

40. Now, about the reduction?—Well, I think a petition was got up to the Government to give us some relief, and I signed it.

41. What was the result of the petition?—They gave us a reduction for a certain time—I think it was for a year.

42. In your case, do you remember what your rent was reduced by?—No, I could not say just now the exact amount.

43. Now, you later became aware that you had the right to convert your lease from that tenure to a lease under the Act of 1892?—Yes.

44. Do you remember when you became aware of that?—About 1892 or 1893—I think it was somewhere about the beginning of 1893.

45. Did you make inquiries?—Yes.

46. From whom?—Well, in the course of conversation I spoke to Mr. Samuel, my solicitor at the time.

47. Did you consult him?—No, it was only in the course of conversation.

48. From whom else did you make inquiries?—I was in conversation with Mr. Fisher, the Reserves Agent at the time in New Plymouth.

49. And I am sure Mr. Fisher gave you all the information at his disposal?—Yes.

50. Now, as a result of your inquiries at the time, what did you do?—I considered it was not an advantage to me to convert, and would perhaps cost me money, and I was not in a position to find that money at the time.

51. Did you convert?—No.

52. Of course, lately you have discovered a great deal about these leases and your position?—Yes.

53. But at that time was the distinction clear to you between your lease under the Act of 1881 and what you could then have got under the Act of 1892?—No, I do not think it was—in fact, I am sure it was not.

54. In what respect was it not clear to you?—Well, I understood that at the first I was going to be paid for all improvements, and then afterwards there was something said about only £5 per acre improvements, and that we had to pay the valuation over the £5.

55. To come in under the Act of 1892 you would have had to pay the Maori any difference over £5—you knew that?—Yes.

56. What was the value of your improvements at that time, in 1892 and 1893? Were they over £5?—No, I do not think they were. Of course, I did not know what the Valuer would value them at.

57. But you knew what you had spent on the place?—Yes.

58. As a matter of fact, at that time were your improvements over £5?—I did not consider they were, but we never know what the Valuers will put on them.

59. *The Chairman.*] And you never know what the sellers will put on them?—No.

60. *Mr. Welsh.*] Did you know what the value was to be?—Well, Mr. Fisher informed me.

61. Would you have been satisfied with his valuation?—I do not know what his valuation would have been.

62. Would you have been satisfied with him as a valuer?—I did not know who the valuer would be.

63. After 1892, did things get better with you?—Yes; some three or four years after that they began gradually to improve.

64. Did you expend any more money on improving your land after that time?—Yes, I kept on expending.

65. And what do you estimate the value of your improvements now?—From about £8 to £9 an acre.

66. Between 1892 and 1900 did you spend much on improving the lands?—Oh, yes, a lot. I added to my house and built cow-sheds.

67. After 1892—after the time you were aware of the right of conversion—did you become aware of any further rights of conversion after that period?—No, in 1893 I think it was. I did not trouble to make any inquiries.

68. Did you receive any notice from any one?—No.

69. You know the difference now between the lease under the Act of 1892 and the lease under which you held?—Yes.

70. If at any time between November, 1900, which was your last opportunity to convert—between then and going back to 1893, had you been aware of your rights, would you have exercised them?—Yes.

71. You would have come in under the Act of 1892?—Yes.

72. It was in 1893 that you first became aware of your right of conversion?—At the end of 1892 or the beginning of 1893.

73. And you told us you spoke to Mr. Samuel on the matter, and also to Mr. Fisher?—Yes. I did not go specially to see Mr. Fisher.

74. What was Mr. Fisher at that time?—He was Native Reserves Agent. I could not say what he was for sure. He was the party to whom we paid the rent.

75. Mr. Fisher was not appointed Reserves Agent till 1895—two years later?—I could not say the date, but I spoke to Mr. Fisher.

76. Are you sure of the time you first became acquainted with your right of conversion?—Yes, in 1892 or 1893.

77. You could not have spoken to Mr. Fisher as Reserves Agent if he was not Reserves Agent at that time?—No, I could not. I cannot remember the date I spoke to Mr. Fisher. I do not know what year it was in.

[Mr. Bell objected to the nature of the questions, as leading.]