

1655. *Mr. Barron.*] I would direct your notice to this part of Mr. Brewer's evidence. He says, "I heard nothing more about the matter except that the Minister was getting estimates from various land agents," &c. You say the only estimates you got were given you in confidence, and you could not name the persons who gave them?—I believe I told Mr. Brewer that I should take my own course, and get information from various land agents. That was at the first interview, before I went to Waikato.

1656. You are not at liberty to give these names?—I was not referring to those gentlemen at all.

1657. I wanted to know about these "various land agents?"—If you refer to the correspondence you will see that I have mentioned the names of several agents. But the gentlemen I applied to were outside of these.

1658. There is no official valuation from land agents in the correspondence?—I do not know what you call Mr. Seaman.

1659. Then this evidence as to your having received various estimates as to the value of the property from various land agents is correct? You did get these estimates?—No, I did not. I told Mr. Brewer it was my intention to do so, and he may have thought that I was doing it.

1660. But, as a matter of fact, you did not?—I got valuations from two parties, but I am not going to disclose their names to this Committee or to any one else, or whether they were land agents or not. But I based my action on the information given me by our own officer and the information of those two.

1661. The only valuations you got, then, were from those whose names you are not at liberty to disclose?—I got valuations from the Land Purchase Officer and from the Property-tax Commissioner; and he was questioned as to whether he still adhered to his valuations, and he gave his reasons for doing so. The whole thing has been before the Committee.

1662. But the whole question turns on these words—"various land agents?"—I do not know what question turns on it.

1663. Mr. Brewer tells the Committee that he had heard nothing more about the matter, except that you were getting estimates from various land agents—indicating that you had got them?—I directed Mr. Brewer to get what information he could as to the value of the property to lay before me on my return from the Waikato. I told him that I should myself take means to ascertain the value, and I certainly led him to believe that it was my intention, as it was, to employ three or four land agents.

1664. But no official values were obtained from land agents?—No.

1665. *The Chairman.*] There is an answer of Mr. Brewer's that I will quote to you. He was asked, "You are not quite sure as to when it was decided not to go into the Compensation Court?" He says, "No, I never received any instructions at all, except on the day when my report was drawn up"—the "report" meaning, I presume, the letter he wrote in advising you to purchase. We understand you to say that he had received instructions from you previous to this?—His receiving instructions from me led to his giving in that report. The more one speaks of a thing the more difficult it seems to make the Committee understand. I say that he drew up his report on the 19th and sent it to me on the 20th. He had an interview with me on the 19th, and when he left me he was told to put his information in writing. I had an interview afterwards—having made up my mind—with Mr. Stark, and possibly without Mr. Brewer knowing anything about it. I verbally, that evening, fixed up the thing.

1666. One of the points is this: Mr. Brewer appended to his report a statement that he did not think that Mr. Stark would accept the offer if you made it?—Very likely that was in his mind. He told me positively that Mr. Stark would not take less than £20,000.

WEDNESDAY, 21ST JULY, 1886.

Mr. H. M. BREWER sworn and re-examined.

1667. *The Chairman.*] In the evidence which you gave before the Committee you stated that you had only two interviews with the Minister for Public Works?—To the best of my recollection.

1668. One when you waited on him to introduce Mr. Stark, and the other when you received instructions to make up the valuation?—Yes; the former in the Star Hotel, and the other in the Minister's office.

1669. The Committee wish to know whether you are perfectly sure that these were the only two occasions?—I have thought over this thing night and day, and I cannot remember any other interviews. I may have met the Minister in some of the passages and had a conversation with him, but to the best of my knowledge I do not remember any other interview. It is six months ago, and one cannot always carry one's mind back. If I have had such interviews I must give in and say I have forgotten. I have tried to think if I had any other interviews, and I cannot remember another one.

1670. I do not think it is quite clear from whom you received instructions to make the valuation and write your letter of the 20th?—From the Minister.

1671. When did you receive them?—On the date of my letter.

1672. You put in a letter from Mr. Stark of the same date?—Yes.

1673. What connection is there between the two?—None at all.

1674. I understood that you had been assured by Mr. Stark that the matter was settled?—That was verbally, the day before. Mr. Stark was passing my office, and he looked in and said, "I have practically settled the matter with the Minister, and ask you to send the voucher as soon as possible, as I want to get away South." I said that I had received no particulars, and he said he would send me them. The next day I found a letter on my blotting-pad on my table from him.