

57. Did you ever tell Mr. Wake that you thought you were getting a perpetual right of renewal?—No.
58. Did you ever tell Mr. Wake that you thought you were getting paid without limitation as to amount for improvements?—No, I never mentioned any of those things.
59. So that Mr. Wake, without knowing what you expected to get, told you you were all right?—Well, that is a curious question to put. There is nothing to be gained by that sort of question. Mr. Wake was satisfied with the lease.
60. What do you say the improvements were worth at the time?—Between £3,000 and £4,000.
61. And what do you say you were paying for the goodwill?—Just about £1,000.
62. Is that what you estimated at the time?—Yes.
63. Have you got a good memory?—I do not say I have a good memory.
64. Are you certain you remember estimating that at the time?—I never made that statement at the time; I am mentioning that to you.
65. I asked you what the improvements were worth and what the goodwill was worth, and I asked you whether you made that estimate at the time?—Yes, I made that estimate at the time, decidedly.
66. Do you remember whether that was the estimate you made at the time?—Yes.
67. Are you quite certain?—Yes, quite sure.
68. Then, why did you tell the Lands Committee a different story, and give them different figures?—What figures did I give them?
69. Do you not remember what figures you gave in 1909?—No.
70. I presume you remember the figures you gave when you took the lease; you would give the same in 1909. I will tell you the figures you gave the Lands Committee: "*Mr. Poynton.*" You gave £4,750 for this property?—I did." "How much of that was for the goodwill?—I suppose the goodwill was £600 or £700"?—Oh, yes, I might have said that.
71. Although it was not true?—A man does not tell a deliberate untruth. If every lapse should be considered an untruth, then a great many of us would be speaking untruths.
72. Well, I am testing your memory. You have been able to give us with extraordinary accuracy the very words used by two gentlemen in 1907. Now, as a matter of fact, do you know what the unimproved value of the property was at that time?—I do not.
73. Do you know what the unimproved value of the property was in 1909?—I do not. I have had the papers from the Government, but I do not remember the figures.
74. It appears from the evidence before the Lands Committee that the unimproved value at the time you purchased was £7,271?—Yes.
75. The question was discussed with you on that basis, and I suppose I may assume that was the unimproved value?—Yes, you may.
76. Now, £7,271 is worth about £363 a year?—Yes.
77. And in your lease there were eight and a half years to run?—Yes.
78. And in order to get that £363 a year the rent which you were to pay was £55 6s. a year?—Yes.
79. So that there was considerable goodwill when you take it over eight years and a half. Does it not seem to you that the goodwill was more than £1,000?—Yes.
80. Do you not think it possible you are overestimating your improvements?—I do not. As regards that, where the discrepancy in those figures may come in is in this way: that I estimated at the time the value of the heavy bush to equal £2 10s. per acre. Then the grassing, and no man can possibly sow less than 40 lb. of seed per acre, and that would come, at that rate of 10d. per pound, to £1 13s. Therefore you have £3 16s. per acre. I afterwards foolishly reduced it, and thus you may see the discrepancy which will bring it to some hundreds of pounds less.
81. Am I right in saying that when you took up this lease Mr. Wake and Mr. Blennerhassett were not the only two people you discussed the question of compensation for improvements with?—I discuss my business matters with very few. They were the only people interested with me in business matters, and the only people I would discuss that matter with except my sons.
82. Let me refer you to some more evidence given before the Lands Committee. You said, "I would point out further than that, that before I expended my all in this land I met a lot of men, and the consequence was that I made my inquiries surer." What have you got to say to that?—I have already said to you that I met my friend on the road, and he spoke about Sir Donald McLean. When I asked him about it he said, "Yes, you are perfectly correct, and so was Mr. Coutts perfectly correct, that all improvements would be paid for."
83. Is that the only explanation you have got to make?—Only; what more do you want?
84. There is only one other thing I want to refer you to. I understand you are one of the leaders of this movement?—I am. Not by my choice, but by choice of the people.
85. Now, I understand there is no desire to take the Native down—to defraud the Native in any way—to rob him of his birthright?—You are perfectly correct there, but where does their birthright come in here?
86. I understand that the lessees are taking what they consider to be the proper steps, and only what they consider to be the proper steps, to assert what they consider their rights?—Hear, hear!
87. Now, what would you say to a man who tried to use political influence to get this matter through?—I think that any means that we can take to keep these men upon the land who have brought Taranaki into the position they have—any legitimate means we have a perfect right to use. They are not dealing with people whose birthright it is: these people that are claiming this land have as much right to it as we have, and we have as much right to it as they have. They only hold it by occupation, by license; that is the only claim they have to-day. We are the men who have built the roads and bridges and put up the finest factories in the world. Are we to be