

1728. They did not take evidence of the Natives?—They did not take evidence of the Natives as to the annual value of the land.

1729. Did they take any other evidence?—Only lessees' evidence. I do not know of any case where outside evidence was called in as to value.

1730. Did they require of the lessees any proof of the cost of the improvements they had made? Did they call for vouchers, or any evidence of the actual cost?—No.

FRIDAY, 25TH JULY, 1890.

THOMAS WILLIAM FISHER cross-examined.

1731. *Mr. Bell.*] Will you tell the Committee what is your occupation—but, first of all, how long have you been on this coast?—Living at Waitotara do you mean, or on the whole of the coast? Since 1864.

1732. What has been your occupation during that time?—I have been connected with store-keeping during the past fifteen years.

1733. Where at?—At Waitotara.

1734. I think you have also kept a butcher's shop?—No; that is not correct.

1735. Before the Public Trustee was appointed to manage these lands, did you act for the Natives?—In many cases.

1736. Did you receive orders from them for rent—that is, from the lessors upon the lessees?—No; I cannot say that I have.

1737. Did you collect the rents for the lessors?—The rents were paid through me.

1738. Then, you took the amounts due to you by these persons at your store?—No; I never dealt with the Natives that way. I have supplied them with goods, but whenever I supplied them with anything it was on the order of Europeans.

1739. You tell the Committee that you collected the rents for a number of them?—Their rents were paid through me. I attested signatures for these people.

1740. Then, the lessees would give the lessors orders on you for goods, and you would deduct the amount due to you?—If the rent was due on the 1st January. The Natives would get any balance paid to them from the person who occupied their land.

1741. The difference being paid to you for goods supplied to the Natives?—If there had been any received.

1742. Have you been able to carry out that method of doing business since the Trustee has had the management of these lands?—I have been out of business the greater part of this time.

1743. I asked you whether you have done so?—I have not done so, nor have I had occasion to do so.

1744. Is it not a grievance of yours that you are no longer the person who collects these rents?—No.

1745. You say you attended the Waitotara Court on behalf of the Natives?—Yes.

1746. Did they pay you?—No.

1747. Did Williams pay you?—No.

1748. Who asked you?—The Natives asked me to take down the evidence.

1749. What Natives?—It was the Natives generally; Wakarua and the others wanted a copy of what was said.

1750. So you told them what was said?—Yes.

1751. Do you know Mr. Williams?—Yes; I know Williams.

1752. Did you see Williams before you came here?—No.

1753. What have you been doing during the last four years?—Farming, and doing commission work when I could get it.

1754. You told the Commissioners that you valued for banks and companies: will you be good enough to say what banks and companies?—I valued for Sclanders and Co.

1755. Did they ask you to give them a valuation?—Yes; they asked me to give my opinion as to what a property was worth.

1756. When was this?—Five or six years back.

1757. But that is a firm: will you name any company you valued for?—I valued for the Loan and Finance Company of Wanganui.

1758. Who is the agent for that company?—Mr. Ashforth was, I think: a change has been made now.

1759. How many times have you given valuations for that company?—I cannot say exactly.

1760. More than once?—Yes.

1761. Then, what banks have you valued for?—The Bank of Australasia has asked me to value for them.

1762. Have you given them written valuations?—No; not written valuations.

1763. The company asked you to value for them, and you did so verbally?—Yes.

1764. You say you never gave written reports: did you give them written reports?—I have given them written reports.

1765. Then, if that is so, they would have them?—Yes.

1766. You told the Committee about the land opposite Durie's lease that was let at some high rent: what was the instance that you gave?—You are speaking of the piece that was let at 8s. an acre.

*Mr. Peacock:* No; the piece that was sold.

1767. *Mr. Bell.*] Who bought it?—Wilkie and Wilson.

1768. I think you gave evidence about the land opposite Durie's lease?—I spoke about the land that belongs to Mr. Donald Smith.