents that the price is considered excessive?—No; I should not be likely to hear it.

1180. Did you make any inquiries as to Mr. Stark's efforts to sell the property?—No; I never heard that he wanted to sell it. I understood that he had an idea of living there for the rest of his life.

1181. You say that this is a time of great depression: what would the Government now get for the land?—I should say an average of about £2 per foot; and I have been told this is a low price.

1182. Why did you recommend the Government not to put it in the market just now?—Because prices would be better, I thought, when the tramway was completed.

1183. Are you aware that Mr. Le Bailley refused the offer of part of the property for £3,500?—I never knew of the offer.

1184. Do you know what the contract price of the house was?—I am told that it was £2,555.

1185. Who told you?—Mr. Stark.

1186. Do you know what the insurance on the house is?—No.