

own coin for application, unless they thought the employés would afterwards sell to them?—That is probably the view to take of it. If they were our employés, and they were fortunate enough to get land, we might have a better chance of buying from them than we would from outside people, and we might get it on better terms from them.

462. *Mr. Thompson.*] I would like to ask you if there was any private understanding between your employés and your manager and yourself in case they were fortunate enough to draw any of the sections. It was understood they were to transfer them to the company on certain conditions?—There was no arrangement as to any conditions whatever. The only thing is, I suppose, we will have the first chance of buying some of these sections.

463. I presume, before you advanced money to these people, there would be some form of security or some understanding arrived at. I should like to ask on what terms or conditions you advanced these men the money to secure the sections?—Well, we are getting the use of the land in the meantime.

464. That is, I presume, as interest for the loan of the money?—I may say that we have the use of all the land on the Levels that was taken up or offered at that sale; some of it was taken on perpetual lease. Even McPherson's section we have the use of, on Mount Misery, and Opawa, and others—we have the use of them all.

465. Are these employés in a position to refuse to sell you this land on very favourable terms; that is, are you in a position to bring pressure?—No, I never bring pressure to bear on any man; it would make no great difference to the company if they sold it to outsiders to-morrow. It is entirely optional.

466. The object of the company in attempting to get this land was principally or almost wholly in respect of the portions surrounded by the company's freehold?—Yes.

467. Not for the purpose of increasing the freehold of the estate of the company?—No, simply to secure that particular part.

468. Have you been doing much in cutting up and selling your properties there on the Levels?—Yes, we are selling almost every week; we have sold a good deal of the Levels estate. It might interest the Committee to know what we have been doing in that way. It will show that the company is not such a cormorant as some people would like to make out.

*The New Zealand and Australian Land Company (Limited).*

Note of land sold and leased on the various estates during the last few years: 459 farms sold, 117,258 acres, for £614,401; 69 farms leased, 16,324 acres, rented at £5,399; 258 small sections, 457 acres, sold for £21,120.

469. *Mr. Smith.*] What number of years does that extend over?—During the last six or seven years.

470. *Mr. Thompson.*] Then, I presume you have not been buying the freehold, except in little patches here and there intersected by previous purchases?—We do not buy freeholds, as the result of our sales shows. We are settling a large number of people on our estates, and they are doing very well. A large number are in Southland. We encourage dairy-farming in every way. We have a large number of leaseholders in Southland making a fair living.

471. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] I was only going to ask one more question: Do I understand that since the sale an offer has been made, or an indirect offer has been made, to you or to the company by some one who has acquired land, to sell it to the company at an advance?—Yes; we were occupying the land, and it has been offered to me by a man who evidently bought it for speculation.

472. Was this man one of your employés?—No.

473. Nobody connected with the company?—No, in no way whatever.

474. *Mr. Cowan.*] You tell us the company advanced to your employés the money to pay for these lands; would you say the company owed a considerable portion of this money advanced?—Some of them have wages lying with the company. I could not say what proportion.

475. A certain proportion of that advanced would be lying to their credit?—Yes.

476. *Mr. Reeves.*] I wanted to ask you, did Messrs. McLean, Gracie, and Clulee, of Timaru, get any land?—I do not think so.

MONDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1890.

JAMES CLARK BROWN, M.H.R., examined.

The evidence I desire to give to the Committee is in connection with a petition which I hold in my hand, and which was presented during my absence in England by Sir George Grey. (Petition read.) The petition came before the Committee some time in September, 1887, and it was reported upon by the Waste Lands Committee, who referred the petition to the Government for consideration. I have applied to the Government more than once, asking them to take the matter up, but they have not done so. The reasons which the petitioners' desire to bring this matter before the Committee are: Believing that a very great injustice was done to a number of intending settlers, who applied for the sections referred to in the petition. The area of those sections, approximately, was about 200 acres each on the deferred-payment system. There being more than one applicant the land was put up to auction. Only those parties who had applied were entitled to bid. I think the price was 30s. per acre. At the auction-sale the principal bidders were people residing in the district, some who had made money by mining, and others who were desirous of extending their holdings and acquiring homes. (I am, of course, speaking only from a general knowledge of the applicants.) There was only, I think, one of these who was successful in obtaining a section. The successful bidders were station-hands, with one exception, all employed by the previous run-