

to press you for an answer to that to-day, but you will have an opportunity later on of informing the Commission as to your views upon the subject. And now that leads me to this question: How was he appointed? Had you recommended the appointment originally? What was the occasion of the appointment of a solicitor in the first instance on the staff of the Public Trust Office? Had you recommended such an appointment?—I had recommended it when Sir Julius Vogel was Colonial Treasurer. Mr. Alexander Bathgate, of Dunedin, was first recommended by me, and it was approved. Sir Robert Stout was then Premier, and the matter was referred to him. He had approved of Mr. Bathgate's appointment on my recommendation, but Mr. Bathgate declined the position for the salary. Sir Robert Stout then suggested two names, one of which was Mr. Wilson. I made a special journey to Clyde to see Mr. Wilson, made inquiries, was satisfied, recommended his appointment, and he was appointed.

386. When Mr. Wilson was appointed he was in active practice at Clyde, I understand?—Yes; and had been for many years.

387. Well, now, about appointments to your staff generally. You yourself have these appointments made?—Yes. I recommend them, and the Colonial Treasurer approves.

388. Where are the officers chosen from?—Several of the officers have been taken from the Property-tax Department, which department had very large experience in a great number of men. Those who were appointed were strongly recommended by the officers of the Property-tax Department.

389. Do I understand you, then, that in the event of your requiring new officers or an increase on your staff you must look to the Civil Service to select them from?—Yes; unless I take them as cadets.

390. Then, you have the power of taking cadets from outside the Civil Service?—Yes; but the appointment of cadets is very much restricted by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1886; and the practice is this: If I am in want of a cadet I write to the Under-Secretary stating my wants. He then refers to a gazetted list containing the names of those who have been successful in passing the Junior or Senior Civil Service Examination. He informs me that the name next on the list is some boy in Auckland, Dunedin, or anywhere else. I then write to this boy and offer him the appointment of cadet, naming the salary to be paid. If the boy accepts, and the Minister approves, he comes to the office. If he does not accept, the name next on the list is then furnished to me, and I write to that boy; so that I have not the remotest notion of the qualifications of the boy until he is in the office.

391. In other words, any accessions to your staff must come from the Civil Service in some form?—Yes; that is so.

392. If you want a qualified accountant or a qualified book-keeper, you must apply through the Civil Service for one to be found for you?—That is so. In other words, I could not appoint an outsider to the important position of accountant or book-keeper in the office.

393. Are good accountants or book-keepers plentiful in the Government service?—By no means. The very nature of their work does not qualify them as good accountants.

394. Does not, I understand you to mean, give them that practical training which your office requires?—That is so.

395. You were appointed, I think, by Act of Parliament?—Under an Act of Parliament. Not, of course, individually. The Public Trustee is appointed by virtue of "The Public Trust Office Act, 1872."

396. Then, I take it, you hold your office subject to the will of Parliament?—Yes, during good behaviour.

397. Now, what do you consider your duties are as the head of the Public Trust Office? Will you give us your ideas as fully as possible? The work is so general, so various, so multifarious in its character, that we should like you to tell the Commission what you consider your duties are as head of the Public Trust Office, because it is well that these should be defined?—It would take a long time to define them.

398. I will put the question in another way. Do you consider yourself, in the position you hold, responsible for everything that takes place in connection with the Public Trust Office?—I must hold myself responsible. There is no doubt that I am responsible.

399. Do you think the Public Trustee is able to overtake and cope with all the responsibilities in connection with the Public Trust Office under its present arrangements?—I am very strongly of opinion that the responsibility devolving upon the Public Trustee is greater than any single man should be asked to bear.

400. Do you think that the work and business, and the responsibilities which they entail, in connection with the conduct of the Public Trust Office are even at present more than one man can cope with?—I do.

401. Have you ever represented that to the Government?—I represented it to the Colonial Treasurer in 1885 or 1886, where I represented that there should be a deputy and assistant; but as I said in that memorandum that legislative authority would be required, I would in the meantime ask for the appointment of a solicitor. That was the occasion which led to the offer being made to Mr. Bathgate, and to the subsequent appointment of Mr. Wilson. I also recommended to the late Treasurer that the office should be placed in commission—placed under three officers analogous in their constitution to that of the Railway Commissioners—and a Bill was prepared to carry out that idea, with other recommendations that I made, in 1890.

402. Was that Bill approved by the Government?—No, I cannot say it was approved by the Government: it was approved by the Treasurer of the day.

403. Have you got a copy of that Bill?—Yes.

404. Has any other Bill been prepared since?—Not since that Bill.

405. Will you be able to let the Commissioners have a copy of that Bill?—Yes.