

216. Do you know of any offers of lease or sale that Mr. Douglas had before selling to the Government?—I do not know personally; but I know what Mr. Douglas told me as regards the offers he had.

217. When did he tell you?—A good many years before the sale took place, in 1889. He told me of an offer from Mr. Brown, of Brown and Rattray, at £4 10s. an acre.

218. For the whole lot?—Yes.

219. He referred to it in a letter?—Yes; there is a letter which I received from Mr. Douglas, stating that Mr. Brown had made him an offer of £28,000 for the land.

220.—That was in 1882?—Yes. (A8, *supra*.)

221. But the 90s. an acre, that was some years before?—Yes; it was some years before.

222. Do you know of any offer apart from that?—That is the only definite offer I remember his mentioning to me.

223. Any offers to lease?—Yes; there was an offer to lease at 3s. an acre for a fixed lease.

224. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] When was that?—About 1880.

225. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Have you any knowledge of recent values?—I know the district very well. I had land of my own in it, which I sold at a price.

226. What price?—At £4 and £4 10s.

227. How does that land you sold compare with Pomahaka?—It is very similar; it is very much the same; but I should say that it is a great many years ago.

228. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] When was that, in 1877?—No: it is about twelve years ago.

229. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Have you exchanged land?—Yes.

230. How long ago?—Several years ago.

231. At what price?—£3 an acre.

232. Have you seen the correspondence in the newspapers touching the sale of this estate to the Government?—I did not see the whole of it.

233. What conclusion did you draw from it?—The conclusion I drew from it was that there were accusations of jobbery and corruption all round.

234. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] I understood you to say that, of your own knowledge, you knew of no offers made to Mr. Douglas except what he informed you of?—None, except what he spoke of in his letters to me. These letters I have looked up. He told me distinctly that these offers were made to him at that time.

235. You are the attorney of Mr. Douglas. Do you keep the documents connected with this land, or any other of Mr. Douglas's property, in your possession?—The documents of title were in the hands of the Union Bank.

236. The documents of title?—Yes; they held them as security for a fluctuating balance not exceeding £12,000.

237. Have you no documents connected with the estate in your office?—None; except with respect to the collection of the rents. I collected the rents.

238. A certain amount of the land was sold in 1889, you say?—Yes.

238A. And you say that was not the best land?—No.

239. It was not the worst?—No.

240. It was fair average?—Yes.

241. Do you know the Popotunoa Estate?—It was nearer Clinton.

242. Was the land sold in 1889 easier of access than the rest of the land?—It was easier of access and nearer Clinton. The land at Pomahaka, sold in 1889, was nearest to Clinton.

243. Was the sale of 1889 at auction?—Yes.

244. Mr. Douglas says the area was 1,450 acres?—He is mistaken; it was 1,140 acres.

245. Why was the rest of the land not sold? Were there no bids?—Yes; but the bids did not come up to the reserve.

246. What was the reserve?—£3 10s. One lot was £3 5s.; it was the highest part of the land.

247. What were the bids rejected?—Some were £3.

248. Any lower?—I do not think so. I think £3 was the only other offer.

249. Only one other offer?—There were other offers, but £3 was the only price that could be got for the other land.

250. How does the price compare with the price of land at present?—I think land has come down in value during the last twelve months.

250A. How is that?—There is not so much money knocking about now as there used to be.

251. Do you remember the land-boom?—Of 1877 and 1878? Yes.

252. Was the offer from Mr. Brown made at that time?—I think it was in 1879. It was land that was sold by Mr. Vogel (Sir Julius) when he was Provincial Treasurer. Mr. Brown bought from Tolmie's trustees.

253. What was the value?—£2 2s. 6d.

254. You say you collected the rents of this land?—Yes.

255. There was 6d. an acre paid for a period, and for six years after that, 9d. When Mr. Douglas says he was getting rent and taxes does he mean general or local rates?—Local rates.

256. Did Mr. Douglas pay the property-tax and land-tax?—There would be no land-tax to pay in 1882.

257. He would pay the graduated tax on this property?—Yes.

258. How much does it amount to on Pomahaka?—There was nothing paid on that particular property; it was lumped over the whole of a man's property.

259. What was the graduated tax?—On £15,000, I think—I can only speak from memory; but it would be easy to find the amount of taxes for the different years.