

whole or a part of their subscriptions. When the directors met to make the allotment they considered how they should deal with the matter, and they dealt with it as the simplest matter of business possible. They said, "Those gentlemen who have applied to reduce or withdraw their subscriptions shall be allowed to do so, and the balance will be allotted." I do not well see how they could have adopted any other course, or how anybody can suggest that they could have adopted any other course than that which they did adopt.

Then there are three questions asked by a shareholder who is in litigation with the company on this subject. He used to send a clerk, or whoever he was, to the office making inquiries. We received him in a good-humoured way and we answered his inquiries to the best of our power; but, apparently annoyed by something or other, he has commenced proceedings against this company, and now by way of assisting those proceedings he asks these questions at this meeting. (Derision.) I think I should be justified, as chairman of this company, in refusing to answer those questions, but I am not inclined to take that course. I will answer the questions, because I never want to conceal anything at all. He asks why, as the directors knew nothing of the reduction of rates, was the issue made when it was made. The answer to that is perfectly simple. The issue was made when it was made because we thought that the time had come when it should be made. There was no reason on earth why it should not be made. The market price was high, and we knew nothing of any reduction of rates. The second question is, whether we had any intimation from Mr. Hickson or anybody else on the other side of the water to induce us to make the issue at once. The answer