

119. If it was likely, do you say that Wake did not advise you that you had no right of renewal?—No, he did not advise me that.

120. Do you say he never advised you as to the improvements or as to the right of renewal?—He knew the value I put upon them myself, and his words were that it was a cheap thing.

GEORGE ALBERT MEHRTENS sworn and examined. (No. 25.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You are a farmer?—Yes.
2. And live where?—Auroa Road, Otakeo.
3. You are the owner of a lease of Section 51, Block I, Kaupokonui, under the Act of 1881?—Yes, of 125 acres or thereabouts.
4. What is your rent?—2s. 6d. per acre.
5. When did you acquire that land?—In September, 1908, in partnership with Richard Henry Watkins.
6. What did you pay for it?—£8 an acre.
7. You purchased it from Mr. L. Fleming?—Yes.
8. Did you see the lease before you purchased?—Yes.
9. Did you read it?—Yes.
10. And what did you think after you read it?—We thought we had full improvements, with no limitation, and at the end of our term that it would be put up to public auction.
11. Now, when you purchased, what were the improvements worth?—About £3 an acre.
12. What are they worth now?—About £8.
13. If you had been aware of the limit of £5 an acre on your improvements, would you have added the improvements that you did?—We would not have purchased.
14. Did you consult any lawyer in connection with your lease?—No.
15. Who prepared the transfer of the lease?—Mr. Bennett, a lawyer.
16. But you did not consult him?—No.
17. When did you become aware of your true position?—Some two months after Tinkler's case was decided.
18. You do not suggest that any one misled you?—No, no more than what we read in the lease. It says in the lease that we were to get compensation for substantial improvements according to the regulations, but at that time I did not know anything about either one Act or the other. Our opinion was that if we got all substantial improvements at the end of our term, that if it was to be put up for public auction we had every chance of a renewal, as it states in the lease further down that if it is not bid for successfully it has to be arranged between the present holder and the Public Trustee.
19. You are still on the land?—Yes, and intend to stay there if they will let me.
20. How long have you to run yet?—Three years from the 1st July.
21. What do you do on the land?—Dairying.
22. Is it fully improved yet?—No, not by a long way.
23. It requires more improvement yet?—I consider that to make a practical dairy farm and a good home on it I will have to spend another £5 an acre.
24. That is for good farming?—Real good dairy-farming, and then I do not count on putting manure into the ground. I think if I put that in, and I have long enough to run, I will get the benefit of it.
25. Was your section bush land?—Heavy bush originally. When I went there it was ring-fenced and nothing else, and covered with logs. Since then I have stumped from 25 to 30 acres, and laid it down freshly in grass. I also built a house and sheds, subdivided it into nine paddocks, and built a big dam worth £30, and other minor improvements necessary on a dairy farm.
26. You know something about dairy-farming?—Yes.
27. How long have you been on the land farming?—Seven years.
28. What is the effect on this bush land after a period?—At the present time mine all wants stumping, ploughing, clearing, and regrassing. It is growing into Cape-weed or hock-weed and moss. The grass has been down twenty-seven years.
29. Is that common to bush land?—All round my district it is. All the bush land practically wants renewing, and it is not possible to do it without stumping and ploughing. It means at least an expenditure of £5 an acre.
30. What is the effect of that? Does that bring it into good dairy pasture?—Yes.
31. If it is not done, what happens to that land?—Well, at the present time I can milk fifty cows on my place, but in five years' time if it is let run as it is I think I would be only able to milk perhaps thirty, and then not feed them well. It will just grow into weeds and moss.
32. *Mr. Kerr.*] Will it revert into light wood?—No, the cattle will keep that down.
33. *Mr. Welsh.*] If you treat that land in the way it ought to be treated, in five years' time what will you have?—I think the result will be that I will be able to carry perhaps sixty cows instead of fifty on my 125 acres. By improving it I can make the carrying-capacity much more than it is at the present time.
34. Now, in that £5 an acre which it would cost to do the best for that land do you include anything for manures?—No.
35. Why not?—Because, supposing I got a new lease, if I put manure into it I think I will reap the benefit.
36. But it does not mean you will spend money on manures?—No. If I put manure into the land I am going to keep more stock, and I will get the benefit of that. If I were grazing sheep on my farm the land would keep better, and would graze more after, say, three years, than