

43. Can you tell us anything about the purchasers there? You know this man, Watson?—Yes.
44. He is in possession of 2,384 acres?—Yes.
45. Is he in the employ of the firm at the present time?—No; he is on his deferred-payment land.
46. What is he doing with it?—I do not know. I am running sheep on it.
47. Then he is living on it, but it is still being used by you for station purposes?—Yes.
48. Has he made any arrangement with you as to terms?—Yes.
49. Have you any objection to state the terms?—No; he lets me run sheep on the ground provided I will pay his instalments. He has the right at any time to turn my sheep off, and I have the right at any time to discontinue paying his instalments—or rather the firm has.
50. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Could you claim your back payments if he turned you off?—Yes; I could claim all I had advanced for instalments.
51. *The Chairman.*] So long as you run your sheep on the land you pay the instalments for this man?—Yes.
52. And when they are turned off, or you take them off, that closes the account?—Yes; except that he returns all my money I have advanced as instalments.
53. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] And how about the land?—That is his.
54. *The Chairman.*] Then if he returns all the money he gets nothing for the use of the land by you?—Yes; he has received money to build a house, which he occupies. I supply him with rations, grain, poison, and plant for destroying rabbits. He sells the skins to whom he pleases. I undertake to purchase all skins he cannot sell elsewhere. He is making, I should think, £150 a year, some of which, I suppose, he is saving to complete his purchase.
55. In point of fact, you merely advance the money—it is merely advanced to be recovered?—That is so.
56. Do you know Robert Gibson?—No.
57. Or Robinson Webb?—I do not know him personally.
58. Do you know Dugald McEwen?—No.
59. William Wilson Francis, who has 4,000 acres, is he under any arrangement with you?—Yes.
60. Of what nature?—The same as that with Watson.
61. Then your sheep are still on that land?—I believe so. I have the right to put them there.
62. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Is there a written instrument?—Yes; to the effect exactly of what I have stated.
63. Have you got it with you?—No.
64. *The Chairman.*] You were at Christchurch when you were summoned?—Yes.
65. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You have no objection to place that instrument before the Committee?—Not the slightest, if I can get it.
- The Chairman.*] I shall have to ask you to telegraph for it.
66. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Is it registered?—No.
67. *The Chairman.*] Have you any arrangement with the brothers William and Charles Higgins?—Yes; the same as with Watson.
68. And McLean and Borthwick, do you know them?—Yes; but I have no arrangement with them.
69. Then the two Higginses, Watson and Francis, are all you have arrangements with?—Yes.
70. Their lands are not fenced at all?—Yes; there is a ring-fence round three sections, and Higgins has fenced by himself.
71. *Mr. Fulton.*] Were you present when the arrangements were made with the Silver Peak men?—Yes; I signed for the firm.
72. Did the proposition to enter into it emanate from the firm or from the men themselves?—It was at the wish of the men that it was entered into. The agreement was made three or four months ago. I had previously been advancing a great deal of money for poisoning rabbits, building, and fencing, &c., and the men asked me to make some agreement to show how they stood.
73. At whose suggestion, the men's or the firm's, was the arrangement entered into at first?—I think it was at the suggestion of the men.
74. You are not quite certain?—No; it was some time ago, and I cannot remember.
75. Take the more recent cases of Webb and some others. Were you present at the arrangement with them?—Yes; I was present at the arrangement to advance money.
76. From whom did the suggestion for that come—from the men or the firm?—Well, the men.
77. Which one of the men suggested it first?—Thomas Johnston was the first man who spoke to me about it. He asked me if I could help him to take up land on deferred payment. I told him I thought it would be a very good thing for him to do, and that I would find him money to pay his first instalment.
78. What security have you for its repayment?—None whatever.
79. Is there any arrangement or written agreement that the land should become the property of the firm at a future date?—Not the slightest agreement whatever with any one of the men.
80. Are these men, from what you know of them, likely to repay the amount?—I cannot say. I should think most of them would.
81. You have had considerable experience of Webb; is he a saving man?—Yes, of late years. He had at first a great drain upon him, as you know, but of late years he has saved money.
82. Is Johnston a man to save money?—No; I do not think he is. He has been unlucky.
83. Have you any reasonable prospect of recovering the money from him?—I should think so. I should think he would be able to pay it during ten years.
84. What means of making money has he on this land?—I presume he can buy sheep and put them on it,