

holder, who had leased the land from the Crown. They were known to be the hands on the station, such as shepherds, ploughmen, fencers, &c.

477. *Mr. Rhodes*: What year was that in, do you recollect?—I do not recollect the year.

478. Was it under the present Minister of Lands?—No. I should prefer to make my statement now, and will answer any questions you may put afterwards. As I said before, the upset price of the sections was 30s., and they were bid variously up to £4 per acre. The applications, as you are aware, were made under a declaration, which was one of the necessary conditions in applying for the land; and the persons, except one, who succeeded in purchasing, were said to have made their declarations before the son-in-law of the previous runholder, who is a Justice of the Peace.

479. *Mr. Cowan.*] What was his name?—Edward Herbert.

480. He was a Justice of the Peace?—Yes. The previous runholder was Mr. James Smith, of Greenfield, the gentleman who held Run 106 previous to its being cut up into these small sections. I may say that at the time it caused a great sensation in the district when it became known that the land had been taken up and occupied by the hands on the station. The biddings were in excess of the value of the land. I have been over the land since, and in every case there was the one construction of fence (that is, wire fencing), and all on the same principle. They were also in all cases of the same quality of wire. Anyhow, it had all come up to one order. In some instances I found two or more holdings enclosed by one fence. In paying up at the sale the amount due by these parties on account of their purchases was paid by Mr. Herbert, the son-in-law of Mr. James Smith, the runholder. It was paid by his cheque. The matter some time afterwards came before the Waste Lands Board of Otago, and the supposed dummies gave evidence in favour of their employer. There was one important witness, however, who could not be got at the time, although considerable search was made for him. He was afterwards found in some part, I think, of South Canterbury, or in that neighbourhood, in the bush, having apparently hanged himself. I think the name of that man was Mr. Reid, but I am not quite certain.

481. He was one of the successful applicants?—Yes; but he had left his land, and had gone elsewhere. He was being looked for to give evidence at the time of this particular inquiry I have referred to. Well, the Government of the day, apparently desirous of obtaining what information they could on the matter, employed Detective Walker of Christchurch to procure what evidence he could from those concerned in the district. His report, which I have read, has been handed to the Government, and is, I think, conclusive, so far as it goes. That is to say, he only took evidence up to a certain point. His work was not finished, and he was not called upon by the Government to complete it. The Solicitor-General was asked by the Government to go through the papers and make a report. I have also read his report. He is of opinion that, from the evidence already taken, if it was possible to get one or more of the alleged dummies to become Queen's evidence, there might be a case of conspiracy against, I think, John Martin Smith, son of the runholder. I may say that a year or two ago many letters from parties interested in this matter were received, desiring that an inquiry should be instituted by Parliament; and I have had several from some of the dummies requesting an inquiry.

482. *The Chairman.*] Admitting that he was a dummy?—Yes; he admits being a dummy, and he was employed by the firm of Smith and Son. There are three names in all. One is Alexander Wymer.

483. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] He is the man who signed this petition?—Yes; he is at the head of the petition, and John Gilliland. I think there is also another name, Gladstone Robinson. He is not living in the district now. I am informed he is living in the Clutha District. I know from their own showing that two were dummies, and also that they were in the employ of Smith and Sons, and that they were successful bidders at the auction at which I was present. I think Mr. Gladstone Robinson was also one, but am not quite certain. Now, these parties desire to give evidence. I may read you the letter dated 3rd July, from Gilliland. (Letter read.) Last year and the previous year I had letters from a number of settlers who felt very much aggrieved at being outbid in this manner. I do not know that I can say much more on the subject. I know, not from my own personal knowledge, but from sworn evidence, that, in the cases I have mentioned to the Committee, all the improvements were furnished by Smith and Sons, and all the crops were taken away by them.

484. *Mr. Cowan.*] Where was this sworn evidence given?—In the Supreme Court. One of the cases had reference, I think, to dummyism, but I am not quite sure, and was in connection with this Mr. Wymer, but when it had proceeded to a certain point the case was withdrawn by consent of Wymer and James Smith and Sons. The papers about this case are, I believe, in the hands of the Government, together with the Judge's notes referring to that trial. The Government paid Detective Walker to go round and collect evidence. Mr. Haggett gave an opinion in Dunedin, also the Solicitor-General, as I have already stated. These are all with the papers, I believe, in the hands of the Government. Now, I desire that the Committee should have full confirmation of all that I have stated, and a great deal more which I do not feel myself called upon to state. But everything is so patent and so glaring, especially with regard to the fencing, &c. Although pressed to make an inquiry, the Government has caused none to be made up to the present time. I should also like to say this: That these sections which I referred to as varying in price at auction up to £4 per acre are now coming within the scope of the Selectors' Land Revaluation Act, and will be before the Government when the proper time comes. A reduction is recommended by the valuer to 30s. or 35s. I have a perfect knowledge of what I am speaking, as I have seen the papers at the Waste Land Board's Office, Dunedin. (To Hon. Minister of Lands): I do not suppose you have received them yet?

*Hon. Mr. Richardson*: No; not yet.

*Witness*: I would like to impress upon the Committee the absolute necessity in the cause of justice of these men, viz., Messrs. Gilliland, Wymer, and Robinson, being examined before the