

made that statement. Do not misunderstand me, gentlemen. I am quite prepared to give evidence now—I am willing to do so at this moment; but I wish to know what charges are brought against me.

Mr. Blair : I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not refuse to proceed. I have merely submitted that what I deem to be the right course is for me to come after Mr. Lawson and Mr. Gore have closed their case. If, however, the Commissioners say “No,” I am prepared to go on; but I can scarcely do so to-day. I shall be ready to go on to-morrow morning.

Mr. Gore : I suppose we shall be allowed to call rebutting evidence?

Mr. Blair : That is an understood thing under any circumstances. We can take evidence at any time.

Mr. Skinner : If it is certain evidence, in reference to certain parts of the building.

Mr. Lawson : Or the grounds?

Mr. Skinner : With the idea of the Commissioners reporting on the results after the evidence has been taken.

The Chairman : It cannot make a great deal of difference to Mr. Brindley whether he gives his evidence first or last, seeing that before he gives his evidence he will have an opportunity of hearing what charges have been made.

Mr. Skinner : If we cannot proceed with our work now it means a delay of at least a week.

Mr. Blair : I am prepared to go on to-morrow if the Commissioners so decide, but I can scarcely do so to-day.

The Chairman : I do not see that it makes any difference whether the Public Works Department begins first or not.

Mr. Blair : I wish it to be distinctly understood that I can bring forward rebutting evidence at any time after Mr. Gore's and Mr. Lawson's cases are finished. As a matter of fact I must do that.

Mr. Lawson : I hope it is understood that we also can call rebutting evidence if any new matter is introduced.

The Chairman : Yes, if new matter is introduced.

Mr. Lawson : By either party.

Mr. Skinner : But there must be no cross-questioning.

Mr. Gore : But if a witness makes a statement that is not correct surely we can call evidence to rebut that?

Mr. Lawson : I think we should have the right to ask questions.

The Chairman : All questions to be asked will have to be put through the Chairman.

Mr. Lawson : If you think it a proper question it should be put.

Mr. Blair : I certainly expect to ask a great many questions of the other side, if we are going to have two sides; and these must necessarily come out in cross-examination.

Mr. Gore : The object of this inquiry is to elicit the facts. There is nothing to conceal by us.

Mr. Blair : I am quite prepared to have my witnesses cross-examined, and I ought to have the right to cross-question the witnesses of the other side. I am not going very deeply into it.

Mr. Skinner : If all questions are to be put through the Chairman, in that case it makes it a different matter altogether.

Mr. Lawson : I merely desired to put before the Commissioners as strongly as I could why I think Mr. Brindley would be prejudiced if we proceed in his absence.

The Chairman : He will have an opportunity of reading over all the evidence directly he arrives. Perhaps he will be in just as good a position as if he were present now.

Mr. Gore : I may mention that of my own knowledge Mr. Brindley acted under the instructions of the Public Works Department as to putting down certain drains, about which evidence will have to be given. In that case it is very necessary that he should be here. I have heard him make statements which are quite different from what we now hear from “the man in the street.”

The Chairman : We can elicit that from him when he is present.

The Commissioners, at this stage, decided to adjourn till next day at 11 a.m.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 1888.

MR. BLAIR'S OPENING STATEMENT.

THE Commissioners met at Ministers' office, Bond Street, Dunedin, at 10 a.m.

The Chairman : With regard to the form of taking the evidence, the Commissioners hope that both sides will see the necessity of allowing all the evidence to be given without any interruption taking place. If either the one side or the other wishes to ask a witness any questions there will be opportunity given of doing so as soon as the witness's statement is finished. Either side should make a note of the questions required to be asked, and, as I have said, an opportunity will be given of putting such questions afterwards. Unless some such form of procedure is adopted it will be perfectly impossible to take down the evidence or get through with the evidence expeditiously. I think that the course I have suggested will be the better way of proceeding.

Mr. Gore : I am perfectly satisfied that that is the only way of getting on with the inquiry.

Mr. Blair : I am about to make to the Commissioners a statement of what I intend to prove. Of course I shall swear to all the facts of the case.

The Chairman : You can supplement it with anything further in writing which you desire to put in.