

543. It was only the fact of there being a person who was willing to give £100 bonus that induced you to go into it?—Yes; that was actually the inducement.

544. Outside of that, you would not have applied?—No.

545. Supposing you had been offered a sufficient sum to have made what you thought a good bargain, would you have been prepared to transfer it if you found, on inquiry, that it would be a better bargain than keeping it?—I dare say I would, after inquiry; but I was quite prepared to take up the land if it was good enough.

546. If it would have paid you better to have done so, to sell it?—Yes; I would have done so.

547. Of course you have seen the names of some of those who have gone in?—I only knew the immediate few with whom I was acquainted—Ellison, Duncan, and myself.

548. According to the report of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, it appears that sixty-five applications were sent in on behalf of people for this block. Do you think this rumour *re* bonus had the effect of causing a number of applications more than would have been ordinarily?—I should think it would; I do not know. It did in my case.

549. In reply to the Chairman, you said that you went into this as a speculation, just as a great many more went into it. Are you not aware that the law is against speculation of this kind, as it at present stands?—I said that I was quite prepared to go on with the land, if I found on inquiry it was good enough.

550. You said you were prepared to part with it if you got a good bargain. I want to tell you, it is not your special case we want to get at, but all cases?—If I could have done better with the land by selling it than I could have done by holding it, I should have parted with it.

551. Of course, that is the point. Supposing you had been successful, and parted with it, do you not consider that you would be shutting out somebody else who would have been prepared to go and live upon it?—He would hardly give a bonus as a speculation, but only in event of his being a *bona fide* occupier. I should think it would have been very much better to have put it up to auction.

552. That is one of the things we want to get at: Whether the present system is the best one, or whether it would be necessary to make a change in the law?—The land was evidently put up at considerably less than its value. The upset price was 15s. an acre, and the land at the back was taken up afterwards at 25s.

553. *Mr. Rhodes.*] As I understand you, there was no understanding with Mr. Duncan or Mr. Baker?—No, nothing whatever; I had no understanding with any one, verbal or implied.

554. *The Chairman.*] I understand you to say that you really applied for this land as a speculation, and not for your own use and benefit, as in the words of the Act?—I can only repeat what I said before.

555. That is, you mean, had it not been that you heard that there was a prospect of selling it to advantage you would not have been an applicant?—I do not think I would. It was the day before the application closed that Mr. Duncan, who is a close personal friend of mine, met me and told me of this, that he himself was going in for it. He advised me to put in an application for it. I had not very much time to consider what I should do with it. Had I drawn it, I should have made further inquiries in connection with it.

GUSTAV HERMANN WEBER, sworn and examined.

556. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Weber?—Mercantile clerk in Napier.

557. You were an applicant some little time ago, were you not, for Section No. 1, Block XIV., Woodville?—Yes.

558. Under what system was that block to be taken up?—On perpetual lease; and at the end of six years I had to complete certain improvements, and then I had the right of buying it up.

559. How did you come to apply for this section yourself?—Well, I heard from my agents in Napier that it was a good thing to go in for, and I applied for that reason.

560. What is the size of the section?—It is about 300 acres; or 295 acres, marked on the map.

561. Bush land?—Yes; all bush land.

562. Did you apply for that section with the intention of taking it up for your own personal occupation?—Yes, I did.

563. Was it suggested to you by anybody else that you should apply for this section for anybody else?—No, it was not.

564. Have you had any conversation with anybody who suggested that you should apply for it, or that you should buy it?—No.

565. You had, of course, the regular declaration required by the Act with regard to it?—Yes.

566. There were a large number of applicants for it, were there not?—Yes; I believe there were.

567. Do you know any of the persons that applied?—I know about four or five of them, that is all.

568. I notice amongst them the names of a considerable number of females. I will read out one or two of them you might possibly know. There is Helen Alexandra Ellison?—Yes; I know her.

569. That is the wife of Mr. Charles Weber, merchant, of Napier?—Yes.

570. I notice, again, the names of John Peebles and Jane Anne Peebles. Do you know either of them?—No.

571. The section fell eventually to Mr. Sowry, I think?—So I heard; but I do not know for certain. I did not trouble about it.

572. Then you say positively that you applied for this section not directly or indirectly for the use of any other person or persons whomsoever?—Yes; I can say that.

573. No one offered you a premium for this section in the event of your being the successful applicant?—No.