

15. How long did you remain there?—About two years.
 16. And then you left?—Yes.
 17. Why?—Because my husband's health broke down.
 18. You went away in search of health for your husband?—Yes.
 19. And you came back to Manaia, when?—In 1897.
 20. What condition was your husband in when he came back?—Still an invalid.
 21. And he never recovered from his illness?—No.
 22. And he died in 1905, I think?—Yes.
 23. Now, when you came back in 1897, who looked after the business?—Partly both of us.
 24. Was your husband in the habit of consulting you in connection with his business?—Yes.
 25. Was he able to move about in 1897?—Only in a chair.
 26. And after that what was his condition?—He took to bed.
 27. And never rose from his bed again?—No.
 28. After that who looked after the business?—I did.
 29. Did you ever hear of any right that he had to convert his lease from what you call the old Act to the new Act?—Yes, in 1892.
 30. Did you take any steps to convert at that time?—No.
 31. Why not?—Because circumstances would not allow it; we could not afford it.
 32. After that, did you ever hear of any other right of conversion?—No.
 33. Now, it is stated that the Public Trustee sent a registered letter to each lessee in December, 1898: did you ever hear of that registered letter?—No.
 34. Was your husband about at that time?—No.
 35. Where was he?—In bed.
 36. The letter was to the effect that you had the right to change the lease from the Act of 1881 and take a new lease under the Act of 1892?—Yes.
 37. You never heard of any further right after 1892 or 1893?—No.
 38. What are your improvements worth now on the 88 acres?—About £5 an acre.
- Mr. Bell:* No questions.
39. *Mr. Kerr:* In regard to the second section of 256 acres which your husband acquired, do you know whether that was converted or not?—No, it was not.

DUNCAN ALFRED POOLE SWORN and examined. (No. 24.)

1. *Mr. Welsh:* You are a farmer?—Yes.
2. And you live where?—Takato Road, Auroa.
3. You are one of those who signed the petition to Parliament?—I am.
4. And you were chairman of the deputation appointed by the petitioners?—Yes.
5. You hold a lease under the Act of 1881?—I do.
6. What is the number of your section?—Section 33, Block XIII, Kaipokonui Survey District.
7. How much is your rent?—£55 16s. per year.
8. That is about 2s. per acre?—Yes.
9. What is the area of your land?—553 acres.
10. When did you acquire your lease?—On 1st July, 1907.
11. Whom did you purchase from?—John Blennerhassett.
12. Where were you living prior to purchasing?—At Matipu, on the Hastings Road.
13. Now, whom did you see first of all relative to purchasing the land?—I saw a land agent in Eltham, and told him of my wants. I wanted a place sufficiently large for myself and my sons, and he recommended me John Blennerhassett's lease. I went with the agent to look over the place, afterwards returning to Blennerhassett's house, and I asked him his terms. He told me that he required £4,750 for goodwill and improvements. I immediately saw my lawyer, and asked him to send for the lease, and give me a legal opinion.
14. Before saying what took place with your lawyer, I want you to exhaust what took place between you and Mr. Blennerhassett?—He told me that he required £4,750 for his lease, plus improvements and goodwill, and that I had a right to improvements, and also a right of renewal. Of course, I gave him no decided answer then, because it was my intention to go over the land and value his improvements. Later on I went to Eltham, saw my lawyer, and informed him that I liked the place, that I would go over the place and value all the improvements, and that in the meantime he should send to Wellington and get the lease and give me his opinion on it. I went over the property, and carefully valued every improvement, and the improvements totalled up to between £3,000 and £4,000, or approximately a little over £6 per acre. On my return to my lawyer's office again I told him of the value of the improvements. The improvements would leave them not quite £1,000 for the goodwill. His reply to me was that he had looked over the lease, and that it was all right, and that if I got it for that sum—namely, £4,750—I had, actually speaking, a “snip.” I saw Mr. Coutts, the Government Valuer, and in speaking of improvements he said, “Yes, Mr. Poole, anything that enhances the productiveness of the land is an improvement, and will be paid for.”
15. What did you do then?—I saw a friend of mine who had been living in the district for many years, and in speaking to me on the subject he said, “Yes, a Mr. Stewart who took a section on the road wrote to Sir Donald McLean with regard to improvements, and Sir Donald McLean telegraphed back to him.” [*Mr. Bell objects to hearsay evidence being admitted.*] As it involved a large expenditure on my part, before I made that expenditure I resolved to get all the information I could in connection with the matter.
16. After your conversation with your friend what did you do?—I was satisfied with the information I had from Mr. Coutts that everything was correct, and I immediately closed with the bargain.