

I find, too, that Mr. D. Peat had evidently been misinformed as to a matter referred to in his evidence, given some months ago, before a Royal Commission on Education. He asserted that, at the time when Major Durie was acting as local agent for the School Trustees, persons could get leases of portions of the estate, and sell them immediately at a high price. The real facts are that the original leases were for fourteen years, renewable at a certain proportional increase of rent for a further seven years. This arrangement was made with a view to inducing persons to become tenants, and so enabling the estate to yield as large an income as possible at the outset. By the end of the fourteen years, the military expenditure, consequent on the war, and the loyalty of the Wanganui Maoris, had given such an impetus to Wanganui, that the tenants were only too glad to claim the right to renew; and it was, no doubt, for some of these renewed leases that Mr. Peat heard of a bonus being given. Only two new leases (for the wet land that could not be let at first, at the extreme north-west corner of the estate) were granted under Major Durie's agency; and as these, like the previous ones, were granted by public tender, and the leased blocks were very difficult of access, no one would be likely to give much of a bonus in respect of them. It is, in fact, the rapid advancement of Wanganui of late years that has led new-comers to fancy that the estate has been mismanaged. They do not realize the fact that at first it took ten years for two hundred Europeans, of all ages, to collect in the districts of Wanganui, Turakina, and Rangitikei, and that, at the time when the original leases were granted, any one would have been thought wonderfully sanguine who had anticipated that, by this time, there would be a thousand white faces in that part of the colony.

Requesting that you will lay this before the Committee,

J. Ballance, Esq.,  
Chairman of Wanganui Endowed School Committee.

I have, &c.,  
H. C. FIELD.

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