

391. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Albury, Three Springs, and the Levels were the three properties?—Yes; but I was only interested in the Levels.

392. *Mr. Reeves.*] How much of the sales was the Levels land, should you say?—I suppose there might be about 8,000 acres; I would not speak positively, but it was something like that.

393. What was the nature or quality of the land?—It was purely pastoral. All the ploughable land had been selected long ago. The bulk of this land was steep faces, and some of it full of stones and rocks, and there was a good bit of river-bed. There was about ten miles of river-bed from the Cave to about two or three miles above Albury, where there were very steep places. I do not suppose there was one portion of it ploughable; just very small patches here and there.

394. It was certainly not to be described as good agricultural land?—It could not be so.

395. Should you call it even first-class pastoral land?—It is good pastoral sheep-country.

396. Should you think it the sort of land that would pay a mere individual to take up and work?—Only if he could get a good-sized block of, probably, 1,200 to 2,000 acres at least.

397. You would certainly not say, then, that it would pay a man to take it up as a speculation; to buy and not work it himself; to allow it to lie?—He might take it up as a speculation, in the expectation of selling it to a neighbouring farmer or landowner. I know that sections—and on that same block, I believe—have been taken up by speculators; because I have been offered sections by them for cash.

398. Do you know Mr. C. H. Orbell?—Yes.

399. What is he?—He is manager of the Levels estate.

400. For the company?—Yes.

401. He was an applicant at that time?—Yes.

402. Have you any idea what land he applied for; was it on the Levels estate?—Yes.

403. Who is Mr. P. Patullo?—He is also an employé of the company.

404. He applied for land at that sale?—Yes.

405. What land did he apply for?—I think he applied for several sections at the Levels.

406. Who is Mr. D. McQueen?—He is an employé of the company.

407. Where?—At the Levels

408. Is he the clerk?—Yes.

408A. Did he apply for land at that sale?—Yes.

409. Land on the Levels, I think?—Yes.

410. Who is George Lyall?—He is an overseer at the Levels.

411. In the employ of the company?—Yes.

412. He applied for land at that sale?—Yes.

413. Land at the Levels?—Yes.

414. Who is Mr. F. Dickson?—He is a shepherd at the Levels.

415. In the employ of the company?—Yes.

416. He applied for land at that sale?—I believe so.

417. And the land was at the Levels?—Yes.

418. Who is Mr. W. T. Hook?—I think he is manager for Mr. Perry.

419. He applied for land at that sale, I think?—I suppose he did.

420. Was the land at the Levels?—I think so.

421. There were also Mr. D. McLean and Mr. J. A. Gracie—who are they?—They are auctioneers in Timaru.

422. They applied for land at that sale too, I think?—I think so.

423. Was the land on the Levels?—Yes.

423A. And Mr. G. F. Clulee, did he apply at that sale on the Levels?—Yes.

424. Did you know that these men were going to apply for land before the sale took place?—Yes; I knew they were going to apply, and also a good many other men in the neighbourhood.

425. Had you any written communication before the sale with any of them?—I had not.

426. Had you any verbal communication?—Well, there was a good deal of talk about the sales with this man and with that man: men not connected with the company, and some who were, and all that sort of thing. There was nothing else talked of for a day or two before the sale, as to who was going to apply and who was not going to apply, and so on.

427. You probably had a chat with some of them; were there any of them to whom you had not spoken, to whom you are sure you did not speak?—I think possibly there were some of them.

428. Could you name any of them with whom you are certain you did not speak on the subject before the sale?—Well, if you mean with reference to asking them to apply for the land—

429. Oh, no, I just mean any conversation?—I was about Timaru for a week or so before the sale took place, and met a great many people, and the land-sale was the general topic of conversation. I could not speak for two minutes with a man without talking about it. I might have had some talk with one or two of them, but I will not say that I had.

430. You knew of their intention to apply, and you might have had some conversation, or you did have some conversation, with some of them; you might have talked with any of them?—Yes.

431. You did not write to them, or any of them?—No.

432. Now, do you believe that these employés of yours—are you prepared to say that they did not apply for this land in the company's interest?—Well, I do not know; I did not ask them to apply.

433. Do you believe that they applied solely in their own interest?—I never asked them.

434. As a matter of opinion, do you think they did apply solely in their own interest?—I do not know. I am sure that I could not express a decided opinion upon it.

435. Do you decline to express an opinion?—I fancy they applied expecting to get some benefit from the result of their applications.