

77. But could it be grown at a profit for the outside market?—Certainly not; you would have to pack it. The station has now thirty pack-horses to carry their supplies. The track becomes impassable for many months in the year.

78. How many miles to Kaikoura?—It take about five hours to cross the range to the main road, and then it is about fifteen miles.

79. In reference to Ferniehurst, did Mr. Tinline buy the 9,000 acres or did he exchange?—He bought through the Land Department.

80. Mr. Tinline is a very good settler?—Yes, he is one of the best of settlers. He has been there for forty years.

81. Then it is not correct that Mr. Tinline is an absentee?—Very incorrect.

82. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] The Commissioners hold their power from the Government by statute?—Yes.

83. With regard to large blocks, do you hold that it would be better that at the end of twenty-one years the holders could renew their leases on fair terms? As it is now shown, the holder is justified in doing nothing. Would it be better to have the power of renewing, so that the man would attend to his estate?—Yes, it would be; and to arrange, if possible, for his continuance a year or two before the lease was up.

84. Was this exchange-work done by valuation?—Yes.

85. *Hon. Mr. McKenzie.*] You are conversant with the tenure of the Marlborough lands?—Yes.

86. If this legislation did not take place, what would be the position of many of these lands?—If there was no power of exchange it would simply mean that 800,000 acres of Crown lands would be land-locked, and no one would have access to them except the surrounding freeholders.

87. With regard to this long lease of twenty-one years having a valuation for fencing and sowing grasses, would not that help them?—At present the valuation for such improvements is limited to a sum equal to three years' rental; it might be extended a little with advantage.

88. For instance, we have the power to give rabbit-proof fences: if that power was extended, would it not give encouragement to tenants to fence their country?—Yes.

89. Has the action of the Government been in the best interest of the settlement of Kaikoura?—I am decidedly of opinion it has. The Commissioners did a great service to the country in acting in this matter as they did.

90. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Mr. Gibson said that the Government had it in their power to bid for those lands that had been put up for auction?—It is quite incorrect and contrary to law.

Mr. D. McMILLAN examined.

*Mr. McMillan:* I was appointed in conjunction with Mr. J. B. Green, of Blenheim, to accompany the Land Commissioners for the purpose of valuing the exchanges that were made. I have no doubt that we put the fair value on the land that Mr. Bullen gave up. The Kahautara freehold had a frontage of five miles and an area of 1,924 acres. This we valued at 17s. an acre. There were two sections that were entirely surrounded by leasehold land, and this we put at 11s. 6d. per acre. Then, there were ten acres at Goose Bay, which we valued at 17s. 6d. per acre. The Hundalee sections, on a main road, at 16s. an acre. Then we valued 480 acres on the Conway, improved and in English grass, at £2 15s. an acre; of that 137 acres was only acquired, being a valuable site for travelling-accommodation. Then, as to the land given in exchange to Mr. Bullen on which the boiling-down plant was erected, we considered the unimproved value of these 400 acres to be £1 5s. per acre; there were about five miles of fencing; 300 acres had been cultivated, 100 acres surface sown, and 5 acres of plantation: the total value of that land with the improvements, except the boiling-down building, was £2 12s. 6d. per acre. Then again the part of Green Hills Run that Mr. Bullen received in exchange was valued at 15s. an acre, and the tops at 5s. I think 5s. an acre good value for the hilltops. The portion of the Green Hills Run put up for sale was valued at the same—viz., 15s. an acre, and 5s. an acre for the tops. With regard to Ferniehurst, there was an old station-site, which includes a woolshed, worth £200, an iron hut and concrete floor, £100: the whole of the buildings and fences were worth £365; the total value, including freehold and improvements, was £1,107.

91. *Mr. Duncan.*] How long have you been Valuer for the Government?—I think about ten years.

92. You had experience in making valuations in similar country to this?—Yes.

93. You heard the evidence given by Mr. Gibson? Do you think the Government made a fair exchange?—I think Mr. Bullen met the Commissioners very handsomely, and it was a good bargain for the Crown.

94. In no instance did you effect a haggling value on the land?—No.

95. *Mr. Meredith.*] Have you had many years' experience as land valuer?—Over twenty.

96. The exchanges were made on the valuations?—We gave the valuations to the Commissioners, who had to exercise their judgment on what allowance to make for obtaining the access to the Crown lands, our value being for the land alone.

97. You say that 5s. an acre was the valuation of the hilltops?—Yes, Mount Horrible and Dog Hills.

98. You have been with the Commissioners when engaged on their duties?—Yes.

99. From the practical knowledge you have of the colony, do you think the right of exchange should continue?—I think it is the only possible means by which the country can be worked to the best advantage.

100. If the exchanges did not take place would it be impossible for settlers to get any land in this country?—That is practically so.

101. *The Chairman.*] When Mr. Gibson was giving evidence he said that owing to the liberal hospitality to the party Mr. Bullen got the best of you?—Certainly not.