

574. Did you hear in Napier of such being the case?—No, I did not.

575. *Mr. Smith.*] I would ask Mr. Weber this: You said in reply to the first question of the Chairman that you applied for the section on the recommendation of your agents. Who were your agents?—Messrs. Baker and Tabuteau.

577. Did they ask you to go in for this block?—No.

578. You say they recommended you. In what way—verbally, or by letter?—Verbally; Mr. Tabuteau is a personal friend of mine. I met him in the street, and he told me such a thing was coming on, and I might just as well apply for it. I saw that I could afford to do so, and I went in for it.

579. But he told you that it was likely to be a good speculation if you got it?—Yes.

580. Did you know at that time that Mr. Baker, one of the firm, was also going in for it himself?—No.

581. Did you know since?—No.

582. Did you intend to go and reside on that block, supposing that you had been successful?—I would have fulfilled all the improvements, and then I would have seen how I could arrange it. I could not tell for certain whether I could reside on it or not.

583. You had not made up your mind whether you would go up and live on it or not?—No.

584. Supposing you had been the successful applicant, and your agents had told you that you could have got a considerable bonus on what you paid for it, would you have put it in the market?—Yes; as soon as I had completed the purchase of the section, and I had a good offer, I most probably would have sold it.

585. What I want to get at is: At the time or immediately after the sale, supposing you drew the section, and your agents said to you, "We can get some one to take this off your hands at a considerable increase," would you have been quite prepared to let it go?—No, I would not.

586. Did you ask your agents previously to look out for a block for you?—No, I did not.

587. This was your first application, and you did it at the recommendation of your agents. Did you put in the application through your agents, or direct?—I put it in through my agents.

588. And, virtually, you applied for this block at the request of your agents, Messrs. Baker and Tabuteau?—No, not at the request, on the recommendation.

589. And they acted as your agents in the matter?—Yes.

590. You read the newspapers, I suppose?—Yes.

591. The *Hawke's Bay Herald*, for instance?—Yes.

592. There was a statement in that paper that a member of the Land Board, Mr. Rechab Harding, had said that an offer had been made of a certain sum to any person who would have applied for that section?—No. It is the first I have heard of it. I did not see that paper.

593. You did not read the account of the Land Board proceedings when you were an unsuccessful applicant?—I do not remember it. I might have read it.

594. Who told you that you were an unsuccessful applicant?—Through my agents. As soon as it was over I rang up on the telephone to find out.

595. Virtually, you were entirely guided by your agents in this application?—No. I read all the particulars, and understood the whole thing, before I went in for it.

596. Suppose your agents had not recommended you, you would not have gone in?—No. If they did not recommend me, I would not have gone in.

597. I notice in the list of applicants there is a Miss Hilda Anne Weber?—She is a sister of mine.

598. Can you tell how she came also to go in for the same section?—No.

599. Did you not converse with her about it?—No; but I knew she had gone in for it.

600. Who told you she had gone in for it?—She told me herself.

601. She told you herself?—Yes, I know; but I did not know anything at all about it. I knew she had gone in for it.

602. On whose recommendation did she apply?—I could not say.

603. Surely, when you were talking about this going in for the section, she would have told you how she came to apply?—No, she did not.

604. And you never heard whether anybody recommended her to apply; it is a very particular thing—

605. *The Chairman.*] Did you live in the same house, Mr. Weber?—Yes.

606. She was also an unsuccessful applicant?—Yes.

607. Do you know from your conversation with her how she intended to fulfil the conditions of this, supposing she had been a successful applicant?—I did not converse with her on the matter at all. I knew she had gone in for it. It was done through Messrs. Ellison and Duncan; they arranged the whole thing, and I had nothing at all to do with it.

608. You must have had some talk about it surely; you were both living in the same house, and applied for the same section. Usually, when relations are going to bid against one another, they talk the matter over. What this Committee wants to get at is, as to whether the applicants in these cases or in any other cases applied for the land entirely for themselves or for speculative purposes. That is the reason I am asking you these questions. Now, what means have you for carrying out the improvements?—I am earning a salary.

609. Do you know how much the improvements would cost?—They would cost £22 the first year, £22 the second year, and £22 at the end of six years—£66 in all.

610. *Mr. Smith.*] Are you sure that is sufficient for a block of 200 acres?—That is all I understood was required to be done, it being second-class land.

611. First of all there is the rental. You understood you had to pay £22 per annum, that is for improvements, and the rental came to —?—£9 16s. per annum. I understood what I was going in for, and what it would cost me, and everything.

612. And you could have afforded to have paid this £31 odd a year?—I could have.