

6. You have been valued on the adaptability of the land and not on its use?—Yes. The place would run more stock than I have on it if it was cleared up. It means that we must do something with it, for we could not keep it at this valuation. It is unfair that people who use their land for sheep farms should be valued on the basis of summer resorts.

7. Did you offer the land to the Government?—I offered half to the Government. I said I wanted a place to live in. They said they did not want it at the time. A good many more would have come down, but they did not know anything about the Commission sitting.

8. *The Chairman.*] I suppose their cases are much like yours—that their land is valued for a different purpose from that for which it is used?—That is so. One man cut up 100 acres into sections, and in ten years he had sold about five.

9. Your case is a very representative case, and any number of witnesses would not carry it much further. Has the county reduced rates all round?—Yes. The rates on my property come to £23—that is, to the Government and the local body. The Government tax is £9 12s. 1d.—1d. in the pound; and, I think, £13 or £14 to the Waitemata County Council for rates.

10. *Mr. Campbell.*] The 100 acres that the man you referred to cut up, was it cut into 5-acre sections?—Some were 3 acres and some were 4 acres. One of those sold was a 5-acre section.

11. *Mr. Rutherford.*] How much standing bush have you?—About half of it is in standing bush. The valuer said that if it had all been under standing bush he would have valued it at more, because people would come out to the ranges more and more.

12. Has all the kauri been cut out?—Oh, yes.

13. How much is in grass?—50 to 75 acres.

14. What stock do you carry?—Six cattle, two horses, and about fifty sheep. It is just the gullies that have been cleaned out. The hills are left.

15. *The Valuer-General.*] Do you know when the revision of values of Titirangi took place previous to the one we are considering?—I do not know any date.

16. It was in 1909, five years ago?—I asked at the county office this morning, and the girl said it was three years ago.

17. Your case is an instance of where the land is undergoing a transition stage. It is only about ten miles from the city, and the Department looks at the matter very differently now from what it did before. It is a hard case for you, of course, but we must value on a fair selling-value, and Auckland people are favouring that locality for summer residences?—There is only part of my land I could sell. My land is sloping down to the west. People who go there for residence sites want a view, and would not buy sections that forced them to build in a gully.

18. Did you know when you were at the Assessment Court that if an owner is dissatisfied with the valuation fixed by the Court he has a right, within fourteen days, to offer the property to the Government at his own valuation, and the Government must either take it over at that valuation or reduce their valuation to it?—No, I did not.

EDWARD CHARLES FALWASSER examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a land agent and licensed Native interpreter, Queen Street, Auckland. The matter I wish to bring before the Commission is a property in Greymouth, in the South Island. I visited Wellington a few days ago on behalf of several of the Native owners of this property. It is the Greymouth Township (Mawhero Native Reserve). I interviewed the Public Trustee, with a view to borrowing money, or formulating some scheme of borrowing money, on this property on behalf of the Natives. They are all fairly well-educated people, and feel that they could do better if they converted the property into cash and went into farming, or something of that sort. The property is under twenty-one years' renewable lease. Some little time back the old leases expired. The properties were valued by the Valuation Department, and put up by auction with an upset price. In the event of the lessees objecting to pay the upset price the matter of rents is adjusted by arbitration. The valuer appointed by the Valuation Department is a tenant in the township, and a big one, I understand. The tenants refused to pay the price, and the matter was referred to arbitration. I understand there is a regulation that in the event of such a thing happening, the Public Trust Office appoints one arbitrator, the tenants one, and I am not just quite sure how the other is appointed. The Public Trust Office can appoint their original valuer as arbitrator, so that there are two representatives of the people who are in occupation of the properties. The price that they assessed is in some cases $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and I think the average runs at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., on the original valuation of the Valuation Department. You are aware that the intention is always that 5 per cent. on the interest of the Natives, or lower as the case may be, should be paid. Although it is only a matter of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., it is a very big matter to the Natives. The Native interest in the Greymouth Township—the minimum, I think—is something like £320,000. I intended to bring the matter before Parliament, with a view to getting for the Natives the right to dispose of their interests, but it was too late in the session for anything to be done. In the matter of the valuation where so much is involved, more particularly in Native townships, the officer representing the Valuation Department should not be selected from the district. The man who was appointed local valuer is, I understand, Mr. Adams, an auctioneer holding a very big interest in the township. This gentleman, again, is appointed by the Public Trust Office as an arbitrator. He therefore holds a dual position, and the tenants have two representatives on the arbitration body. Of course, it is not the work of the Valuation Department; but that is the fact. It is only to be expected that the local valuer will do his best to keep his own rent down. The only other matter I wish to bring before you is the reversionary interest of the Natives in assessing the value of improvements in leases. It is only since the Act of 1909 that we could do anything in the way of purchasing Native lands. Previous to that, it was only dealt with