

16. Since that time have you been aware of any other rights that you had to convert?—No.
17. If you had come in under the Act of 1892, do you know on what your rent was to be based?—Yes, on the revaluation at that time, I take it.
18. What was your rent originally?—2s. an acre.
19. If you had come in under the Act of 1892 you knew there would be a revaluation?—Yes.
20. And what was the rent to be based upon?—3s. 5d. per acre.
21. How did you know it was 3s. 5d.?—According to the revaluation it would work out to that.
22. After that date you did not hear of any right to come in under the Act of 1892?—No.
23. What was your financial position then? Was it strong?—No, I had to work outside to keep the section going.
24. What kind of work?—Shearing and general fencing, and whatever I could get.
25. Working as a farm labourer for other men?—Yes.
26. That was in 1892?—Yes.
27. Now, if you had been aware of that right in subsequent years down to 1900 to come in under the Act of 1892, would you have availed yourself of it?—Yes.
28. What is the value of your improvements now on each section?—On Section No. 17, about £1,200—198 acres at £6.
29. And the other section?—On Section No. 14, £5 an acre.
30. That is the value you place upon your improvements upon those two sections at the present time?—Yes.
31. Near your property is there any Native land occupied by the Natives?—There is a Native reserve not far from me on the Mountain Road, nearer Normanby. I believe the area is 640 acres.
32. Do the Natives occupy that land?—I think one or two occupy it, and others lease to various white people at yearly rentals.
33. How much of that land is occupied by the Natives approximately, and how much by white people?—I should think there are 500 acres occupied by white people, and about 140 by the Natives.
34. During past years have they occupied more than the 140 acres?—No.
35. Have they always occupied the 140 acres in past years?—No, only of late years—probably the last two years.
36. Now, what condition is that land in that is occupied by the Natives, from the farmer's standpoint?—It is felled and fenced and grassed. Of course, the fences are practically new, because it was felled by one party some four or five years ago, and it is not in as good a condition as other lands round it by a long way.
37. Why not?—Well, it has been felled in pieces, and there is a certain amount of standing bush and scrub and a few noxious weeds on it as far as I have seen, and parts that the Natives used to crop a little have been left unsown.
38. Is your land suitable for dairying?—One section is not suitable. Neither of them is very suitable. There is a big gully which runs right through the front.
39. In the other section, if you had security of tenure under the Act, would you dairy on part of it?—About 100 acres. That would take about £3 an acre.
40. Do you think it would be an advantage to the land to spend that money upon it and dairy on it?—Yes, part of it.
41. *Cross-examined by Mr. Bell.*] Now, you refused, Mr. Best, to come in under the Act of 1892 because the valuation was too high?—That is so.
42. If you had known subsequently that you had the right to convert, you say you would have come in?—Yes.
43. I suppose if the rent was not fixed too high then?—Yes.
44. If the rent was fixed too high, then you would wait till a later opportunity came, and you would try again and see if the rent was too high then, and go on perpetually till the rent suited you?—Well, of course, we cannot tell.
45. You would have refused if you thought it was too high?—Yes. I would have come in later if I had had the opportunity.
46. If the rent had not been too high?—No, I do not say that.
47. *The Chairman.*] You say you would have come in later if you had had the opportunity and if the conditions were the same as in 1892?—Yes.
48. *Mr. Bell.*] You would have come in subsequently at the rental of 3s. 5d. if you had the opportunity. Of course, land had gone up in value?—We understood we were to be paid for bushfelling, and later on we were not sure of that, but lately I have heard we are.
49. Now, let me turn to the Natives for a moment. I suppose you have had to spend a good deal of money on your place to make it pay?—In bushfelling and houses, yes.
50. Otherwise it would not have been a paying proposition?—Yes, that is so.
51. Put yourself in the position of the Natives for a moment, without the money to improve, what would you do? Would you sublease, supposing you had taken up a section and could not raise the money to improve it?—I would have had to go out to work.
52. But you would have had to sublease if you could not raise money to improve?—I went out to work and earned my money to improve as I went along.
53. Did you raise any money?—No, I never raised any money.
54. You never had a mortgage on your place at all?—No. I never expended more money than I had.
55. Did you have any money when you took the place up?—About £50.