

260. Whatever you paid to the general taxes would, of course, reduce the rent?—Yes.

261. Can you say how much it would reduce the rent?—I cannot tell.

262. Would you undertake to find out?—I can tell how much the land-tax was each year, but I cannot tell you how much of it was on Pomahaka, because if he had no other land than Pomahaka there would be no graduated tax.

263. Assuming that he paid the amount payable after deducting the value of his mortgage?—He never leased that land; he refused to lease; he merely gave a grazing tenancy at 2s. an acre.

264. The land sold at £3 12s. 6d. an acre had been let at 9d.?—Yes, for grazing, and for a short time.

265. That was in 1889?—Yes.

266. How much, in your opinion, did this payment of taxes take off the rent?—For several years nothing; there was no property-tax.

267. But since then there has been a land-tax and a property-tax?—I could not tell without going into figures.

268. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] Do you know the Pomahaka property?—Yes, very well.

269. And the adjoining properties?—Yes.

270. What comparison has that with Waipahi?—The land at Waipahi is more broken; it (Pomahaka) is better land, but it is not so convenient for access.

271. You know Clydevale, is not that a very valuable estate?—Yes, it adjoins; it is very similar land.

272. Do you know Mr. Logan's property?—Mr. Douglas's land was naturally better; Mr. Logan's land had been ploughed.

273. Was Pomahaka offered to the public prior to Mr. Logan's?—Yes, some years before.

274. Do you think that offering such a quantity of land as Mr. Logan's and Pomahaka would affect prices?—It would tend to fill up the demand.

275. Did you ever know such a quantity offered in so short a period?—In that part I did not; in other parts of the colony I did.

276. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] At the date of this letter of the 1st March there had been no offer—no written offer?—It was a verbal offer. The year 1882 was the year the frozen-meat trade was inaugurated; every one thought it would raise the value of land.

277. He was anxious to get an offer, because he had not had one before?—Yes.

278. He was not to pay any cash down?—No.

279. *Mr. Hogg.*] Did you ask Mr. Brown to call and see you?—That letter is the only record I have; it is twelve years ago. We had discussed this matter before, when he indicated the value, and so on, but there was never any written offer.

280. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Mr. Douglas has given it in evidence that Messrs. Begg, Turnbull, and himself had a hand in getting up that petition?—I was not here at the time; I left the colony in May, and did not come back until December. When I went away there was no notion of selling this property; when I came back it was sold and paid for.

281. *Dr. Fitchett.*] It is your son who would be referred to as "Begg"?—I do not know. I do not think he had any hand in it; but he might have made a copy of it, or something of that kind.

282. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Do you remember Mr. Murray's, of Wairuna, offer of 2s. 3d.?—That offer was not accepted.

283. Why not accepted?—Because Mr. Douglas did not want to tie up the land for seven years; he did let it for 1s. an acre, with a month's notice.

284. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Do you know what notice he usually gave to grazing tenants?—Three months.

285. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Do you remember Messrs. Brown and Rattray's property?—The aspect is not so good, and I think Pomahaka is worth more money; there is a better aspect to Douglas's property.

286. But what about the land, apart from the aspect?—Mr. Douglas's is better land.

287. When was Wairuna sold?—Some of it had been sold before that time.

288. *Hon. Sir R. Stout.*] Is it the fact that the land from Clinton towards Gore is cold clay land?—There is a good deal of good land there; there are some twenty or thirty settlers on it.

289. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Will it grow wheat?—I have not seen wheat growing on this particular land, but there is land similar in the district on which I have seen wheat growing, a good crop.

Mr. JOHN DOUGLAS RITCHIE recalled and cross-examined.

290. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] While these negotiations were going on about the sale of Pomahaka to the Government, did you correspond in any way with Messrs. Wright, Stephenson, and Co.?—I believe that Mr. Johnstone wrote to me, asking whether the sale was completed; that was about the time the sale was completed.

291. What did you reply?—I think I said it was. I do not think I said anything about the money.

292. What did you reply to Mr. Johnstone's inquiry?—I cannot tell you what I said to him; it seemed to be a private communication from Johnstone to myself, asking when it was completed or likely to be completed. I think I said "Yes" to his inquiry; I cannot say what I said. I think the communication was about the time the sale was completed, or shortly after.

293. He wrote to you under the impression that it was not completed?—Yes.

294. And he wanted an answer whether it was or not?—I was aware that Messrs. Wright, Stephenson, and Co. had given the money to the bank, and that he was anxious to have some definite answer.