

264. Is wheat-growing generally a profitable occupation?—No, not profitable.

265. You say this land will not grow wheat on account of the wet climate?—It will not grow satisfactorily. It grows very good oats.

Mr. HARRY LYTTTELTON BRITTAN re-examined.

266. *Dr. Fitchett.*] You said yesterday in your evidence that Mr. Douglas came to the bank in Wellington in August and said that a petition was being presented, and asked the bank not to press for payment. Is that true?—Mr. Douglas was not in Wellington. I mistook the date. I knew that Mr. Douglas had seen us in Wellington within a month or two of the 22nd of August.

267. Will you swear that that was as late as June?—I will not swear about the date.

268. Mr. Douglas says that he has not been in Wellington since last April?—I will say that I did not see Mr. Douglas in Wellington in August. The evidence I gave was—and I read it from this telegram—that Mr. Douglas had informed us in Wellington on the 22nd August that there was a petition *re* the purchase of this property for settlement, and I telegraphed to my manager that this seems idle. But I found that it was a letter I received from Mr. Douglas on that date, and that I did not see Mr. Douglas personally. I have the original letter, and I have the postmark, but I do not care to read it. I was informed in Wellington on that date. The rest of the evidence is absolutely correct.

269. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] Has the letter any bearing on the matter of this dispute or the petition?—The letter says that there is a petition *re* purchase for settlement, and he asks for delay on that account. It is a private letter; and Mr. Douglas used that as a reason for the bank not to press him.

*Dr. Fitchett:* The suggestion was that Mr. Douglas came to Wellington just about the time the land was offered to the Government, and in connection with the offer.

270. What about the agents being nasty?—He said in his letter the agents are inclined to be nasty. In our telegram to the manager in Dunedin I said it was idle. We could not entertain it.

271. What is the date of that letter?—17th of August, at Mount Royal. The other is the 19th August, and we received it on the 22nd—the day that I telegraphed. Both letters are from Mount Royal.

272. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Does Mr. Douglas mention Mr. Ritchie in that letter?—I do not think Mr. Ritchie's name occurs in it. There is no mention of his name.

273. Does the letter mention any effort being made at all to forward the sale to the Government?—No; he is writing privately. The only thing bearing on the point is, "Let me also tell you that a petition at the present moment is being largely signed in Clinton and Clutha districts."

274. What was it he tells you before in that connection?—He commenced by saying he is in receipt of the demand for payment, as to which I gave in evidence; and then he says, "In these times it would be impossible for me to do so"—that is, pay at once. And then he says, "I may also tell you there is a petition," &c. That is the substance of the letter; and it was this letter that my evidence was based on. I spoke from memory when I said he was here in Wellington in August.

Mr. ALEXANDER BARRON, Superintendent of the Crown Lands Department, was examined in connection with the records relating to the purchase of the Pomahaka Estate by the Government.

275. *The Chairman.*] Have you supplied the documents required by the Committee?—I have made an abstract.

276. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] Do you mean by "abstract," a copy?—That is a copy from the record-book.

277. Do you mean that every document mentioned in the record-book is mentioned here?—I sent an officer up this morning to compare the record-book with this extract, and he informs me that it is an absolute copy.

[Mr. W. F. Hilson, Clerk of the Waste Lands Committee, gave evidence that he had compared the list with an officer of the Lands Department, and certified to its correctness.]

Mr. THOMAS MACKENZIE, M.H.R., examined.

278. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Your name is Thomas Mackenzie?—Yes.

279. Are you member for the district in which this land was sold to the Government?—I am.

280. You remember the sale to the Government?—Yes.

281. Did you hear, previous to the sale to the Government, of any movement on the part of the settlers to get this land?—Nothing beyond the receipt of the petition. I heard of no movement at all on the part of the settlers.

282. There was no agitation of any kind?—I was here while the petition was being got up.

283. Previous to your coming to Wellington you never heard of any movement to get the land?—No.

284. If there had been any movement to get the land would you have expected them to come to you about it?—Yes.

285. And on this occasion they did not?—Yes.

286. Have you anything to say about the matter at all—any information to give?—I can only describe to you the history of the receipt of the petition and its presentation.

287. I understand that you were desirous of making a statement?—I should like to answer any questions put to me.

288. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] Do you know the land yourself?—I have never been on it—I have seen it at a distance only.