

2281. Where?—Part of it is three miles from Hawera, the remainder is about eight miles.
2282. You are not the holder of any confirmed lease?—No.
2283. Nor are you a relation of any person holding a confirmed lease?—No.
2284. Nor in partnership with any person holding a confirmed lease?—No.
2285. You acted as umpire in a number of cases in which Messrs. Livingston and Cowern were arbitrators?—Not Mr. Cowern and Mr. Livingston; Mr. Livingston and Mr. Bailey.
2286. In Sigg's case: do you remember that case?—I sat as umpire in all the cases in which Messrs. Livingston and Nolan sat as arbitrators, except one case in which I was unavoidably absent.
2287. Which case was that?—In Buchanan's case.
2288. Were you umpire in the case of Mr. Gower's lease?—No.
2289. You were not called in on any occasion to give your decision as umpire?—No.
2290. Did you sit in the Courthouse when the investigations were held?—Yes.
2291. Did you go to see the land in each case?—Yes; I went on it, and examined it carefully in each case.
2292. Did the arbitrators go?—Yes, they were there in every case.
2293. You personally inspected the land, and you sat with the arbitrators in the Court while they were taking evidence in each case?—Yes.
2294. And you heard all the evidence except in Buchanan's case?—Yes.
2295. Did the arbitrators consult with you at all?—No, not a bit.
2296. Do I understand that you were there to give a decision in the event of a failure of agreement between the arbitrators?—Yes.
2297. It has been suggested that there was something unfair in the method of taking evidence: did you observe anything of that kind?—No, I did not. I thought the Court was conducted very well. Of course there was more liberty given to the Maoris than to other persons—Europeans.
2298. You took no part in the proceedings?—No, except that the arbitrators might have asked me whether I had any questions to ask the witness.
2299. Who was the chairman?—Sometimes Mr. Livingston would take the chair; Mr. Nolan on other occasions.
2300. It is suggested that Mr. Livingston took a mere passive part in the proceedings?—That is not true. The Maoris in most cases refused to give evidence. I may say that when they did give evidence it was to the effect that they wished the rent to be entirely prohibitory—that is, that the rents should be so large as to prohibit any one from leasing. Their values were so excessive as to be beyond what any farmer could pay. They expressed themselves to the effect that they did not want the land to be leased, and for that reason gave the high values.
2301. Do you know the district well?—I do.
2302. And the properties with which the arbitration was dealing?—Yes.
2303. You saw them in each case?—Yes.
2304. Were the rents fixed by the arbitrators in the cases upon which you sat such as to coincide with your own view of what was a just rent?—I considered them in every case to be equitable and just as between man and man—not as between Europeans and Europeans, or between Maoris and Europeans, but as between man and man. I think the arbitrators rather gave the benefit of any doubt they had to the Maoris.
2305. Will you tell us whether land on the Coast is of the same value now that it was in the seventies?—Not nearly of so much value.
2306. Has there been a fall in the price of stock?—Yes.
2307. To what extent?—Quite from 50 to 100 per cent.
2308. *Mr. Stewart.*] One hundred per cent.?—I am referring more to cattle than to sheep; it is principally a cattle country.
2309. What was the price of fat cattle? what was the price you would get for a fat beast towards the end of the seventies?—About £8 to £10 for a fat bullock.
2310. Was it higher before that?—Yes; it was up to £10 or £11.
2311. At the present day what can you get for a fat bullock?—This has been rather an exceptional spring: this spring they are a little higher than usual, but from £5 to £6 is about the price.
2312. That is not 100 per cent.?—This season is rather exceptional, fat cattle being rather scarce.
2313. But you say the average price is from £5 to £5 10s.?—Yes; up to £6.
2314. Last year what was the price?—It was difficult to dispose of them last year.
2315. Store cattle were also much higher in the seventies than they are now?—Much higher.
2316. Has there been a fall in the actual selling-price of land on the West Coast?—Yes.
2317. To any great extent?—About 50 per cent. of fall.
2318. There was at one time a very great demand for land on that coast?—Yes; there was a bit of earth-hunger there certainly.
2319. Does it exist now?—There is a demand always there.
2320. At a price?—Yes; at a price.
2321. But the price is lower now than in the early days?—Yes.
2322. *Mr. Levi.*] How many cases did you sit on altogether?—I cannot tell you from memory; if you will read the names, I will tell you.
2323. How long did each case take the arbitrators?—I could not tell you—a long time.
2324. How long were you sitting altogether?—I sat, I think, three days.
2325. How many days did you take to go on the land?—Three or four days.
2326. That would be about six or seven days altogether that you were engaged on these cases?—Yes.