

17. To what solicitors do you refer?—Messrs. Stafford, Treadwell, and Field.

18. Are you able to hand in a statement of “those assets referred to in ‘The Bank of New Zealand and Banking Act, 1895,’ as the subject of sale to the Assets Realisation Board”?—They have been handed in.

19. And “The remaining assets (retained by the Bank of New Zealand)” ?—That is also handed in.

20. “A statement showing the details of the £148,110 set against the debt of the Auckland Agricultural Company as good assets” ?—That is handed in.

21. In addition to this you are asked to produce “all other documents, papers, and writings relating to the matters respectively above mentioned or included in the order of reference” ?—There are no other documents I think you require.

22. Have you in your possession the profit and loss account of the Estates Company for the year ending March, 1896?—I have not it with me. I have it in the office.

23. Can you produce it?—Yes.

24. Will you kindly produce it at the next sitting?—Subject to consideration I will produce the document.

25. Will you also see whether you can obtain the consent of the board to have “C” and “D” produced, and if the board are willing to produce them?—Yes.

Mr. O'HARA SMITH examined as to the production of documents.

*Mr. Smith:* All the statements I have have been put in before the Committee. I understood I was to be here to be examined upon my statements.

26. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] You have nothing further to add to your statements?—No, except to be examined upon them if the Committee considers it necessary.

27. *The Chairman.*] You have already handed in all the statements you have?—Yes.

28. And could only be examined on those statements?—Yes. I presume, gentlemen, I can go away on my holiday.

29. I think the Committee will not object under the circumstances?—I have nothing more to say than what I have already stated.

Examination of WILLIAM BOOTH, Director of the Bank of New Zealand, continued.

[Witness handed in certain returns which had been called for.]

30. *The Chairman.*] The statement (g) which you were asked to produce has, I think, been handed in by Mr. Foster?—Yes. With regard to (f) I ought to say that the total recoveries given there are in respect of the whole writings-off.

31. Does that complete the statements, as far as you have been asked for them?—Yes, I think so.

32. *Mr. Montgomery.*] You recollect, Mr. Booth, that you said in your examination that the position of the Bank of New Zealand is now one of complete safety. I now ask you, would not a full knowledge of the bank's exact financial position and of its prospects tend to increase the public confidence in the institution?—I do not see how the public can expect a fuller knowledge than they have already got.

33. I now come to the writings-off. You have said in the returns furnished, that the writings-off amounted to 3,095,799. How much of this amount represents the debts of private persons released during the currency of their accounts?—That I cannot say.

34. With regard to specific parts of this amount, is the reduction of the Assets Company share account included in the £3,095,799?—I believe so.

35. Will you return to exhibit 11 [return referred to by witness]?—Yes, that is so; it is included.

36. So far as this amount is concerned, £764,306, it is not the writings-off of the debts of private individuals?—Not directly.

37. Part of it is due to the fall in the value of properties, is it not?—I should think a large part of that would be due to the fall in the value of properties.

38. Is part of it due to the heavy interest on debentures?—No doubt the cost of floating the debentures, and the heavy interest that had to be paid, crippled the company and ultimately had a considerable effect in making the writing-off necessary.

39. Will you tell me how much the company lost through the debentures being floated at a low amount and being then subsequently bought in at £103?—I could not give you the exact figures without looking up the matter in the books of the bank.

40. Could you say whether there is about £300,000?—I would not like to say. I think it is not less.

41. Is not a great part of that amount due to losses on trading concerns?—I could not say without looking up the matter to what extent the loss arises from trading concerns.

42. Do you agree with the report of the Committee of last year, that the deficiency of £400,000 is in trading concerns?—I could not say, but the statement that was given to the Committee last year is the deficiency which arose in trading concerns and that properties outside New Zealand were responsible for a large part of it.

43. As to these losses—I am referring to the amount written off the Estates Company's shares consequent on the banking legislation—have they been incurred subsequent to the estates of private individuals being taken over by the Estates Company?—It is impossible to say.

44. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] Do I understand that it is impossible to get it, or impossible for you to tell us?—I could not tell you, and I cannot imagine how anybody could give you an exact answer to that question.