

449. Is there much of what you would call agricultural land in the country?—To all appearances it is all agricultural land. It is level, and watered most of the year with good streams. The bulk of the ground is thin soil, with shingle below.

450. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Did you acquire the runs by auction?—Yes.

451. Was there much competition?—Keen competition.

452. How close up to the selling price were the other competitors?—I could not say. I did not bid personally; my agent bid for me.

453. You had £2,000 capital, irrespective of the value of the sheep?—Yes, I had £2,000; but I had to buy the sheep from my father.

454. *Mr. McKenzie.*] The competition in your case came from a neighbour?—Yes, principally.

456. Did he get any of your father's country?—Yes; he got one block.

457. The run belonging to your father before the sale in 1882?—Yes.

458. Mr. Curry got one of the subdivisions?—Yes.

459. And what has been the result of his labours?—The result is that he has lost all his capital. He cannot even pay his rent this year.

460. *Mr. Whyte.*] You practically had £2,000, and 1,000 acres freehold?—I had no freehold. I had the command of the freehold. I leased the freehold and bought the stock, having to mortgage them to do so to the then value of them.

461. If you were compelled to abandon the leasehold, any other man coming in not having command of this 1,000 acres freehold could not give as much rent as you could?—He could give very near it. There are 500 acres of the freehold which I cultivate; the other 500 acres are not so good, and are unimproved.

462. A new tenant would be able to give very nearly as much as you could?—Nearly, so far as any interference with the freehold is concerned.

463. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Other portions of the run could be made to grow crops, as well as that which you have under cultivation?—Yes.

464. *Mr. Whyte.*] Would not the new tenant have to put up buildings?—Yes. All the buildings are on the freehold.

465. Therefore he could not afford to give quite so much as you?—He would only be put to the cost of building a shed and a hut. In my case the shed is in an inaccessible place. It would require to be shifted, but I cannot afford to do it.

466. In order to cultivate as you have done, would he not have to go to expense?—Yes; the 500 acres are cut into five paddocks.

467. The new tenant would be put to a lot of expense that you would not have to incur if you continued in occupation?—I would be glad to sell my interest in it to the new tenant at the Government valuation.

468. He would be handicapped as compared with you?—Yes.

469. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What rise would be required in the price of wool to enable you to carry on and retain your runs?—I have not made a calculation; but it would have to amount to between £500 and £600 per annum. That would be about 2d. per pound.

470. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Then it really resolves itself into a drop in the price of wool and stock?—Yes.

471. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What did you get for your lambs last year?—I did not sell any, but I sold four-year-old sheep at an average of 10s. 6d. each in 1885. The fall this year is nearly 50 per cent.

472. *The Chairman.*] You said that £500 or £600 per annum would be required?—Yes.

473. That would amount to somewhere about an increase to 10d. in the price of wool?—In wool and stock. Of course my surplus stock makes a considerable difference with me. If the wool rose, the stock would rise also.

474. *Mr. Whyte.*] Would not a rise in the price of mutton cause a rise in the price of sheep?—Yes, it would do so in the long run, but mutton has not risen in price yet.

475. *The Chairman.*] I am afraid the prospect of wool getting higher is very bad; what other relief would enable you to carry on?—The lowering of the rent.

476. To what extent?—I could run the country at 9d. for winter country, and 4d. for summer country. I believe I could make it pay at that per acre.

477. What average would that be?—7½d., about one-half what it is now, 14,000 acres out of the 21,000 being winter country.

---

Mr. FRANCIS C. FULTON in attendance, and examined.

478. *The Chairman.*] Will you be kind enough to make any statement you wish in support of the petition?—I am unfortunately not in a position to do so, as I have not seen the petition. It was signed for me by my representative in Dunedin.

[The Clerk read paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 of the petition.]

479. The petitioners pray simply for whatever relief is desirable?—I may say that I made a special application for relief some time ago to the Ministry, to see if they could help me, as mine, I thought, was an exceptional case. My runs are in a goldfield, and they are honeycombed with miners' holes and water-races. They are numbered 186 and 259, and adjoin the Waipori River and Lee Stream. The two runs consist of 56,000 acres, exclusive of the freehold. The loss in my case, in consequence of these miners' holes, is fully 10 per cent. more than it would be under ordinary circumstances. The loss arises from the rabbits, and the cattle the miners have on the run. They make a great outcry if I say anything about one or two cows; and I have always been in the habit of treating them as well as I could, as it was to my interest to do so. Around the edge of these diggers' holes has grown up verdure, and the miners' dogs going for the cattle rush the sheep in numbers into the