

259. Why?—Because I am lessor on behalf of the Natives.

260. You state that all the land in your block is first-class land. Mine is about the best, and I have 502½ acres, and all I can carry is 150 head of cattle, for which I pay £70 a year in rent, £20 in taxes, besides all the money I have spent on it. Do you call that first-class land? Do you not think that that £3,000 that was lost to the Natives was necessary to keep the settlers on the land?—I do not think so.

261. Was it not a fact that many of them had not and could not pay their rents, some of them being two years in arrears?—Some of them may not have paid their rents. There were no steps taken to ascertain whether they could pay them.

262. Have you had only one complaint, or several, about Mr. Jones as a valuer?—I have had several complaints that Mr. Jones is not a competent man, but I have offered to prove his competency by the market.

263. Have not those objectors offered you or any other party to employ a practical man and compare values?—It is entirely at my discretion. I am quite satisfied with him. I would not be justified in going from him as long as he does not give too low a value.

264. You were very stringent yesterday on the trespassers, the persons who had obtained certain rights from the Natives and were living on the land. Do you not know that these trespassers paid rent to the Natives?—I do not know. I found them there, and gave them notice.

265. Were you not made aware of the fact that they were paying rent?—They told me; but I have never ascertained it for certain.

266. Would the rent-receipts convince you that they did pay?—I do not know that they would. These were trespassers who took the land with a knowledge of the law that the Trustee alone could issue leases. They squatted on the land at their own risk. They may have paid rent, but they were in illegal occupation.

267. They paid local rates also?—I do not know that they did so.

268. Mr. Luxton, who was one of your trespassers, was paying £60 a year to the Natives?—He was paying something, I know, according to report. In his case, the Natives themselves insisted on his leaving the land. I was making arrangements to give him a temporary tenancy, but the Natives insisted that he should go.

269. You say you have one trespasser left on the estate?—Yes.

270. What is his name?—I do not know his name. He is, I think, somewhere about Hawera. As soon as I come to use the land he will have to go.

271. This furze that I wrote to you about on Black's section: Why should he want so very many months to clear that section of furze when I told you I had spent £500 in doing the same thing?—I cannot answer that question. He is a Native owner, and has had notice. I am giving these Natives who have allowed their land to be overrun with furze notice that if they do not clear the land I will lease it, and I am gradually leasing it. I must be patient with these people. I am acting in their interests, and I am not going to do anything harsh with them.

272. Do you not know that Edward Black is now a tenant of yours?—Has he obtained a lease by public tender?

273. No; he has applied for it, and is to have it?—I do not know the case.

274. Do you know that Elman's land is covered with furze?—As soon as the lease is issued the Natives will be required to keep the land cleared. This land has been worse than waste land for years.

275. *Mr. Green.*] If once a Native takes a lease he will have to comply with the conditions?—Yes.

276. *Mr. Lang.*] At the present time he is one of the owners?—Yes. They propose to take up tenancies. They will pay every tax that the European would pay.

277. It is your duty to work the land in such a way as to get the most possible out of the land, irrespective of settlement purposes altogether?—Yes, exactly so.

278. *Mr. Wells.*] You said that you had leased 40,000 acres. Does that include the 14,000 advertised this month?—No; only 5,000 of that area. The last two days I have leased 500 acres more.

279. It is all bush land, and is cut up small?—Yes, from about 150 acres to 300 acres.

280. You said that you were making a 12ft. track. Are you doing that through the whole block, or only in one portion?—Not throughout the whole.

281. Only on one road-line?—On three roads, I think, at present.

282. On the Puniho Road you have 4,000 acres unlet, at the end of the road?—Yes.

283. Is it all ready for occupation?—It requires to be surveyed yet, and is generally inaccessible by road.

284. Have you leased some 1,700 acres at the lower end of that block?—Yes, about that area, I think.

285. Have not these men applied to you to make a road through that block?—Yes, and there is a petition now to the House of Representatives.

286. You have agreed so to do, have you not, under certain conditions?—I have offered to consider whether I could make the road if they would contribute the amount one way or another.

287. In that expenditure these 4,000 acres at the top of that road will largely benefit by every penny that is spent. Will that land contribute towards the cost?—It is not leased yet. It will hardly pay to lease that land.

288. Were you not told that Carter's son will take the lot if it is let?—I do not know.

289. *Mr. Green.*] Are you of opinion that you would obtain a higher rent, and a better class of settlers, by spending some money in opening up the roads before you lease the land?—I consider whether that course should be adopted in every case before I let the land. I have had it under consideration in connection with this particular land for the last eighteen months. It is a question, however, whether the land can be let with any benefit to the Native owners. I doubt if it will let