

91. So that you did not look upon the difference in area as material?—I should not have looked upon it as material if you had not mentioned it yourself in the conversation: that is the point.

92. Now, who took the greater part in the conversation which is alleged to have taken place.—You did yourself. Sometimes you referred to Mr. Kennedy Macdonald, and sometimes he joined in. But it was a conversation held in my office, in which I was one person and you two gentlemen were talking over the matter with me. It was just an accident that the Record Clerk came in and that the messenger saw you there. You appear to have said that you never saw me, which is the most extraordinary statement I ever heard in all my life.

93. In your memo. to the Commissioner of Crown Lands you did not mention the area which is to be exchanged as part of the transaction?—No.

94. And you say that was written immediately after?—If you look at my memo. you will see that it is referring to the valuation of Section 488, City of Wellington.

95. And you go on to say, "As the Wellington City Council are asking the Government to dispose of this area to them, in order that they may exchange with the owner of portion of Section 487, a portion of which it is proposed to cut off for street-widening purposes?—That is right.

96. You did not say anything there as to equivalent value or as to specific area?—No.

97. You say that I had a personal interview with you on the 4th September?—I said, about that time; I was not quite certain—before the letter was written to the Minister.

98. And you say that was the occasion of this letter being written?—Yes; I asked you to write it.

99. Did you ever suggest at that time to me that if we acquired the land it should not be sold again?—No.

100. Was that matter talked of?—I do not remember its being talked of at all.

101. Was the area which Mr. Kennedy Macdonald was to pass over to the Corporation mentioned?—No; not in that interview.

102. Was there anything said as to a specific arrangement then made with Mr. Kennedy Macdonald?—You only mentioned to me that Mr. Macdonald was the person conveying the land to you, and the one to whom this land was to be conveyed by the Crown. You asked was there not any way of getting rid of the title issuing to the Council and the Council conveying to Mr. Macdonald.

103. Did you suggest that the fact of Mr. Macdonald being the owner made any difference?—No, I did not.

104. Did you express any surprise at that time that I had not mentioned it?—No, I never expressed any surprise or made any comment on it at all.

105. Now, in what way do you say that the matter was completed when I spoke to you? How could you say it was completed?—I say it was completed as far as the Department was concerned, and the Cabinet.

106. Had you seen the letter which was written by Mr. Strauchon?—I do not remember having seen that at all. On the 28th June, do you mean?

107. Yes. Did you know that Mr. Strauchon had written offering the thing to the Council?—No, I doubt if I did. These were letters written from his own office, and I do not see them.

108. I suppose you knew it would take the form of an offer?—I did not know in what form he would do it.

109. You see, he wrote to the Council enclosing a form which they were to return if they made an application. Well, had that form been signed, or had any application been made?—That is a matter for the Commissioner of Crown Lands to deal with. It is entirely his business.

110. I suppose you read the letter which I wrote to the Minister?—Yes.

111. You see there that the terms agreed upon between Mr. Macdonald and the Council involve the application for a grant of a piece of land adjoining, and, if successful, the passing of it over to Mr. Macdonald at the valuation put on it?—Yes.

112. Is not that perfectly plain—that Mr. Macdonald was to pay the full purchase-money?—No. Of course, I do not know anything about your idea. My idea was that the Council was to pay the cheque over to the Receiver of Land Revenue, and that the Crown was to issue the title direct to Mr. Macdonald.

113. Do you not see I pointed out in my letter of the 5th September, "The Department has valued it at what the Councillors think a fairly high price, but, as it is Mr. Macdonald's affair, no question is raised on that point." If the Council was to pay, it would have been the Council's affair?—I cannot tell what influenced you in writing that letter.

114. Is not that the understanding on the 5th September?—You came and saw me, as I stated in my evidence, and said, "Why should there be so much red-tape?" Why should we issue the certificate of the title to the Council, when you were conveying to Macdonald? I said I did not see any reason. I said, "If you will write to the Minister I will see that it is issued direct."

115. I suppose you read this letter? You see, I go on and say, "I, however, find that the Council, once acquiring the land, cannot sell it again"—you made no suggestion of that sort to me, you see; you admit that in the conversation—"but I am also advised that we can ask the Crown, in pursuance of the arrangement, to make the grant to Mr. Macdonald direct, we paying you the purchase-money, and he paying us." Does not that show that Mr. Macdonald was to get his land, and pay the whole purchase-money?—Of course, I cannot tell what you meant in writing your letter. You do not want me to interpret it for you.

116. Can you suggest any language in which it could be conveyed more clearly than in that that Mr. Macdonald was to pay the full amount of the purchase-money?—I think your language was perfectly clear on the 5th September: but, as I said before, all the transaction had been completed before that.