

will bear me out in that. We know that there are exceptions, but, speaking generally, they are losing in carrying-capacity.

39. Would you be content, if the leases were renewed, that they should be renewed under exactly the same conditions, or do you ask that any alteration in the terms and conditions of the leases should be made?—I recognise that there must be occasions where an absolute renewal of the lease on its present conditions could not be granted. There must be cases where such a thing could not be granted; but, speaking broadly, it could be granted; and the request of the petitioners could be granted without any money compensation, and would improve the carrying-capacity of the Government leaseholds.

40. You do not quite apprehend what I mean. With regard to those runs which are not required for subdivision, if the leases were renewed would you be content that they should be renewed under the existing conditions of a pastoral lease, or would you want those conditions altered in any way?—I would be quite content that they should be renewed under the conditions of the present leases, because I recognise that this is hardly the time to bring up the question of a further fixity of tenure.

41. I meant as to improvements, really. You think the extension of the term would be sufficient encouragement to tenants to surface-sow, and so on, and keep up the pasture, without there being any compensation for grass-sowing, and so on?—Yes, I think so.

42. Have you anything further to add to that?—I think not.

43. I want to ask you one or two questions arising out of certain correspondence. I suppose you know Canterbury generally pretty well: do you know Mr. Robert Guthrie?—No, I do not.

44. He is a small grazing runholder, I think, up in the Mackenzie country. I have here a letter that he has written to the newspaper on this subject. He states that "Land that, in 1890, Messrs. Baker, McMillan, and Foster (Commissioners)"—members of the Land Board—"would only give a fourteen-years lease of, knowing that at the expiry of that time it would be wanted for closer settlement, the Land Board of 1895 . . . extended the leases for a further twenty-one years, on the grounds of compensation for loss by snow." He then goes on to say that the lessees of the land referred to are again amongst the petitioners, and he protests against the renewal in all cases, inasmuch as some of this land may be required to be cut up for small grazing-runs, and so on, and suggests that the Government, before extending the leases of large areas of land, should appoint a Commission of thoroughly practically unbiassed men to go carefully into this matter, with a view to eliminating from the operation of a renewal or an extension any land that might be required for cutting up: do you think that is a reasonable suggestion?—I recognise that there may be cases which could not be treated exactly the same.

45. Then, it would be necessary to make some inquiry with regard to each particular run before it was brought under the operation of renewal: is that so?—That, of course, would be more a question for the Land Board than for us here to express an opinion upon.

46. *Mr. Bennet.*] Under what clause of the Land Act are the leases principally held?—The greater part of the runs referred to here are held under, I think, what is known as Class I. The greater part of them would be held without the right of renewal. Others would be held without the right of resumption; but I should think a very large proportion would be held under Class I.

47. You recognise that there might be a number of these runs that would require to be let under Class II. of the Act, in case they might be required to be cut up for settlement?—I think you would find there would be very few.

48. I dare say you are aware that there is an agitation at the present time for some of these runs, and on that account it would not do to put them under Class I. of the Act, but under Class II., so that if they were required they could be taken?—It must be recognised that no holder of leaseholds under Class II. could be expected to do anything in the way of improvement of his holdings.

49. I understand that, but both cases have to be met to some extent—you recognise that?—Yes.

WILLIAM GRANT examined. (No. 3.)

50. *Hon. Sir W. J. Steward.*] Will you please make your statement now, Mr. Grant?—My evidence, in the main, would be the same as Mr. Pattullo's. On one run in the Mackenzie country I lost 12,574 sheep.

51. On what station?—The Wolds. The year before I had 414 bales of wool, and this last season, after the snow, I had only 210.

52. As regards the neighbouring runs—the other runs in the Mackenzie country—you are generally acquainted with them?—Yes. There were heavy losses on the Simon's Pass, Balmoral, and Lake Tekapo Runs. If I were granted an extension of lease I would fence in some valleys—fertile land—and plough it, grow oats and hay on it, and stack them by until a snowstorm came.

53. And it would not pay you to do this unless you got the extension?—Just so.

54. Of course, these losses were common to all the stations round there?—Yes.

55. In fact, to the whole of the country?—I am certain that if we got this extension and the Government made us keep a certain amount of feed by us—make us grow this feed—we would save our sheep.

56. Then, you concur, do you, with Mr. Pattullo that if the extension of term were granted it would be a sufficient inducement for you to make these improvements without being granted any further concession?—Yes.

57. Do you want to add anything to that?—No, that is all I want to say—that is, regarding the extension—and that the Minister of Lands could bind us down—me, at any rate—to expend so much money within a twelvemonth in sowing feed.

58. What do you say in regard to this contention of Mr. Guthrie's—and there are similar contentions in other letters reaching me from other people—that if a renewal were granted it should not be an indiscriminate renewal, but be made after inquiries—that is to say, that the