

Chairman. I asked the questions myself when in the chair. When Mr. Cowern was Chairman I put the questions through him.

2153. When Nolan and you were acting?—I put the questions through him.

2154. Then you did cause questions to be put?—Yes; and I took down the answers.

2155. And you held your Courts where it was most convenient for the body of the Natives to attend them?—Yes.

2156. Did the Natives give any evidence as to value?—Not in many cases. In the first they gave evidence as to value.

2157. Which was the first case?—Caverhill's, in which I was umpire.

2158. What was the name of the property?—Okahu, I think it was.

2159. You say evidence was given to value there: we can easily turn to your evidence if you have it there?—Yes; it is in this book. Rangitawhata gave evidence. The arbitrators could not agree in his case. He was willing to lease for 7s.

2160. Which is that—No. 10? And you fixed it at 6s. 8d.?—These notes were made by me when the award was made; afterwards I passed them over to Mr. Barton.

2161. Mr. Sinclair was present at one of the Courts in which you were sitting: have you a report of some proceedings while he was there?—Yes, in Zigg's case. I took down a note of it. I also cut out a newspaper report of it.

2162. Is that newspaper report substantially correct?—Yes. [*Hawera Star*, 15th May: account of proceedings read and put in.]

2163. Was every facility given to the Natives to give evidence?—Yes.

2164. Did you ever during the whole course of the inquiry hear any complaint from any Native against the propriety of your appointment as arbitrator for the Natives?—None whatever; they seemed rather pleased.

2165. Did you fairly consider the rents which you fixed?—Yes, in all cases.

2166. Having had this experience on the Coast, are you able to say that the rents you fixed were fair and just?—They were fair and just, carrying them out according with our instructions under the regulations.

2167. Have you any reason to say now that they are not just?—None whatever.

2168. You were bound to assess the capital value, and then fix the rental upon that?—Yes. We assessed the capital value, and we fixed the rent at 5 per cent.: that is the rate at which the Government calculates it.

2169. You fixed the rent on that basis, regarding the rents by themselves: from your knowledge of the land, having regard to that basis, are they fair rents?—I think they are fair rents.

2170. Do you think they ought to be increased?—Not at the present time, certainly: they are fair rents for the time being, and were at the time they were made.

2171. But if property goes down it would be the other way?—Yes, it would.

2172. With regard to Riddiford, Whareroa No. 2?—Yes, I remember that.

2173. And George Gower's confirmed lease Nos. 41, 42?—Yes.

2174. There was a very great reduction in the rent in this case: will you tell the Committee why?—In Gower's case, I cannot tell how he arrived at his calculation; he said he thought there was more level land in it. But we went over it, divided and classified it, made out a calculation; consequently it was reduced. It is a very rough piece of land. The plan [produced] was before me. [Classification of land and plan put in.]

2175. Do you know whether there was evidence given to you showing what the Education land next to Gower's was let at?—Yes.

2176. Did you go on it?—Yes; but it was on the boundary: we could see both well from the boundary.

2177. Was it land of the same quality and description?—Just the same.

2178. Do you know what that land was put up at before?—The upset price was 6d. an acre. I have the notes of that here.

2179. But it is a fact that the value of this Education land next to Gower's was proved before you?—Yes.

2180. It is all rough and broken land?—Yes; it is very rough and broken.

2181. Is there bush on it?—Yes; it is covered with bush, except a small portion. The Education land is all bush, except the small piece shown on the plan.

2182. Was the rent which Gower had been paying for this land in the past a fair rent?—Not the old rent.

2183. Was evidence given as to what happened to Gower through paying that rent?—Yes, there was; but I did not think it mattered. I did not think it had any bearing as to the way we should arrive at the value.

2184. But that evidence was before you?—Yes: we did not pay any attention to it.

2185. In some other cases, as in Gower's, there were considerable reductions made?—Yes.

2186. In these cases, did you and your co-arbitrators honestly and fairly arrive at what you considered to be a just conclusion?—We classified the land; put what we considered a fair value on each division of the classification. I have the calculations here in my book; the items are there: 102 acres, in an improved state, £7 10s. an acre; 43 acres, £6 10s. an acre; 59 acres at £4; and so on.

2187. *Mr. Levi.*] Do you know how many cases you sat on altogether?—I do not.

2188. How long did you sit altogether?—We were months at it. We did not sit continuously. Sometimes we sat for a fortnight at a time. We had to write the notices, and then to get them served.

2189. Did you write them yourselves?—Some were printed.

2190. Did you employ a solicitor?—We employed a solicitor to make our awards into legal shape. My first award is here among these papers. It is marked off with the solicitor's pencilling.