

my position; but I did what I did for the school, and I would not have done it for anybody else, as a matter of business. As I said on one of the previous Commissions, I could have obtained, if such had been my wish, a far more valuable property than the Te Aute Estate for less money than I spent on improving the estate. I could have taken the Te Aute School property for myself for a very small sum of money. To use a colonial phrase, I could have gridironed the place; I could have picked its eyes out and paid $\frac{1}{4}$ d. an acre, which was the Government rental, for the intermediate pieces, and then gradually, as has been done by other people, made it my own property at from 5s. to 10s. per acre. I mention that as I have been charged with acting in a selfish way in the matter; otherwise I would not have alluded to it. Instead of buying when land was cheap—much of my money being locked up in the College estate—I had subsequently to pay many times as much for the land I bought for my family.

281. The present lease is for twelve years: can you tell us why the term of twelve years was fixed upon?—In this way: There was a difference between us. I told the trustees I was annoyed at them asking £100 a year more than was placed on the property by a competent valuer. At last I said I would, if they approved, take a lease for twelve years, that being the period when the other leases would terminate which I took up originally for Church purposes, and which were eventually thrown upon my hands because Bishop Abraham and the trustees did not like the liability.

282. Then, the twelve years fitted in with the termination of your Native leases?—Yes.

FRIDAY, 18TH MAY, 1906.

SAMUEL WILLIAMS further examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] I understand you wish to make some reference to your evidence of yesterday?—There are two or three points I desire to make clear. I did not catch the remark of Mr. Fielder yesterday, when giving his evidence, that there was no stock of any kind in connection with the estate. There were a number of sheep at the time of the first lease to me. There were six thousand sheep, and the winter-carrying capabilities being three thousand, they had to be reduced, principally by old ewes that were almost valueless. We never had done any culling before this. It will be seen in evidence that we had been obliged to sell many of our best ewes the year before, at the time of a heavy drought, when the sheep had to be removed, and we could only remove them by selling our young sheep, two- and four-tooth ewes, at 6s. per head, giving three years to the purchaser to pay for them. The price of sheep was so low at the time that some of the settlers questioned the advisability of putting the rams into the ewes. However, that was the position of the sheep, and it was left as a question to be arranged between myself and the trustees, as was also the question of buildings. Now, when the deed was conveyed to the trustees in Hawke's Bay, Mr. Cotterill was the gentleman who communicated with me, and he looked upon it as rather hard lines that they could give me no assistance with regard to the buildings. He said, further, "We will do the best we can for you. We will give you the right to remove your buildings if we cannot deal with you. That will recognise your claim." I looked at it in this way: he said they had no funds, and they did not know where to get funds from. The only way to provide funds was by stinting the school and reducing the number of scholars. That was aversive to my feelings, and I thought we would just go on as we were rather than stint the school in any way whatever. I may say that while there is a liability in reference to the stock, there is a much greater liability in reference to the buildings, to say nothing of fencing, draining and grassing of the run, which go with the land.

2. With regard to stock, you say the trust owns no stock now?—The tenant is responsible for the value of this stock when taken over.

3. Can you tell us what that responsibility amounts to in numbers or value?—I leave myself in the hands of the trustees; that is my feeling about it.

4. How do you estimate the value of the stock?—It has never been gone into. It is a liability that is standing over in the same way that there has been no estimate of the liability of the trust for buildings.

4A. Do the books show the stock belonging to the trust, and the progeny of that stock?—The progeny, of course, would be mine, as tenant. It is only the liability at the time.

5. As against that you say there is the amount of money you have put in in improvements?—Having given the improvements I cannot charge for them, with the exception of the buildings. Mr. Cotterill said the trustees could only allow me to remove my buildings; that was all they could do for me. That is poor consolation for a man, and, of course, such an arrangement would not be entered into as a matter of business. I put a few thousands of pounds into the place.

6. We noticed the other day a large dwelling is being put up?—That is a lease which is being arranged with the trustees. It is covered by my lease to the end of the term; but the gentleman who is building it contemplates arranging with the trustees for an extended lease.

7. That building is not being put up by you?—Not as part of my establishment.

8. But it is on the land leased to you?—Yes.

9. And the person putting it up is communicating with the trustees, with your approval, for a lease of a portion of land?—Yes. When you were there you may have noticed the overseer's house and the men's accommodation and the dining-room and the wool-shed. I may say I have had no money for these buildings at all.

10. We could not understand who was building that large new house on a twelve years' lease?—I am in this unfortunate position, that being on public ground I am obliged to keep my friends at a distance. My son-in-law wished to come there, and I advised him to arrange with the trustees.