

11. How long did you and your cousin remain owners of the lease?—About two years, I think.

12. And what happened then?—My brother Charles Hughson took over my cousin's share, joining partnership with me.

13. What year was that?—About 1884, I think. I am not quite certain of the date.

14. Well, after that what happened regarding the land?—My brother and I remained in ownership and worked the land for four or five years, and things were so bad that my brother said he would not stand it any longer, and that he would give it up. I pointed out to him that if we gave it up at that juncture we would certainly lose all we had put into it, and I decided I would take the responsibility on myself, giving him a promissory note for his share, to be paid when I was in a position to do so. When I had paid my brother his share both the interests were transferred to my wife.

15. What year was that in?—I think it was in 1890, but I am not sure about the date. The reason for transferring to my wife at that time was that by the Act we were prevented from acquiring any further land unless it was attached to the section which we had. If there was a section between we were debarred from taking it up. Consequently I thought as the family grew they might require a little more land, and I decided that a transfer to my wife at once would enable me to take up another section under the Act in another part.

16. *Mr. Kerr.*] Were you not in error in that? Was it not only your holding 640 acres of land?—No, we could not take another section unless it was joined. If it was joined we could take up 640 acres.

17. *Mr. Welsh.*] After the land was transferred to Mrs. Hughson, how was the land used?—It was farmed by us on the same principle—milking and farming in the usual way.

18. Who managed it?—I did.

19. Who paid the rent?—Well, it was practically paid by the proceeds.

20. What has become of the lease since; is it still in your wife's name?—Yes, still in my wife's name.

21. Are you living on the land still?—No, we have a family milking, on shares.

22. Did you ever live on the land?—Yes; I lived on it all the time up till within the last ten years.

23. And since then, how has it been used?—For dairying and farming generally.

24. By whom?—By me.

25. Who farms it now?—I do. Of course, I have a man working on it milking, on shares—a Mr. Vincent.

26. And that has been so for the last ten years?—No, about five years. In the interval I was running coach-horses on it.

27. Has it ever been leased by you to anybody else?—No.

28. And you have been in continuous occupation of the land from the beginning?—Yes.

29. And how far is your residence from the land?—Twelve miles. The land is this side of Okato, near the toll-gate.

30. How long have you been living at Rahotu?—About ten years.

31. You have told us that when you took possession of the land first of all it was covered in tutu, fern, and flax?—Yes, we could ride through on horseback without being seen.

32. What improvements have you done to the land?—I have ploughed and grassed every bit of it, with the exception of about 5 acres. It is all cleared and ploughed and fenced and subdivided, with a good house on it.

33. Can you tell the Commission what you value your improvements at to-day upon the land?—Roughly, I value the improvements at £5 10s. as now existing.

34. Were you aware at any time that you had the right to convert that lease into a lease under the Act of 1892?—Yes.

35. When did you first become aware of that?—About 1893—the beginning of 1893.

36. Did you take any steps to do so after you became aware of it?—I inquired with regard to the conditions, and looked carefully into the matter, and after considering it I could not see my way clear to finance the conversion.

37. Did you estimate what it would cost you to convert?—I could only do that roughly. I considered it would have cost me nearly £200, and I was not aware that there was any provision for spreading that amount over a period. I understood it all had to be put down, and I could not do so.

38. How did you arrive at your estimate of £200?—I considered the amount of improvements that had to be put down and the extra back rent that would have to be paid up.

39. You were anticipating what the future rent would be?—Yes, and that it would cost so much that it was better not to do so at the time.

40. What were your improvements at that time?—About the same value as they are now.

41. Did you estimate you would have to pay the Public Trustee any sum for improvements?—Yes, I considered there would be a certain amount, but I did not know how the value would go.

42. Are you clear when it was that you made those computations and considered your position in regard to conversion and determined not to avail yourself of the right?—Yes, I feel quite clear on the point that it was when the Act was brought in.

43. After that time did you become aware of any subsequent rights of conversion?—No, I have no recollection except the once. I had the idea that twelve months was given, and that that was final, and that if we did not convert at that time that we ceased to have a chance. I do not recollect any subsequent chances.

44. It is stated that registered letters were sent to the lessees in 1898 informing them that their rights of conversion had been further extended down to the year 1900?—I have no recollection whatever of receiving any circular whatever, and when the meeting was held here it came as a great surprise to me that we had three chances of conversion.