

*Mr. Hutchison* : It will not do any harm, at any rate.

Hon. E. BLAKE : I understand this is tendered subject to objection by consent.

*Sir R. Stout* : How can the witness remember what was said ?

*Witness* : I remember that perfectly well.

*Sir R. Stout* : Then, you should be asked to repeat what was said, since you will not take the written thing.

Hon. E. BLAKE : I understand this is an extract from print, and, of course, it may have a context.

*Mr. Hutchison* : If there is any context it may be given.

*Sir R. Stout* : Why not put in the whole of the proceedings ?

173. *Mr. Hutchison.*] I do not choose to do so. If it is objected to in that way, I shall ask the witness to say, first of all, did the Hon. Mr. Seddon, Minister for Public Works, appear at the hearing of the petition?—He did.

174. Did he take any particular part in the inquiry?—He took the part of the representative of the Crown.

175. Did he cross-examine the witnesses brought forward by the company?—Yes, in many cases.

176. Did he examine witnesses brought forward by the other side?—Yes, in some cases. Once or twice he was absent, and then deputed Mr. Gordon or Mr. Blow to examine for him.

177. Did he address the Committee at the conclusion of the evidence?—Yes, he did, on behalf of the Public Works Department.

178. In his address, can you remember what he said towards the end of his speech?—I cannot remember the exact words, but I can give you the sense of what he said. It was that the evidence that had been given before the Commission in 1883 was probably that of very sensible men, but that conditions had changed, and the evidence he brought forward now showed that the experts of the present time had taken different views. He said he did not wish to strain the case against the company, but that if the evidence was published, and the company had to go for more money, it would damn their prospects.

179. Did he say he would hand in any tables?—There were statements, estimates, and tables made by the Government experts—Mr. Blow and Mr. Gordon, I think—handed in, and I think he said he would not read them, as he had not time, but they were to be embodied as part of his address.

*Mr. Hutchison* : Does my friend object to my putting in these statements ?

*Sir R. Stout* : No ; subject to all exceptions hereafter, in order to save time.

[Statements and tables put in, subject to verification and all just exceptions. Marked exhibit No. 77.]

180. *Mr. Hutchison* : This statement put in by Mr. Blow purports to be calculations on the basis of evidence produced before the Committee. Can you say where the material for the fourth column A2 was obtained, in whole or in part?—I think these figures were taken from a statement submitted by the company.

181. These three years—the first, second, and third?—Yes.

182. But not the fourth, fifth, and sixth?—I think they took these from the company's tables.

183. Of course, if you say so I must accept it. You can refer, surely, to the company's tables to see whether they were taken from them or not. It will be found in Parliamentary Paper D.—4, 1892, pages 5 and 6. Now, just see whether more than the first, second, and third years, which are bracketed, were taken?—The rest were not taken from the company's tables.

184. Now, the interest on the £745,000 would be what?—£37,250 a year.

185. In the company's computation, from which the first three years were taken, do the next three amounts—namely, £23,000, £25,300, and £27,830—in any sense correspond with the calculations put in by the company?—No. These figures were not the company's estimates of the traffic ; there were other figures which were the company's estimates of the traffic.

186. These last three, which appear in detail, were not from the company's computations. They were on a rising scale. The £37,250 represented the interest on the £745,000.

Hon. E. BLAKE : I think it would be more satisfactory to put in the other table.

*Mr. Hutchison* : It is in Parliamentary Paper D.—4, 1892, page 5.

187. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Now, turn to the second page. It starts with a table ostensibly giving an estimate of Mr. Maxwell's as to the profit on working the Reefton line and the East and West Coast line. Does it correctly quote Mr. Maxwell's evidence?—Mr. Maxwell corrected that statement of Mr. Blow's.

188. How did he make up the amounts?—He increased the profit on the Reefton traffic to £4,000, making a total of £24,000 instead of £22,000.

*Mr. Hutchison* : Of course, if the bases were wrong the whole computation would be wrong. Although Mr. Wilson is not giving evidence of his own knowledge on the timber question, I think it would be convenient for him to put in the correspondence, because he was the correspondent on behalf of the company. I am not purposing to ask questions just now on the particulars of the second claim, which you have expressed an opinion are not strictly within our second reference.

[Correspondence relating to timber rights put in. Exhibit No. 78.]

189. *Cross-examined by Hon. Sir R. Stout.*] You have spoken about the topography of the country through which this line runs. If you had known the nature of the country before the contract was first made would you have advised the company, in the terms of the contract made, to undertake the construction of what is called the end of the Nelson line?—It would depend entirely upon what instructions I had received as to how I should report.

190. Assuming the conditions were the same as in the contract, would you have advised any company to undertake that contract from the Nelson end?—That is rather a difficult question to answer without more information as to what I should have to report upon. Do you mean, were I to report upon the nature of the country and the possibilities of traffic ?