

8. Who paid the rates upon the land before you bought it?—Nobody; because there were no rates to pay.

9. No rates having been levied previously, why do they plead for the payment of rates now?—They do not ask for rates at all. We have been paying rates to the Corporation, which, however, refuses to take over the streets. The Corporation is prepared to take over the streets directly they are made.

10. What are they doing now for the rates they get?—The money goes to the general revenue of the borough.

11. Then they take the rates and do nothing for the money?—Yes. If the Government had made the streets soon after the sale they would have been kept in repair and properly lighted.

12. *Mr. W. C. Buchanan.*] Is this land a distinct ward of the city?—No; it forms portions of other wards.

13. And do you think that, if the Government and the owners refuse to make the streets, the Corporation will still continue to levy the rates for the benefit of other portions of the city without doing anything for those who purchased the land?—Yes.

14. *Mr. Levestam.*] Have the Corporation any legal power to rate you at all?—I do not know. That is a point which we have not fought out with them.

15. How much have you been paying in the pound as rates?—About two shillings and sixpence.

16. *Mr. M. W. Green.*] Do you wish the Committee to understand that if the Government had not promised to make these streets, you would have been bound to make them in accordance with the municipal law?—Yes.

17. And that, in order to avoid that liability, the Government were asked whether they would make them, and they replied that they would?—Yes.

18. Then you simply ask that you may have what you paid for?—Yes.

MR. W. H. LEVIN, M.H.R., examined.

19. *The Chairman.*] You presented this petition. Have you any personal knowledge of the matter to which it refers?—Yes; but I wish to explain that I was not a bidder, nor an intending buyer, at the sale, nor had I anything to do with the land which was sold. However, I was present at the sale, and the statement which is made in the petition to the effect that Mr. Duncan was the auctioneer, and that Colonel Whitmore, who was then Colonial Secretary, stood by his side, is perfectly correct. I presume that he stood there in his official capacity. After the auctioneer had concluded his address to the public who were present one, if not more, persons asked him whether the Government intended to make the streets running through the land they were about to sell, and the auctioneer thereupon conferred with Colonel Whitmore. After that he got into his rostrum, and said he had much satisfaction in telling them that he had been authorized to state that the Government would complete the streets on the land about to be sold, and he added that he was glad to be able to tell them this, because he knew that, if the General Government undertook to do the work, it would not be done in the way in which the late Provincial Government would have done it, but in the most complete manner. This statement was received with cheers by those present, and the sale proceeded. I am satisfied that the promise of the auctioneer meant that the streets would be made in the most complete manner, and the fact of the Colonial Secretary being present, and making no objection to the statements which he heard the auctioneer make, caused the sale to be a greater success than it would otherwise have been. After consulting the Colonial Secretary the auctioneer dilated largely upon the advantages the public would have in buying under such terms and conditions. The conditions of sale had nothing to do with the making of the streets.

20. Were you of opinion at the time that the Government undertook to metal and make the streets?—Most certainly.

21. Was that fact put on record in any way by Mr. Duncan? Was it published in the local newspapers?—There was a paragraph in a local newspaper corroborating what I state.

22. *Mr. Levestam.*] What was the nature of your question and of the answer which you received?—In asking the question I read a statement from the auctioneer, and the Hon. the Minister for Public Works said the statement of the auctioneer threw a new light on the matter, and he added that he would make inquiries into the matter and let me know the result, but he has not done so.

23. *Mr. W. C. Buchanan.*] If the land had been sold by a private person and this promise that you allege was broken, had been made and not kept, would you have proceeded against him?—If the seller had been a private person I should not have paid him the balance of the purchase-money until every promise made at the sale had been carried out.

Mr. CHARLES WHITE examined.

24. *The Chairman.*] Have you any personal knowledge of this alleged promise made by the auctioneer on behalf of the Government with regard to the making of the streets?—I was at the sale, and I know that it was delayed by Mr. Duncan pending the attendance of Sir George Grey or some other Minister. I asked the auctioneer if the footpaths would be made and kerbed and channelled, and he said he would not give an answer until Sir George Grey arrived. Sir George Grey did not come, but Colonel Whitmore did, and Mr. Duncan then put the question to him, and Colonel Whitmore said distinctly, in my hearing, that the roads would be made thoroughly, and not in the half-and-half wretched way in which the late Provincial Government would have made them.

25. And the auctioneer repeated this?—Yes, and he appealed to the public to give him more money for the land on that account.

26. *Mr. W. C. Buchanan.*] In putting your question did you include the making of the footpath, and the kerbing, channelling, and formation of the streets?—Yes.

27. You contend that the Government have not done what they should have done in this matter?—Yes.