

14. That land would be in a different position?—It is Crown land. We have known that the Government, as a rule, does not sell land privately or without competition except under special circumstances.

15. *Hon. Mr. McNab.*] Do you suggest that they cannot do it under the Land Act?—I do not suggest they cannot; I only say they do not.

16. *Mr. Fisher.*] In 1902 notice was served on Mrs. Williams to quit this land?—About that time, prior to the issue of the writ. The writ was dated November, 1902.

17. And after the issue of the writ, upon representation made to the Department, you paid taxes on 33 ft. of land?—After that date I noticed that our assessment was reduced from 77 ft. to 44 ft.—after 1902. In 1895 we were assessed at 77 ft.; in 1903 we came down to 44 ft.

18. Mr. Martin stated, I think, in his evidence, that Mr. Renner, in the Department, had said that Mrs. Williams had been paying too much land-tax on the land which she did not own?—That is so.

19. *Mr. Witty.*] Did Mrs. Williams object to pay the tax at any time?—No, she has recognised that the land is occupied by her, and she hoped that in time, if no claim came in, she would be able to get a complete title.

20. Was it within her knowledge that the land was not hers?—She always knew that perfectly well.

21. She did not object to the reduction of area in 1902?—No, but after being given notice that the land was taken by the Government she did not want to pay more taxation than she could help.

22. She paid this taxation knowing that she really had no title to the land except by occupation?—Yes, and she kept the land during the time from being a waste-heap; it was of no benefit to her.

23. *Hon. Mr. Mills.*] Is there any difference per foot in the valuation of that block—because Mrs. Williams occupied only a portion of that derelict block?—Yes. We never made out what she did occupy.

24. From the formation of the land would it be worth more per foot than the land occupied by Mrs. Williams—was the land irregular?—Yes. The level part she occupied would be rather more valuable than the part below.

25. Would she have been willing to give £25 per foot for the part she occupied? If so, it would not prove that the valuation was £25 per foot for all of it?—We never had before us the question of dealing with it.

26. I am asking because the valuator here says the whole block is worth so-much, and the Committee might think the value £25 per foot for the whole of the frontage?—I asked Mrs. Williams if she would have given £25 per foot after this trouble came on, and she said, “No, I should be very chary about doing that, because of possible litigation.”

27. She never asked the Government to consider her case?—No. I told her that there was very little chance of the Government doing anything except under the Land Act, which would give every one a chance of bidding. She seemed satisfied so long as she expected to be treated as everybody else was.

28. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] With regard to the £25 per foot, you wish the Committee to understand that Mrs. Williams would have given a higher price than the Government eventually got for it?—I am advised that she would certainly have given more if she had had an opportunity of buying it.

29. Do you know the value of it?—No.

30. A valuator said a portion of it was valued at £25 per foot, and the balance was valued at £17 10s. per foot?—That may be. I have no doubt that in Mrs. Williams's mind she was assuming that the whole land in her garden was the piece she was buying. She might have considered the other of less value. Land at the present time on Wellington Terrace is worth more than £25 per foot. Land in Hobson Street is worth more than £25 per foot. This land is valuable not for residential sites, but for factories.

31. You know that piece of land to the north of Mrs. Williams's house?—Yes.

32. Do you know what value it is?—That has a greater depth.

33. I am speaking of the land north of the house—a vacant space opposite Mr. McLean's house on the Terrace: Do you know what that land can be bought for?—But that is not so good a piece of land as the land in Woodward Street up to the Terrace.

34. How far apart are these two sections?—I should think the land you refer to is worth from £18 to £20 a foot, but that is only my own opinion—although I have had considerable experience.

35. *The Chairman.*] In your opinion, is the value put upon the piece of land, the subject of this inquiry, by the Government a fair one?—I do not think the Government values are the selling-values.

36. Do you say that the value is greater than the amount set down?—I have not worked it out. I passed these values as not being excessive at the time—because they all passed through my hands.

37. *Mr. Rhodes.*] You say that Mrs. Williams is making no use of this section?—I said it was only fenced in and used as a garden. Immediately before this change of ownership took place she had licensed a man living opposite to build a motor-shed on it.

38. And it was for that reason that she was willing to give £25 a foot for it?—No; but, having no title, she could give no lease.

39. What was her object in wishing to give £25 a foot for it?—Because she could use it for building or any other purpose.