

2612. Was there no arrangement of any kind on your undertaking the work as to the remuneration?—No.

2613. It was left to you entirely to make your charges?—It was left to me entirely.

2614. Did you take any evidence as to the actual cost of the improvements made by the lessees? did you ask them what were the various improvements made by each, and the cost as to the fencing, building, bush-clearing, and laying down in grass?—Yes; in most cases they gave the actual cost, but some of the improvements had depreciated in value very much—buildings that cost £200 or £300 to put up had depreciated down almost to £100 in some instances.

2615. But you did take reliable evidence as to cost of improvements?—Yes.

2616. And you were guided by that?—We relied more on our own knowledge.

2617. Do you live at Hawera?—No.

2618. Then how can you know the value of land so well in the district?—Because I am so much identified with it; besides, the lessees are nearer to Patea, where I live, than to Hawera.

2619. You mean that as a land agent you would know what it would cost the people there to produce crops, to raise stock, and so forth, and what profit should be had on the rent to be paid: now, what would you consider a fair rent there for depasturing sheep?—I think we should run three sheep to the acre on the best farms: they could pay 10s. an acre for the best land.

2620. That is something like 3s. 4d. a sheep?—Yes.

2621. You spoke of a large rent of £500 for 700 acres of agricultural land: was that originally fern?—Yes.

2622. None of it bush?—No.

2623. That is, it was actually valuable land for agricultural purposes?—Yes.

2624. As regards valuing improvements, you say you have to take depreciation into account?—Yes.

2625. Were the fences mostly wire?—Wire and gorse.

2626. *Hon. Mr. Peter.*] These charges are so enormously high in some cases as to strike one at the first glance: was there no fixed rate charged for the arbitrators?—No; the costs are in our discretion.

2627. As the charges made by the arbitrators you see that one £75 sometimes double and treble that of the umpire?

2628. *Hon. the Chairman.*] The arbitrator fixed the umpire's charges?—Yes. The umpire had nothing to do with the detailed work; he visited and went over the property, sat in the arbitrators' Court, heard the evidence, and went away. If there had been a difference between the arbitrators he would have had to decide. He might, probably, have reheard the whole case, and would fix the arbitrators' fees at his discretion.

2629. *Hon. Mr. Acland.*] Is it the fact that, in estimating the value of land by deducting the improvements from the capital value, and fixing the rent at so much per cent., you bring it back to its value in its wild state?—Yes; with the additional value that the settlement of the district gives to all lands in common.

2630. *Mr. Levi.*] Were you guided at all by the definition of "improvements" in the regulations?—We took every improvement into consideration.

GEORGE SAMUEL NEWLAND examined.

2631. *Mr. Tripp.*] What are you?—A farmer.

2632. How long have you been farming?—Pretty well all my life.

2633. On the Coast?—Yes, for a number of years.

2634. What is the extent of your farm?—One hundred and twenty acres at present.

2635. Are you one of the confirmed lessees?—Yes.

2636. Where is your farm situated?—At Whenuakura.

2637. Have you ever had more than 120 acres?—Yes.

2638. What was the extent of your former holding?—With this included, about 650 acres.

2639. What was the rent of your former farm?—It was nominal in the first place; we had to improve it.

2640. When you came to rent, what did you pay?—It went back to the landlord at the end of the term.

2641. How went back to the landlord?—We gave it up. My brother was in partnership with me at the time.

2642. *Hon. the Chairman.*] What you gave up was not included in this Native land?—It was freehold. My brother, 300 acres; 250 acres leasehold.

2643. Who was the 250 acres leased from?—From Northcroft.

2644. *Mr. Tripp.*] Does this 120 acres adjoin the other?—Yes.

2645. When did you take up this 120 acres?—About twelve years ago.

2646. What was the original rental?—It was 7s., 9s., and 12s., for three different periods.

2647. Was this rental altered by the arbitrators?—Yes.

2648. What was the alteration made?—They reduced it to 4s. an acre.

2649. Would it pay at the original rent?—No; I may state that when the first lease was drawn up we were to have had it at 3s. 6d. an acre. Some of our neighbours came behind us and offered more money; that was the reason it was run up to that price.

2650. Then you say it would not pay at the original rent?—No.

2651. Do you remember Mr. Mackay going to Patea in 1884?—Yes; I attended the meeting at Patea.

2652. What took place at that meeting?—We were given to understand that in the following June an arbitration would take place and a new lease would be granted.