

1250. Have you any other Imprest Account in connection with branches or agents?—There is one recently established in Christchurch. That is only a matter of a month's standing at present.

1251. Then there is no other imprest for any of the other ordinary agents?—No.

1252. Then, do I understand that if the idea of substituting branch offices for ordinary agencies is pursued and carried out in different parts of the colony, under your present system Imprest Accounts would have to be opened for each?—Not necessarily, unless they were charged with the duty of paying claims.

1253. It is presumed that if you open a branch in any locality you must give power to do that?—Yes.

1254. And under those circumstances it would be necessary?—Yes.

1255. Would it not be more simple and regular, instead of having these Imprest Accounts, when you had advances or remittances to make, say to the West Coast Native Reserves Trustee, that you sent the remittances with full particulars for their disposal, and that you charged the amount of the remittance to that distinct agency, without going through the form of opening an imprest?—That West Coast Settlements business is rather a peculiar one. We work the rents out here to ascertain each Native's portion, and then we make a list of payments, and send that list to the officer with the advance. The moneys that the list shows payable to Natives may amount to several thousands, but we send him an advance of £1,000 or £1,500 on account, which he disburses, and when he is running short of money he applies for more. In no case does he pay the full sum due to Natives.

1256. Then, before you attempt to disburse any money, either directly or indirectly, for the benefit of the Natives, your Head Office satisfies itself that you have got the money in hand?—Yes.

1257. When you find a sum of money in hand that should be distributed to the Natives, or that the Natives are entitled to, what do you do with it?—These divisions of rent are made in the main periodically. We work out the distribution, transfer the amount payable to the Natives to a separate account in the Special Deposits, and then make the officer the advance out of which he can pay.

1258. You spoke just now of sometimes having several thousand pounds of this money. Would it not be more simple, when you find the time is ripe for making a division, to carry the total moneys in hand to a separate account, and then charge that account with any sum you may think it prudent or necessary to send to your agent to make a progress division of? Would not that be a more simple mode?—We do that to a certain extent now. Having made out the sheets and ascertained the amount payable to the Natives, the sum payable is transferred from the Grant Account to another account in the Special Deposits. That keeps the Grant Account clear for subsequent money for distribution. It goes into one fund, and remains there until it is all drawn; the moneys accumulate there.

1259. When you analyse it in the first instance, and take out the totals for division amongst the Natives, you at once mix up the balance by throwing it in among a lot of other moneys under the head of "Special Deposits"?—Yes.

1260. Then, when you want to get at the balance of that money account you have to fish out from the account under Special Deposits what sum is available for taking a sum out of it again?—We do this: In these sheets showing the shares of rent we have a column for the division of the rent for the half-year then being divided; the second column shows the arrears due to those Natives unpaid; then there is another column for any deductions that may have to come off, and a final column for the amount payable to the Natives. Mr. Rennell sees by the list what shares of rents the Natives are entitled to, and he disburses accordingly.

1261. What I want to know from you is as to whether an improvement in your mode of keeping the accounts could not be made by—instead of opening these different Imprest Accounts—charging the agency or branch with the exact amount you from time to time remit?—We could do it that way.

1262. Why, then, open another account for the purpose of taking moneys from any particular account to put to the credit of the Imprest Account for the purpose of making a debit entry against it to pay elsewhere?—It keeps the advance account between the office and the Natives distinct from the other account, which has the shares of the Natives in it.

1263. Supposing it does not, what is the object?—It prevents complication.

1264. How and why? It appears to me to form complications. The more general and subsidiary accounts you open in respect to certain individual accounts, and the more divisions you find it necessary to make from those accounts, unless you keep them distinct without mixing them up with imprest, the more you seem to me to complicate?—Instead of opening one account in Special Deposits, we could open an account for each grant, so as to keep its own money separate, and not mix it with other moneys.

1265. Then, in your opinion, how many different sums belonging to distinct classes of Natives have found their way into Special Deposits?—The grantees number probably over three thousand. We have to work out these three thousand shares, and there are groups of Natives entitled to different grants. The number of grant accounts would be something between sixty and seventy. In each one of these grants the rents are shared in by a very varying number of Natives, from one up to a hundred, altogether totalling some thousands.

1266. At different periods you transfer from each of those grants sums of money, a portion of which you remit to your agent for distribution. Other portions you sink into Special Deposits?—We transfer these moneys to Special Deposits, and leave them there. Then, out of the West Coast Settlements Advance Account we advance Mr. Rennell the money out of which he is to pay these shares. He sends the vouchers down, and we charge these vouchers against the shares which have been transferred to this Special Deposits Account.