

87. Are you a particularly suspicious man?—I do not know. You must use your own judgment about that.

88. Do you regret having written this letter?—I do not think so.

89. After having made inquiry and having heard all these statements, you are still of opinion that improper influence was brought to bear on the permanent head of the Department or on myself in order to induce the Land Board to rescind its decision?—I do think so.

90. What reason have you for thinking so?—The surrounding circumstances of the case.

91. Have you any direct or indirect evidence? I want you to bring it out?—No, I have none.

92. Nothing at all but the merest suspicion?—That is all.

93. Had the fact of your being dropped off the Canterbury Land Board anything to do with your writing this letter?—I do not think so.

94. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] How long were you a member of the Canterbury Land Board?—For four years.

95. Had any of those Cheviot sections originally leased by adjoining owners been applied for during your term of office under similar circumstances to this Gore Bay section?—I do not remember. There may have been.

96. Were there not a number of sections at Mina Township rented by some adjoining owner?—In some cases—not in all.

97. What was the method of removing them from the leases held by adjoining owners and putting them up for selection?—They were resumed in the ordinary way at the expiry of the lease.

98. There was no difference between those cases and the case in question?—No; but they had been let under a different tenure. They had been let on a longer tenure, of seven or ten years. This was a year-to-year lease.

99. Would you consider that a year-to-year lease was more likely to be terminated by the Board—or, rather, that the reasons for giving such a lease were more likely in the opinion of the Board to lead towards an early termination if there was a demand for small sections in the district?—Naturally, I should think. A piece of land that you let on a temporary lease like that you can resume without any feeling of hurting the other man, I think, because he ought always to understand that he holds it on that condition.

100. Do you think that the Land Board, in arriving at a decision to temporarily lease that section, had anything in view in not giving a longer tenure? What reason had the Board in letting the section on a year-to-year tenancy rather than on a longer lease as with the Mina sections?—It was never interfered with. A good many leases on Cheviot had been carried on in the same way. The Mina sections were bigger, and, of course, men wanted a more secure tenure in order to work them.

101. But you are of opinion that the object in this case would be to wait for a demand for small sections: that is what I understood you to say?—I could hardly say for what reason, because it was long before I was on the Board.

102. You would assume that the intention was to settle the land in question when a demand set in?—I presume so.

103. Were you on the Board when the Under-Secretary of Lands communicated to the Board his recommendation to sell the section?—No, it was after I left.

104. Was the Canterbury Land Board unanimous in agreeing to a renewable lease for this section?—Perfectly unanimous.

105. Why did they alter their opinion when the Under-Secretary of Lands communicated his recommendation to the Board?—They did not alter it while I was on the Board.

106. Is it a common matter for a Land Board to alter its decision on being communicated with by the head of the Department to adopt another system of tenure?—I never remember its being done with us while I was on the Canterbury Land Board.

107. Is this the only case?—The only case I remember.

108. *Mr. Nosworthy.*] Do you not think that the man who approached you first with regard to this section would stand a better chance of getting it at auction than he would if he went to the ballot?—Yes, if he has got the money, probably he would.

109. What is the good of a man taking up land if he has not any money?—I do not know.

110. Do you think it would be a good thing for the State?—I do not know anything about that.

111. *Mr. MacDonald.*] When the decision was given to change the method of disposal of the section from the renewable lease to sale for cash, you were under the impression that some influence had been brought to bear either on the Under-Secretary or the Minister to have that alteration made?—Yes.

112. When the Land Board come to a decision as to the most suitable tenure on which to offer land, whether it be renewable lease or sale for cash, decisions are very seldom altered by the Under-Secretary?—With regard to selling by cash, we have had very few transactions of that kind since I have been on the Board. There has been very little land sold by auction, excepting the pastoral leases.

113. After the Ranger's report and the Board's decision that the best method to dispose of the section so as to give everybody a chance would be to let it on renewable lease, you came to the conclusion when the Board received word that the Department's intention was to sell by public auction, that influence must have been used to bring about that decision of the Department?—Yes. You see the first suggestion was that the section should be let on a short term. That came while I was on the Board.

114. *Mr. Anderson.*] You are not in the habit, are you, of believing all the rumours you hear in the street?—I do not think I am different from anybody else about that.