

85. But only by repaying your money can he turn off your sheep?—I have only had sheep on it a few weeks.

86. The arrangement was made that you were to run your sheep on it?—There is no arrangement whatever with these Strath-Taieri men—only with the Silver Peak men.

87. Is there no arrangement to allow your sheep to run on the land?—Not the slightest.

88. Then the firm, just simply from good will, has advanced them money without security?—Partly from good will and partly because I knew the men a good many years, and I would rather have men I know to hold land around me than others.

89. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You say there is no engagement whatever with regard to the land passing to your firm in return for the advances?—None whatever.

90. Is there no understanding, direct or indirect, between the firm and any of the men as to the ultimate disposal of the land, failing the power of the men to fulfil their engagements with you or any one else?—No.

91. None whatever?—None whatever, either direct or indirect.

92. And your firm made these advances without any view to that ultimately?—They have no engagement.

93. But that is not an answer to the question. Did your firm make these engagements with a view to obtain this land in the future if the men failed in their engagements?—We could not do that. The men may fail at any time. It is impossible to make any engagement like that. The men can turn me off whenever they like, so it would be of no use attempting to make engagements like that even if I so wished.

94. Not at present, but when you get nearer the termination of the time?—Well, all that remains to be seen. I cannot foresee what is going to happen in fifteen years.

95. *The Chairman.*] Is the Committee to understand from you distinctly that the firm has no security whatever for the advances made?—None whatever.

96. And you think these Strath-Taieri men will be able to pay the instalments?—Well, they have paid one. I do not know the means of each.

97. Well, take Pearsall?—I know nothing about him, except that I believe he has some £1,000 or £1,200.

98. You do not know if he will be able to pay £700 a year?—No.

99. Is Johnston in a position to pay £300 a year?—Certainly, if he could borrow money. A great many persons have done the same thing. A shepherd of mine—Matheson—took up between four and five thousand acres, which he has fenced and stocked, and I do not believe he had above £1,000.

100. In this case you have advanced the money without security?—It is absolutely without security.

101. Some thousands have been advanced by the firm in that manner?—Somewhere about £2,000, I think.

102. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] When you made these advances in respect to any of these men, was it not with the understanding that the land was still going to be used for your sheep?—No.

103. In no case?—In no case.

104. But your sheep have been continually running there by agreement with these people?—Not by agreement. The licenses have not been issued, and I have not been told to take them off. I have received no notice, and, as the land would be unoccupied if I took the sheep off, I leave them on and keep the rabbits down.

105. As regards the Silver Peak land, was there any understanding or agreement at the time that you were to leave your sheep on it?—None whatever. Had no sheep on land when sold. I believe some of the men took up land because they could get it cheap with a view to sell it again. That has been done in several cases. At the last sale a man named Marshall was declared a purchaser of a section, and sold it at an advance of £50 before he left the room. The Board sanctioned the transfer. There are many ways in which men can take up land without holding it to make money.

106. *Mr. McMillan.*] If the Silver Peak men turn your sheep off, are they to pay up the whole of the advances you have made?—Yes.

107. Then, in that case, you would have had your sheep grazed for nothing up to that time?—Not quite, because I do not get any interest. In ten years the interest would be more than the rent. I charge them no interest whatever for any advances I make. I have advanced Francis over £1,200, so I am paying an actual rental of £120 a year. If he turns my sheep off I charge nothing for that.

108. Is your firm prepared to extend your liberal arrangements into other districts?—I am not prepared to say. I must consult my firm before I give any rash promises.

109. *Major Harris.*] If at any time you ceased to pay for Watson, would he be able to carry on?—I think so. Any one, I think, would take them up, because after five years they can sell, personal residence then being no longer compulsory. I have no doubt they would make a remarkably good thing of it.

110. *Mr. J. W. Thomson.*] You say you had no conversation with any of these men as to your firm purchasing their section?—What I said was that I could not undertake to remember any conversation I had had in the last five years. If you name any man I will try to remember.

111. Is there no understanding?—None whatever.

112. *The Chairman.*] What is the ordinary brand used by your firm?—V for the sheep, and circle y for the cattle.

113. Do you ear-mark them too?—Yes.

114. *Mr. J. McKenzie.*] You state you had no conversation with any of these men with a view to the firm becoming the purchaser of these lands?—No; I did not say that. I said I did not remember any conversation.