

28. What did you do then?—I withdrew my application. Previous to withdrawing the application I went to Wellington to see Mr. Warburton, the Public Trustee at that time, to see if he could either revalue or put it in accordance with the other land that had been revalued just previously.

29. Was he able to assist you?—No, he said he could not do anything.

30. Did it cost you anything?—It cost me about £12 or £12 10s.

31. How was that cost made up?—I sent along some of the money with the application, and afterwards, of course, I sent my lease along when I applied to surrender, and then I got a bill back from the Public Trustee for the amount that was owing. It amounted to about £12 or £12 10s.

32. Was that money paid by you to the Public Trustee?—Yes.

33. It was not including your private expenses to Wellington, or the lawyer's expenses?—Oh, no, it was paid to the Public Trustee.

34. Well, you withdrew your application?—Yes.

35. Can you tell us what the value of your improvements were at that time upon your land?—They would be about £4 10s. an acre at that time.

36. Do you know what they were valued at by the Valuer at that time?—No. I never had a list of what he made the improvements up to.

37. Now, what year was it that you went to Wellington and saw the Public Trustee and withdrew your application?—It would be 1893.

38. Now, after that date, did you ever hear of any further right to convert under the Act of 1892?—No, I never heard of any more.

39. If you had been aware in 1900 that you had the right of conversion would you have exercised it?—Yes.

40. The right of conversion on the same lines and the same basis as you understood your rights in 1892?—Yes, I would have converted then.

41. On what basis was your rent to be assessed in 1892, did you know?—The rent then was to be fixed by the Valuer appointed by the Public Trustee.

42. What did he fix?—The original rent was 3s., and he raised it to 4s. 6d.

43. You say you would have been willing to come in later on in 1900: what rent would you have been willing to pay?—I would have been willing to pay 6s.; land had gone up, and was becoming more valuable.

44. On what basis did the Valuer fix the rental upon in 1892?—I cannot say how he fixed it.

45. Did you think the Valuer fixed the rent or fixed the valuation?—He fixed the valuation.

46. And what was the rent assessed upon?—5 per cent. on that valuation.

47. You were not satisfied with the Valuer's valuation in 1892?—No.

48. Now, since then have you added anything further to your improvements upon the farm?—Yes, I have ploughed some and done a great deal of logging up, all the timber is off, and I have done a lot of burning and that sort of thing.

49. Can you give the Commission your own estimate of what you value your own improvements at upon the land at the present day?—Yes, I value the improvements at the present time at about £5 10s. per acre.

50. For what purpose do you use the land?—Grazing purposes.

51. You do not dairy upon it?—No, I have sheep and cattle running upon it.

52. Is not the land suitable for dairying?—Yes, but it wants to be made into two farms. It fronts on to two roads, the Fraser Road and the Mountain Road, and there is a fairly big gully which runs through it, and there would have to be two sheds on it.

53. Is the land suitable for dairying?—Oh, yes.

54. What improvements would you require to put upon the land if you wished to bring it into dairy farms now?—It would take from £4 to £4 10s. per acre to build suitable buildings and houses to bring it into dairying.

55. Now, assuming that you held a lease under the Act of 1892, with a right of renewal for twenty-one years at 5 per cent. on the unimproved value at the end of that time, would you bring that land into dairying?—Yes.

56. And you say it would cost from how much?—From £4 to £4 10s. to build suitable buildings and fences to bring it into dairying.

57. *Cross-examined by Mr. Bell.* Now, Mr. Best, you say you knew there was a limit of £5 per acre on your improvements?—Yes.

58. Did you see many other lessees about that time?—Yes, I saw a good many.

59. Did they know that it was limited to £5?—Yes, I think a good many did. Those in my locality knew.

60. Now, before the 1892 Act was passed there was a public meeting of lessees under the 1881 Act?—Yes.

61. Were most of the lessees there?—Well, there were a good many.

62. Was the question that was raised at that meeting generally talked about in the district?—Yes, around Normanby and Okaiawa.

63. And was the description of the improvements that were to be compensated for discussed at that time?—No; we all understood that bushfelling was included.

64. The question of £5 an acre limitation and the desirability of getting a permanent renewal was discussed amongst the lessees generally?—Yes.

65. At the time you had the right to convert in 1892 you think the value of your improvements was about £4 10s.?—Yes.

66. And the value of your improvements now is about £5 10s.?—Yes.

67. Now, are you aware that one of the arguments for the lessees at the inquiry before the Lands Committee on this question was that they could not have understood there was a limitation