

ARTHUR NEWELL sworn and examined. (No. 4.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You are a farmer, and live where?—At Fraser Road, Hawera.
2. You are a lessee under the Act of 1881?—Yes.
3. What is your section?—No. 17, Block II, Hawera.
4. You are an original lessee?—Yes.
5. Did you take up the land in 1883 or 1885?—In 1883.
6. And you knew of a limit of £5 an acre for your improvements?—Yes.
7. You thought the improvements covered all improvements, but you knew of the limit of £5?—Yes.
8. What was your rent?—2s. an acre.
9. And your acreage was what?—200 acres.
10. In what condition was the land when you took it up?—All heavy bush.
11. Did you reside on the land yourself?—Yes.
12. And you got the bush down and grassed the land?—Yes.
13. Are you still living on the section?—Yes.
14. Approximately, what is the present value of your improvements?—£6 an acre.
15. Does that include bushfelling, grassing, and everything?—Yes.
16. Did you know of the right of conversion?—Yes.
17. When?—In 1893, I think.
18. Did you attempt to convert?—Yes.
19. Did you give the notice?—Yes.
20. What prevented the conversion proceeding?—Well, they raised the rent too high.
21. What was your rent fixed at?—3s. 6d.
22. Did you know what that was based upon?—Upon the unimproved value.
23. What percentage on the unimproved value?—Five per cent.
24. It was the same Valuer for all the lessees who applied?—I could not say it was the same—I am not sure.
25. After that time, were you aware that you had subsequent opportunities of conversion?—No.
26. Right down to the year 1900?—No.
27. You have heard of it since these proceedings have been commenced, have you not?—Yes.
28. In the year 1900, if you had been aware of the right to convert, would you have taken advantage of it?—Yes.
29. Do you know on what basis your rent would have been fixed in 1900?—On 5 per cent. on the unimproved value.
30. We know that in 1892 or 1893 you were aware of your right of conversion?—Yes.
31. But latterly you discovered that seven or eight years after that you again had the right to convert?—Yes.
32. Now, if you had known in the year 1900 that the new rent you would have been asked to pay would have been an increased rental at the rate of 5 per cent. on the unimproved value, would you have taken advantage of it?—Yes.
33. On what year would that 5 per cent. on the unimproved value be based?—In 1900.
34. Would you have been prepared to pay the load, being the difference of rent between 1892 and 1900, to the Public Trustee?—Yes.
35. Why would you have been prepared to pay this additional amount in 1900 if you were not prepared to pay 5 per cent. on a lower basis of valuation in 1892?—Well, I was in a better position.
36. How were you in a better position?—I had more stock, my place was cleared, and I was making more money on the place. I could not have paid the rent before.
37. Did you find it difficult in 1892 to pay the rent?—Yes.
38. Did the land pay its own way in 1892?—No.
39. How did you manage?—I borrowed money.
40. For what purposes do you use your land?—For dairying.
41. Does it require further money spent on it to bring it into profitable farming?—I could spend more money on it, and make it more profitable.
42. Say you got a lease under the Act of 1892 now with a better tenure, would you spend moneys upon the land?—Yes.
43. Can you tell us to what extent you would spend more money?—I would spend £2 to £3 an acre on it still.
44. Do you think it requires that?—Yes, I do.
45. *Cross-examined by Mr. Bell.*] What rent were you paying in 1892 when you had the right to convert?—I do not know exactly the date it was reduced, but it was reduced from 2s. to 1s. 6d. for a period of five years.
46. Now, supposing you had converted in 1900, what rent would you have expected to pay?—Five per cent. on the unimproved value.
47. At what date?—From 1900 and the time back.
48. Would you have expected the land to be valued in 1900 at 1892?—The land to be revalued in 1900.
49. Do you know what was the unimproved value of your land in 1900?—I could not tell you.
50. Then, you have no idea of what 5 per cent. on the unimproved value would have amounted to in rent?—No, I could not say.
51. Do you seriously come here and tell the Commissioners that you would have taken on a contract not knowing what rent you would have to pay?—The rent would not have been more than 5s. or 6s. an acre.