

# WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

## PETITION OF THOMAS BRYDONE AND OTHERS, PASTORAL CROWN TENANTS.

### MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 15TH JUNE, 1886 (Mr. A. P. O'CALLAGHAN, Chairman).

Mr. JOHN ROBERTS, Runholder, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] We have received a petition from several runholders of Otago. Have you any information to give the Committee in reference to the facts stated; have you anything to corroborate the statements made in that petition?—Yes; I have some evidence to give. I can give you the example of two runs, for which I act as agent.

2. For what length of time?—In respect to one of them for five years, and the other for the last three years.

3. You are agent for both runs?—Yes.

4. Will you give the evidence you have to the Committee?—I may preface my remarks by informing the Committee that I am myself a runholder, paying about £3,000 a year. I do not appear here to make any personal appeal on my own behalf; bad as times are, I am prepared to bear the consequences.

5. You say you are agent for two other runs outside your own?—Yes; my remarks refer to them and to other runs, which I know are in a similar situation. The run that I will refer to first is No. 200, and known as "Miller's Flat."

6. Where is that?—It is near the Teviot. The revenue for the last twelve months, extending to the 30th of April, has been: Wool, 160 bales—102 bales greasy, and 58 bales scoured—from 13,444 sheep, at say 8s., £2,016.

7. Upon what do you base your calculation?—I judge by the perusal of the catalogues, and I am quite certain as to the fleeces. I can also give you details of the sheep sold during the year, amounting to £282 17s. 6d. There were four bales of rabbit-skins, which have been shown as likely to realize £15 each—that makes a total of £2,358 17s. 6d. The expenditure during the year has been: Rents and taxes, £1,122 8s. The rent is £1,040; the property-tax, £47; shearing, £311; wages, £335; repairs and management, £247; rabbit expenses, £244 3s. 8d.; with other expenses, carriage of wool, coals, insurance, stores, &c., making £2,573 17s. 6d., showing a deficiency of £215. In addition to the leasehold there are about 1,500 acres of freehold, which is worked in conjunction with the rest of the country. The expense on account of rabbits has been lighter owing to the country being "patched." The meaning of that is, that formerly it was the custom to go over the whole of the country poisoning the surface of the ground to get rid of the rabbit pest, but latterly the custom is to put poison on "parts" or "patches;" but this winter, I expect, the whole country will have to be gone over, so that the expense under that head will be nearer to £500 than £240. The number of sheep has been decreased by five hundred during the year. Some of the low country has been taken from the run, and it has been found necessary to reduce the stock. That was done with a view to provide against certain contingencies. We thought it advisable to reduce the stock to this extent.

8. *Mr. Fulton.*] Have you taken into account the interest on the money invested?—No; no interest whatever.

9. You might give what would be the amount of the interest, as well as the rate of interest.—Seven per cent. Suppose the run to be worth £10,000 at 7 per cent., that would be £700 a year.

10. *The Chairman.*] At the present valuation?—Yes.

11. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the length of the lease?—It has about five years to run.

12. *The Chairman.*] Does that include the valuation of the freehold?—Yes.

13. That is based on the value of wool?—On what it is likely to be this year. I have catalogues from which I take it at 8s. as the value per fleece, which is, I think, more than will be realised. I can give you the relative value of wool for the last three years:—

|      |     |     |     |                  |                              |
|------|-----|-----|-----|------------------|------------------------------|
| 1883 | ... | ... | ... | £3,752 13s. 4d., | equal to 4s. 7½d. per sheep. |
| 1884 | ... | ... | ... | £3,146 19s. 7d.  | " 4s. 2½d. "                 |
| 1885 | ... | ... | ... | £2,593 0s. 5d.   | " 3s. 8¼d. "                 |

14. *The Chairman.*] That is partly due to less price than to deterioration?—Yes.