

39. *Mr. J. B. Fisher.*] Is it not a fact that a number of people, in spite of the Commissioners' report, were deprived of their sections after they got them?—No.

40. No other leases were granted except those recommended by the Commission?—None.

41. You say Palmerston Street was made previously?—Yes, by the Government, in 1872. Previous to Westport being declared a borough.

42. How was it made?—It was formed.

43. How formed?—It was sufficiently formed to get people's houses moved along. The Government Buildings were moved along Palmerston Street in 1872.

44. Was not the place a swamp?—It was, before formation.

45. Was not the street just a bush track, 12 feet wide in the middle?—That was the first road.

46. And ditches cut in the outside of the track?—Yes.

47. Was it not, as a matter of fact, one of the rudest forms of bush road constructed in the colony?—I have known much rougher roads.

48. As a matter of fact, has not property greatly depreciated in value since this lease?—I have said so, to some extent.

49. *Mr. O'Connor* (quoting from page 8 of the report of the Commission.) I want to ask you whether you consider that portion of the recommendation of the Commission has been adhered to?—Here is the form of lease referred to there. I consider the lease was, at the time, reasonable in its terms, and the rental fair.

50. I ask you whether, at the present time, taking into consideration the present value of property, these people pay a nominal rent, and have easy conditions?—I consider that all persons taking such leases must take them for better or worse. They must run their chance.

51. *Mr. W. J. Hurst.*] *Mr. O'Connor* wants to know your opinion upon the subject, taking the recommendation of the Commissioners as being made at the present time?—I do consider that the rents now charged are fair and reasonable; that they are nominal rents.

52. *Mr. O'Connor.*] How, then, do you account for the fact that the property in Westport shows no value?—I have already admitted that there is a depression, and people wanting to leave must make a sacrifice.

53. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Is it not a fact that the time has only just arrived when a considerable increase in the value of property may be expected from the opening of the railway and mines?—Yes; there is a reasonable prospect of a considerable rise. Greymouth has gone through the very same phase. Some time ago, rents in Greymouth on the Native reserves were reduced, owing to depression of trade, and a number of houses being uninhabited. Now, I am told, there is not an unoccupied house in Greymouth, and there is a decided improvement in the trade of the place.

54. Is it not a fact that several steamers have been ordered for Westport, and a considerable trade is expected alongside the wharf?—Captain Williams, of Wellington, has gone Home for steamers to trade there.

55. *Mr. O'Connor.*] Is it not a fact that private persons cannot get rent for their buildings—rent which they have to pay to the Government?—I have no knowledge of that.

56. Are you not aware that *Mr. Nahr* is paying for four sections for his private house?—I must decline answering a question of that kind.

57. I want to ask you whether, under conditions of the lease, some six or seven years of which have expired, any person in his senses could be expected to put up a permanent building on that ground?—Only four years have run, out of twenty-one years, and we have seen a good many persons put up buildings on a fourteen years' lease; but I dare say, whatever Government is in power at the time the leases fall in, will not object to make fair and reasonable terms for their renewal with the lessees.

58. *Mr. Macandrew.*] They would rather have the Government for a landlord than private individuals?—Yes; tenants get more latitude from the Government than from private persons.

WRITTEN Evidence furnished by *Mr. Thomas Mackay*, on Petition of Lessees of Westport Colliery Reserve. (Clauses 1 to 6 were answered on the 29th July.)

7. As regards the formation of the streets, this is incorrect. The main one—Palmerston Street—which divides the Colliery Reserve from the freehold side of the town, also Wakefield and Rintoul Streets, off it, on the Colliery Reserve or river side, were first formed by the Provincial Government in 1872. Brougham Street, leading to the railway-station, was also formed subsequently by the Government. Besides, in January, 1875, the Borough of Westport was endowed by Crown grant with the municipal reserve of 240 acres, for such purposes as the formation of streets, and drainage.

8. This is correct, as to the depreciation of the value of property; but that is due to the reaction that set in after the discontinuance of the Government expenditure in and around Westport, which, in seven years, amounted to £210,000; besides, the development of the coal mines did not keep pace with the progress and completion of the railway works. Further, a new township, near the mines at Waimangaroa, has sprung up, having four hotels and a population of about three hundred, which is principally a migration from Westport.

9. The rents of freehold sections in the main streets—which, according to situation, range from 7s. to £1 a foot frontage, on leases of not more than fourteen years to run, the buildings falling to lessor at the end of the term—have no doubt come down, for the reasons already given in answer to No. 8. And, as regards the rents on the municipal reserve, common report says that not a few of the Town Councillors and their friends are lessees, and they had the question of reduction of rents in their own hands.

10 and 11. Proceedings are, no doubt, threatened, to enforce the agreements for leases and payment of arrears of rents; but, apart from all other considerations, it would be unjust to those who have duly fulfilled their agreements, and paid their rents, not to do so; however, it has been intimated to several of the persons who so complain, that a recommendation will be made to the Government to accept the surrender of any agreement or lease which they may wish to give up, on the condition that all arrears of rent shall be paid up to the 30th June, 1881.