

37. Had he any connection with the matter officially?—No; not officially.

38. What was the nature of his connection with it?—He was the manager of the estate before he became Inspector of Stock.

39. The Pomahaka Estate?—Yes; and the Mount Royal Estate.

40. He had charge of Pomahaka at the same time?—Yes.

41. How did you come to know this?—I believe from himself.

42. You believe; can you not be sure?—No.

43. Was it from what he told you, or was it knowledge on your part?—I had some previous knowledge.

44. Are you aware of any relationship between Mr. Ritchie and Mr. Douglas?—Mr. Douglas is Mr. Ritchie's uncle.

45. And Mr. Ritchie had been managing Mr. Douglas's property?—Yes.

46. Then, we are to understand that you took action to get this property inspected by a public officer, on the strength of the fact that you knew that Mr. Ritchie had been manager for Mr. Douglas?—No.

47. I understood you to say so?—No. Mr. Ritchie probably told me that Mr. Douglas was offering, or had offered, this estate to the Government. Mr. Adams was on his way to the Conical Hills Estate; both are within a short distance.

48. Then, on the strength of Mr. Ritchie's statement of this estate being about to be offered to the Government, you took upon yourself to issue instructions to have it inspected?—Yes.

49. You had no authority from any one to do that?—No; I did not require any authority; my appointment was sufficient authority.

50. Suppose you had heard from any one else that an estate was going to be offered to the Government, would you have taken this action?—Yes; I would have done so.

51. Before it was offered?—It is not at all unusual to do so.

52. Can you mention any similar case in which you acted so without authority?

*Dr. Fitchett*: He has said that his appointment was sufficient authority. He did it by virtue of his office.

53. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie*.] Did you ever, on the strength of a statement coming from an outsider (for you say that Mr. Ritchie had no official connection with the matter), that land was about to be offered to the Government, ever take such action before?—I cannot recollect without referring to the papers themselves to see whether I have taken any similar action.

54. If you had done so, do you not think you would recollect it?—No, I do not think so; it is an every-day occurrence.

55. What is an every-day occurrence?—Sending instructions to the Chief Surveyor.

56. On the strength of a statement made by an outsider? Is that an every-day occurrence?—The Act has been only a short time in force, so that there cannot be many cases.

57. Can you give me an instance in which you have issued instructions to a public officer to inspect an estate for sale on the strength of a statement made by an outsider?—I should have to look over the papers relating to the estates offered to see. I cannot recollect.

58. You cannot recollect. You think you could not?—It is nothing unusual.

59. If it were a usual thing to do you would know that, and would have said it was usual, enough to issue instructions without consulting a superior officer. But what I want to know is whether it is usual to give instructions to buy property?—I did nothing of the kind.

60. But you cannot recollect giving instructions to inspect?—Yes, I have said so.

61. It has been stated in evidence that you referred Mr. Maitland to Mr. Begg for plans?—Yes.

62. How did you come to send to Mr. Begg for plans?—It is well known that Mr. Begg is Mr. Douglas's agent.

63. That he is Mr. Douglas's agent?—Yes; perfectly well known.

64. Is there any reason why it should be so well known?—A good many reasons. Mr. Begg probably had connection with the department in respect to pastoral rents, and so forth.

65. You sent to him specifically for plans. How did you know where the plans were lodged?—Mr. Begg was Mr. Douglas's agent, and would have the plans in Dunedin.

66. Did not Mr. Ritchie tell you where the plans were?—Possibly he might have done so; he may have done so. I do not recollect if he did; but, if he did, it was unnecessary.

67. You are aware that a petition was got up for this land?—Some time afterwards a petition came for this land.

68. How long?—I could not say.

69. Then you took action before this petition came?—Yes; a good deal of action was taken before the petition was received.

70. On the strength of the statement made by Mr. Douglas's nephew that the land was to be offered?—Not altogether on that statement. Mr. Douglas's offer was made to Mr. Maitland on the 21st August.

71. Do you know that Mr. Maitland received the offer?—Yes; it came to the department in the usual course.

72. Then, on the self-same day that Mr. Douglas made the offer to Mr. Maitland, in Dunedin, instructions were issued to Mr. Adams to inspect that land?—Yes.

73. Had there been any communication between Mr. Maitland and yourself?—No.

74. Then you did not know, at the time that you issued the instructions, that any offer had been made to Mr. Maitland?—Except probably through Mr. Ritchie.

75. The same day?—It might be the same day or the day before.

76. Before, you say, that the offer was made—on the 21st?—Yes.