

Committee, as I am only telling you what is within my own knowledge. I do not, of course, know what they may say. I do not know their cases except in a general way. I know this fact, that the land was dummied, and greatly against the interests of the district. The matter has not been allowed to rest from that time to the present. What my constituents say is that there should be a proper inquiry, which has been burked up to the present time. Nothing has been done to complete it, and what I stated came before the Supreme Court in Wymer's case—the Judge was not allowed to decide. The last case was simply a question of accounts.

485. *Mr. Thompson.*] I would like to ask if this is evidence?

*The Chairman* pointed out that great latitude was always allowed to members of the House.

486. *Mr. Cowan.*] You have given us some very valuable information. Could you tell us in what year these transactions originated?—I do not just now recollect.

487. Perhaps you will find it on referring to the papers?—Of course, I am only speaking from my own knowledge, and not from what the petition recites. I say, from memory, it might be 1881, 1882, or 1883, but I have no reason to doubt the correctness of the petition.

488. I presume, from what you have told us, that these sections in cases where there have been more than one application made were put up to auction, I suppose you know that is not possible now?—Yes; I am only speaking as to the law at that time.

489. You have also told us that you were struck by these sections being fenced with the same kind of fence?—Yes; fenced apparently with some general plan of enclosing as much ground as possible within one fence, not sectionised in separate properties. At the time I went over the land I refer to they were thus enclosed.

490. Was there any other visible means of occupation besides fencing?—Yes, certainly.

491. Was there a house on each section, for instance?—No, not on all of them at that time.

492. Has there been since?—I have not been there since I am speaking of, twelve months afterwards.

493. You have also told us that the moneys were paid by Mr. Herbert's cheque. Will you kindly tell the Committee how you came to this information?—I got it from the person who received the cheque, Mr. R. B. Martin, the auctioneer and receiver.

494. It was he who told you that the application was paid by Mr. Herbert's cheque?—I may say that it was generally known.

495. You say it was hearsay evidence?—Yes; and I had it confirmed by Mr. Martin, the auctioneer. Of course I would not take what others said, unless it was confirmed by an officer of the Government.

496. Then you tell us, in the inquiry by the Waste Lands Board, all the evidence was in favour of Mr. Smith?—Yes, I believe so; what could be got at the time.

497. In what respect was it in favour of Smith?—Well, it was in favour. I forget whether it was James Smith personally or the firm; but the evidence, as I understand, was not conclusive against Mr. James Smith.

498. We have on the papers before us a memorandum by Sir Robert Stout, who was at that time Attorney-General; do you recollect it?—I do not recollect it.

499. His memorandum was to this effect: that the action should be discontinued on the ground of insufficient evidence?—I understood the evidence was not conclusive, and the Government was afterwards advised to that effect. Not conclusive for the reasons I told you—one of the principal witnesses being absent and could not be got. His evidence was important, inasmuch he had abandoned the place.

500. That is, the man who hanged himself?—Yes.

501. You also tell us that the detective was not allowed to complete his work?—I say that he was called back before he completed his work. His work was not completed.

502. I take it that the work must have been sufficiently complete to satisfy Sir Robert Stout, at all events?—I cannot tell you that. I have had no conversation with Sir Robert Stout upon the matter.

503. With reference to your suggestion to call these three men that you have mentioned. One of them, at all events, Mr. Gilliland, was he not said to have made a certain declaration and subsequently to that he swore that the declaration was false? Do you think the evidence of such a man before us would be of any use?—Well, it is not for me to say; it is for the Committee to determine. The Solicitor-General recommends that such evidence should be taken if a prosecution is to follow.

504. I will put my question this way: From the knowledge I have just given you, you still suggest that Mr. Gilliland should be summoned?—Yes.

*Hon. Mr. Richardson:* I think we ought to treat Mr. Brown's evidence as a statement more than anything else.

*Witness:* I am only speaking within my own knowledge.

505. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] There is only one question I would like to ask. You stated once that you had seen Detective Walker's evidence; and you stated more than once that you had seen the Solicitor-General's opinion on these cases, and that his recommendation was in a certain direction. I would like to ask how you saw these papers, when you saw the papers, and by whose authority you saw them?—As far as my recollection goes, it was a Minister of Lands who gave me the authority to see the papers, because they referred to matters within my own district; and, knowing what had taken place, as I have stated, I was desirous of knowing what had been done.

506. Which Minister was it; was it Mr. Ballance?—Well, it was, I believe, the Minister of Lands at that time.

507. Was it Mr. Rolleston or Mr. Ballance?—It must have been in Mr. Ballance's time.