

235. Is it the practice when you have called for tenders and the successful tenderer asks for an extension of time, to let him have it without calling for fresh tenders?—That would depend upon all the surrounding conditions at the time, and also upon the response to the invitation for tenders.

236. Supposing the tenderer next to Mr. McLean had tendered to do this work in five years, and had put in at a higher price in consequence, would it have been fair to that tenderer to give to the successful man an extension of time?—Oh, no; the Government would not have done a thing like that. I think that in this case Mr. McLean's tender was practically the only one.

237. That point did not arise, then?—No.

238. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Were there not three tenders?—There were other ones, I think—I almost forget now—but they were a long way higher than Mr. McLean's tender.

*Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie:* One was only £28,000 more.

239. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] If the person who tendered at £28,000 more than Mr. McLean was willing to do the work in five years, might he not, if he had known that he would get another year, have been willing to do the work at the price Mr. McLean tendered at? It might have been that he would save £28,000 by getting a year more?—Yes, possibly.

240. That would be one of the reasons which influenced the Department in adhering to the five years?—Most likely.

241. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Mr. McLean did not put the six years in his tender, did he? He tendered for the five years, and then asked for an extension of a year before he signed the contract: was not that the position?—I think so.

242. If he had not tendered under the specification as it was advertised his tender would have been informal?—It would have been.

243. Would it not have been an injustice to the other contractors to have allowed the extra year?—I do not think the Government would have done that.

244. You stick to your specifications as you advertise them?—Yes.

245. Always?—Yes.

246. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] I think I understood you to say that in the event of Mr. McLean's contract being terminated, in your opinion there are only two ways in which the work can be done—by day-labour or by contract?—Yes.

247. You do not think it is practicable to carry the work out under the co-operative contract system?—No.

248. The work is too large: is that your opinion?—Yes.

249. Suppose the contract were terminated and the Government took over the work, do you consider the present plant is sufficient in respect of power and other matters?—The contractors were finding that the power was hardly sufficient.

250. Are you of that opinion?—I have not gone into that question.

251. Would it take you long to find that out?—Most likely it would.

252. You could not give me an answer in a few days?—No.

253. What I want to know is whether, in the event of the Government having to take over that work and proceed with it, they would have to incur any great expenditure on plant in order to carry the work out according to their ideas of what is necessary?—Time governs that position to a great extent. If you would be satisfied to take a longer time over the work, probably we could get along with the plant that is already there.

254. You mean that if the Government were satisfied to carry on the work at the same rate at which it has proceeded for the last three years the present plant would be sufficient: that is your present opinion?—Yes. We might want to increase it slightly to deal with the ventilation: we should want a little more power.

255. The further you go in the more power you will want for driving the fans, and so on, will you not?—Yes.

256. Is the present plant capable of overtaking that work?—I believe it is; but the contractors have experienced one or two difficulties through shortage of water during the dry season.

257. Has there not lately been an application made by the contractors to the Government to advance some money to buy some special plant?—I believe there has been.

258. What was that special plant for?—That matter has not come before me at all.

259. As to driving the heading at the Bealey end, is the material there such as you could continue to drive any length through without having it lined?—Yes, as far as we know—that is, for a heading.

260. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] As to plant, the plant that is there now, as far as ventilation is concerned, was provided of sufficient power to finish the tunnel?—The contractors estimated that it would be sufficient.

261. There have been no alterations necessary in the plant for ventilation. The conditions for ventilation, as far as the power plant is concerned, are now the same as they were when the tunnel was started?—Yes.

262. So that the extra plant which Mr. McLean says is required is to provide power to work the tunnel during dry weather when the water-power is useless to them?—I believe that is the principal reason.

263. There is no other plant required as far as you know?—I do not think so.

264. *Hon. Mr. Fraser.*] You do not know whether that extra plant is being procured or not?—I do not.

265. *Mr. McLean.*] Would not the rate of progress at the Bealey Flat be affected by the shortness of labour?—I suppose it would.

266. Where there was a shortage of labour, would not you, as an engineer and a practical man, apply the labour that you had available where it was most effective?—Certainly.