

him to sign the telegram till he had left the room?—No; the telegram was sent for him to sign, I think.

554. Now, Mr. Ritchie, I understand you to say you sent that telegram yourself—first the one and then the other. Had he consented to allow the company to act as his agent before you sent the telegram?—I do not know about acting as agent: he had consented to do what I asked him to do on the terms proposed.

555. He had consented to act though he had left the room? Did you not know that the thing was pressing?—I do not exactly know what you are driving at.

556. Never mind that. Did not you know the matter was pressing?—I did not know it was so pressing as I found out afterwards, when I called Mr. Henderson, and found out the date and the hour of the sale. I do not believe ten minutes had elapsed between the one and the other, so far as I know.

556A. In the previous transactions had you seen Mr. Scott—about the previous run-transactions—at all?—I think so; yes.

557. I again ask you, did you not send the first telegram before you got Mr. Scott's authority at all. Will you say you did not?—I am as sure as I can be of anything.

558. You have not the original you sent to the agent at Timaru?—Is it not there?

559. Now, you sent the telegram, and you say you led Mr. Scott to believe that he was to run the risk?—Certainly.

560. And you will say, Mr. Ritchie, that the letter you sent to your agents in Christchurch was sufficient to let them know the terms on which you and Mr. Scott had agreed?—I do not understand.

561. I understand you to say this as to the letter to your manager, "The manager knew well that the cattle and sheep belonged to the company; I repeated what passed between me and Scott to Martin"?—I said I intended to convey to Martin the tenor of the understanding arrived at between me and Scott.

562. Very well; that is the same. He knew who owned the stock?—We had been in correspondence about the stock for some time.

563. You did not suggest to Mr. Martin to say what was untrue to Matheson?—No. In what respect?

564. In any respect?—Certainly I did not intend to do so.

565. Then, you intended Mr. Martin to convey to Mr. Matheson the truth?—Yes.

566. Very well, we accept that. And I suppose you were not surprised at Mr. Martin's letter that you got back about his transactions with Mr. Matheson: that did not surprise you?—No.

567. And you did not see that Mr. Martin had done anything wrong in anything he had done?—No.

568. And you never found fault with him for his action?—Not that I remember.

569. You knew Mr. Scott had a fair business, Mr. Ritchie?—No.

570. I thought you said you thought he was doing better?—I asked him, and he said he was.

571. You knew he was doing a little?—Yes.

572. Did you contemplate anything happening to Scott, but simply the demand for the rent being made, and his having to give up the run? Did not you think the usual thing would follow?—I did not know what might follow.

573. Did not you think so?—I did not.

574. Did not you know as a fact that surrender of runs had been accepted from private individuals by the Government?—Oh, yes! I knew that.

575. And were you not afraid, Mr. Ritchie, that the then Minister of Lands would not accept surrender from a company?—I knew he would not, and it is exactly the same either one Minister or another.

576. Take it like that. Had you any transactions of this sort before 1891?—No.

577. January, 1891, was the first transaction with Mr. Scott; and the other was in February or March. You had none of this class of transactions before?—What do you mean by "this class of transactions"?

578. Why, getting people to buy runs to give you the use of the grazing-rights?—Well, I do not know how to answer that question.

579. There is nothing illegal in it, nothing immoral, nothing wrong in it, my learned friend says?—I have subleased from men who bought runs.

580. Had they taken up the runs on your account?—Not more than that—

581. Not more than that what?—That they had agreed to sublet it to me afterwards.

582. Did you enter into any agreements with them?—Not specific.

583. Well, verbally—that you were to be the tenant?—Possibly.

584. Why was that done, seeing that you wanted to sublet it?—I was the tenant; I subleased from them.

585. But why should not you have taken the run direct from the Government?—Because I did not choose to.

586. Then, you wanted to get rid of the liability of a tenant to the Government?—No, I did not. It was not with the Government at all.

587. You wanted not to take up the liability of a lessee, so that you could get out of it at any time by giving up the lease?—I did it because I chose to.

588. Because you chose to! Very well; that was the object of it. Now, Mr. Ritchie, if you had nothing to do with this, how came you to write the telegram saying that Scott was to surrender the run—abandon the run?—What telegram?

589. On the letter of the Chief Inspector, in your handwriting—the pencil memorandum on the