

then authorised without the express sanction of the ratepayers) from being imposed at all. These calculations I am now about to submit as to the area of Crown lands then available, and their value, were based upon the official information furnished to the Harbour Board at the time.

2. By whom?—They were furnished from the Survey Office. I think Mr. Humphries was Chief Surveyor.

3. Have you got any information from the Board on the subject, as it is important?—I have a copy of the original information furnished to the Board.

4. *Mr. Wright.*] I see the name of T. K. Skinner on these papers; who was he?—He was then, I believe, a Government official, and is a man of the highest ability and integrity.

5. How was the valuation of £1,400,000 arrived at?—

6. *The Chairman.*] Have you any information on that point?—I have copies of the original papers on which the statement of the value of the land was based. I shall produce them, and leave them at the disposal of the Committee. They contain a full statement of the then estimated extent and value of the landed endowments. The information is given in considerable detail. I have also the original letter forwarded by the Chairman of the Board to Mr. Skinner, upon which these returns were prepared.

7. Was Mr. Skinner a General Government officer?—He was then; he is not now. He was an extremely reliable man. There is an approximate estimate given of the areas of land liable to be rated for harbour purposes. I shall put all these papers in, if the clerk will kindly see that they are preserved and returned. Taking it, then, as established that the Harbour Board had a right to expect, that the people of the district had a right to expect, and that the lenders of the money had a right to expect, that these confiscated lands would be a part of the harbour endowments, it is within the knowledge of the Committee that that expectation has not been fulfilled. By legislation altogether subsequent to the raising of the loan in 1879 these expectations failed to be realised. The policy of handing back the land to the Natives was, I think, first spoken of—at any rate, gravely proposed—in 1880, when the first West Coast Reserves Settlements Act was passed. Certainly there was no intimation or indication previous to that date that these lands would be given away without value received. The Committee are also familiar, no doubt, with the grounds of complaint which the Harbour Board and bondholders have against the Legislature in respect of alterations of the land-laws. I do not propose to dwell upon that business, because I think it would be undesirable at any rate, if not improper, for me to take up the time of the Committee in doing so; but I merely wish to mention it because in the figures I propose to give I have put on one side all such complaints and all such claims for compensation, although they must not be deemed abandoned. I have taken into the calculation the value of the confiscated lands, which, I think, must be done. Supposing the Government were to take over the balance of the loan at the present time, to convert, as I am given to understand outside, has been proposed by the Council of Foreign Bondholders, into a Government loan, at such rate of interest as Government can arrange—

*The Chairman:* There is no evidence whatever of that.

*Mr. Wright:* There is some information by Sir John Lubbock that some reasonable arrangement might be come to.

*Mr. Samuel:* I put it in this way: Supposing that some such arrangement can be effected, as indicated by Sir John Lubbock in his letter now before you, it would have the result of the Government converting the present loan into a Government loan, at such a lesser rate of interest as the colony is able to borrow money at. I undertake to show that, taking into consideration the compensation (which the colony unquestionably, I think, owes to the Harbour Board, as the trustees for the people of the district, and for the bondholders) for the confiscated lands which the Government has given away, the colony will have an actual gain in £ s. d. by merely taking back the endowment of one-quarter of the land revenue which they have given, and for which the colony is liable. The following are the figures which, I think, show this. They set forth, in the first place, the lands which would have been sold and the moneys which would have been received by the New Plymouth Harbour Board but for alterations in the land-laws, even at the Government valuations, which I shall show in a few minutes are very much less than the land was really worth. The figures are as follows:—

	Area.	Value.	Harbour Fourths.	Annual, 5 per Cent.
	Acres.	£	£	£
Lands in confiscated territory given back to Natives, &c. ...	197,270	362,000	90,400	3,520
Land now held on deferred-payment system ...	94,818	73,621	18,405	920
On perpetual lease ...	69,152	68,200	17,050	853
	361,240	503,821	125,855	5,293

This shows that these three items give a credit to the Harbour Board of £125,855, all still outstanding, and not paid over to the Board. Coming, then, directly to the question of the value to the colony of the land revenue endowment, which is still to be paid to the New Plymouth Harbour Board, the following are the figures:—

	Area.	Value.	Harbour Fourths.	Annual, 5 per Cent.
	Acres.	£	£	£
Crown lands held on deferred payment ...	94,818	73,621	18,405	920
Crown lands held on perpetual lease ...	69,152	68,200	17,050	853
Crown lands open for sale, &c. ...	31,919	22,219	5,554	277
	195,889	164,040	41,009	2,050

So that these three columns show that the Government now have money belonging to the Harbour Board appropriated—