

15. Were you aware that you could not have obtained it from any other source except the Government at the time?—No; because the Drainage Board got a loan of £100,000 at 4 per cent. in London. We never attempted to get any as far as I know. We realized it was the best thing to go to the Government. I was not on the Board at that particular time when the negotiations were started.

16. Do you agree that it was of urgent necessity to prosecute the drainage and waterworks?—Oh, yes.

17. It was of vital interest to the health of the community?—The Board were desirous of keeping up with the city in connection with drainage, and we have now got ahead of them. We have done with the reticulation in our own district, but we are not able to connect.

18. If you could not have obtained this money presumably the drainage-works and water-works scheme could not have been prosecuted?—Oh, no.

19. *Mr. Hanan.*] Do I understand you to hold, Mr. Dickson, that this loan should not have been granted by the Government?—No, I do not say it should not have been granted—I say it should. You were not in here when Mr. Cawkwell gave his evidence. It was over the £10,000 that I understood Mr. Myers asked me the question as to whether it was very urgent at that particular time to get the money.

20. Do you contend now that the moneys granted by the Government should not have been granted?—Oh, no, I do not contend that.

21. Then what was done, in your opinion, was right and proper?—In granting the money?

22. Yes?—Yes, but I maintain that it was not of such urgent necessity to get that £10,000 before the election. We could have carried on the work.

23. You think it should have been held over?—Yes, I maintain it should have been held over.

24. Until when?—Until we had got the advance. We had applied for £8,000 to be given to us on the 1st January, 1912, and we could have carried on till we received that money on the 1st January.

25. Why, then, was it pressed for by members of the Board—simply for amusement?—I do not know, unless it was pressed for political purposes.

26. Why do you say that?—To advocate my opponent. The members who pressed for it were members of Sir John Findlay's committee.

27. Then, I understand you to say that the members of the Board did not honestly believe that the money was required?—That is their opinion. I could not say what they thought. They did not consult me about it.

28. How do you come to the conclusion that it was simply to help your opponent?—By their actions.

29. In what way?—By waiting upon him as a deputation and getting him to send that particular wire.

30. The fact of their waiting upon Sir John Findlay, in your opinion, justifies you in coming to the conclusion that they did not believe the money was actually wanted?—Yes. There was provision made for it. It would not have stopped the works if they had not got the money.

31. And they simply made this as an excuse?—That is what I put it down to.

32. Did you know the actual financial position of the Board at the time?—Yes, I was a member of the Board at the time.

33. What was the overdraft?—The overdraft, roughly speaking, was about £1,500 to £2,000.

34. What were the liabilities at the time?—That I could not say exactly.

35. Can you say what amount had to be paid to the bank at the time?—I could not say whether £6,000 or £4,000. We had had £4,000, and then increased it to £6,000. I could not say what it was standing at then.

36. Is not that a big margin for a man to give who says he knows the actual financial position?—No, I knew. We had either £2,500 or £4,500 to work on, but either sum would have been sufficient to enable the work to be carried on till we got the £8,000.

37. What was it, £4,000 or £6,000?—That I could not say.

38. Then you swear on your oath, Mr. Dickson, that it was not necessary for the Board to obtain that money?—In my opinion, not until the 1st January.

39. And it should have delayed making the application until the 1st January?—They had already made application for the money to be given to them on the 1st January.

40. It would have been better, in their own interests, and in the interests of the Board, to have delayed it till January?—I do not say that—I would not say that.

41. Well, if it was not better in their own interests to delay, what was the objection to their applying then?—Well, I could not say it was better in the Board's interest, because we were paying on the overdraft, and we got this loan at a lower rate of interest.

42. Then does it not follow from your remarks that it was better for the Board to get the money as soon as possible?—We had applied for the money for January, and it was coming to us.

43. Was it not better?—It was necessary, but it was not an urgent matter that we should get it.

44. If it was an advantage to the Board, then did not the members of the Board do the right thing to try and get the money as soon as possible?—Not the way they did it.

45. That is not the question—my question to you is this: if it was to the advantage of the Board, as you admitted, to get the money at that time, then do you not think they acted rightly?—Not in the way they went about it.

46. Was the request to get the money as soon as possible a wrong step on the part of the Board?—No; but the way they got up the deputation—by not making it official.

47. Are you not aware that deputations are got up representing local bodies frequently?—I was not acquainted with the deputation, and no report appeared in the minute-book.