

The Minutes of the Committee were read and confirmed.

Dr. Knight attended, and produced a paper, showing the ordinary and territorial revenue, and a statement made up according to the request of the Committee, showing the working of the accounts for 1854-55, and showing the distributable surplus.

The following evidence was then given by Dr. Knight.

1. Q.—We observe in a statement before handed in, you state that at that day there was held for land deposits £32,896. Will you so good as to state what the nature of this fund is? A.—It consists of sums deposited by applicants for land when the land applied for had not been surveyed.

2. Q.—Why is not that sum of £32,896 added to the former sum of £206,160? A.—Because the land not having been surveyed, there was no certainty that the land would be forthcoming. In consequence also of the deposits being chargeable with the expenses of the Land Departments and Surveys.

3. Q.—Do you keep a strict account of the cost of surveys, so as to show the exact period to which the purchases refer. A.—Yes, and, as I have before stated, as the surveys come in the deposits are transferred to the revenue account.

4. Q.—Is there any doubt as to this land being ultimately available? A.—The greater portion of the land is found available. It may be calculated that about £2,000 or £3,000 a quarter will be returned to depositors, or 10 or 12 per cent. may be allowed for.

5. Q.—Then with what deduction the deposits may be treated as assets? A.—Subject to that deduction and the cost of surveys they may. I may also state that at present it is optional with Government whether to receive their deposits or not. It may elect to make the surveys prior to the whole of the purchase money being received.

6. Q.—When a purchaser has paid his money for any specified quantity of land, and pays his deposit of the full purchase money, and supposing the lands applied for to be forthcoming on survey, has the applicant a right to insist upon having these lands conveyed to him after survey? A.—In justice, it is considered if the land is forthcoming, that the applicant has a right to it; but I cannot speak in legal point of view, although I am of opinion that the contract for the purchase is complete.

7. Q.—Supposing, the land being found, the Governor were to require it for a public reserve, would not that defeat the purchase? A.—I do not know.

The following motion was then put by the Chairman:—

“It appearing that the practice of the Government is to treat certain purchase moneys paid for lands, of which the purchase is not yet complete, as moneys held in a suspense account, to be carried forward to a future account, and that this sum £32,896 was held on such suspense account, July 1, 1855, it is unnecessary for the purpose of the present inquiry to disturb the calculations submitted by the Auditor General; the question being open whether such is or is not the proper mode of creating such accounts.

Amendment proposed by Mr. Brown:

“That the land revenue of each year, as it arises, ought to be treated and dealt with as the revenue of that period, and should not be carried from one quarter to another.

The question was then put, that the Amendment be adopted.

The Committee divided,

Ayes
Messrs. Brown
Mackay

Noes
Messrs. Sewell
Hart
Forsaith
Travers
Crompton

The amendment was therefore rejected.

The question was then put that the original motion be adopted,

The Committee divided.