

42. That was why you considered it was better to sell it for cash?—Yes.

43. There was valuable lime on it, and it was better to dispose of it for cash?—Yes, that was one reason.

44. You say you do not know whether smaller areas have been let under renewable lease?—I do not know. I cannot recollect any in the meantime. There may or may not be.

45. Have you received any letters on the matter outside the reports from the Commissioner?—Nothing that I know of. Any letter I have received will be on the file.

46. You saw a letter from Mr. Holton which was sent to the Minister of Lands in connection with the matter?—Yes.

47. In that letter, dated 23rd December, 1912, it states, "I venture to appeal to you to ask if you could advise the Land Board to allow me to retain possession of this section of 8½ acres on any lease they choose to give, and I am willing to pay an increased rent for it, or to allow it to be transferred to my son, Charles Holton, who is landless." Would he have a better chance or opportunity of getting it for cash than if let on renewable lease?—He would have a better chance for cash because he could go as far as he liked.

48. In letting land on lease, do you try and give every advantage to the small man?—Yes, we always consider the small man as well as the big man.

49. In your opinion do you think selling for cash is giving the small man an equal chance with the man in better circumstances?—Yes, I do not see what is to prevent him, especially under the Cheviot auctions, where he only pays one-quarter down, a quarter in a month, and the balance remains for five years. I think the poor man has a very good chance.

50. At auction do you think a man has got the chance of getting land at as reasonable a price as he would under the renewable lease?—I do not think he would get it at just as low a price. The object of auction is to get a fair price for the land, and that is all we want.

51. Was it your idea to get a higher price for the land?—I wanted to get a fair price for the land.

52. Is that one of the things that guides you in connection with the administration of the Lands Department?—Yes, to get a fair value.

53. To get a high price or a fair price for the land, is that the first consideration?—That is one consideration.

54. You wrote this letter to the Minister of Lands, dated 2nd June, 1913: "Referring to the attached letter from Mr. G. W. Forbes, M.P., I have to inform you that the above area has been withheld from sale hitherto on account of its containing limestone-deposits; it has not, however, been formally reserved, and may therefore be disposed of under Part IX of the Land Act, 1908, which deals with the Cheviot Estate. There is a permanent reserve of 3 acres of limestone land adjoining Section 20, which is considered by the Crown Lands Ranger to be ample for any requirements for lime in that part of the district. The section consists of land of special value and will be keenly competed for. I have therefore to recommend that it be sold for cash by public auction instead of on renewable lease as suggested by the Canterbury Land Board, and that Mr. Forbes be informed accordingly." In that letter you give one of the reasons for the sale of this land?—I have already answered that question.

55. You understand clearly that there is plenty of limestone for all requirements?—I understand there are 3 acres of limestone.

56. You would not claim to have any local knowledge at all?—No.

57. And you would take the Crown Land Ranger's decision on the matter as being quite enough to go on?—It might be sufficient for a number of years, but not enough for all time.

58. You would not know that from your own knowledge?—I would know it from the area.

59. When you have the Crown Lands Ranger, but it might be a mountain?—Not in 3 acres.

60. When you have the report of the Crown Lands Ranger and he says it is ample and you have no local knowledge yourself, you evidently think that is sufficient to put in the letter to the Minister of Lands, "There is a permanent reserve of 3 acres of limestone land adjoining Section 20 which is considered by the Crown Lands Ranger to be ample for any requirements for lime in that part of the district." You further say, "The section consists of land of special value, and will be keenly competed for"?—Yes.

61. You further say, "I have therefore to recommend that it be sold for cash by public auction instead of on renewable lease"?—Yes.

62. Do you think it is in the interests of the small man to deal with that piece of land in that way?—I do not think I am tied to the interests of the small or big man. I want to get a fair value.

63. The reasons you give in this letter, and approved by Mr. Massey, are, "The section consists of land of special value and will be keenly competed for." That means that a high price would be given for that land?—I want to get a fair price.

64. Do you not think that would block the man of small means getting an opportunity?—No, not necessarily. As I understand the Cheviot auction system it enables a man to come in on very fair terms.

65. Do you not find that at auction high prices are given for the value of the land where the competition is keen?—In some cases that is so.

66. Do you think that is fair that a man should have to give a higher price than the land is worth?—To get a fair value, that is all I ask for.

67. You think in making that recommendation it was in the interests of small settlement. You can quite see, can you not, that this gives Mr. Holton, who has written as being anxious to retain the land, a better opportunity than if let under the renewable lease?—I did not know whether Mr. Holton had 5s. in the world.

68. You know that that would give him an opportunity of competing?—Certainly it would give any one the opportunity of competing.