

Mr. FREDERICK RIDDIFORD, of Hawera, Farmer, examined.

2786. *Mr. Bell.*] You are the holder of one or two confirmed leases?—Yes.
 2787. Lease No. 2, 387 acres?—Yes.
 2788. You took up that lease in what year?—About 1877 or 1878.
 2789. Had it been leased before?—Yes; it was not leased direct to me.
 2790. What had become of the original lessee?—He resided in Patea. Having leased the land, he did nothing with it.
 2791. Did he pay his rent?—I do not know.
 2792. It was offered to you by the Natives?—Yes.
 2793. Did it join property belonging to you?—Yes; it cut right into my property.
 2794. You work it?—Yes.
 2795. What is the nature of the country?—It is very broken.
 2796. Are there gullies on it?—Yes; very steep gullies.
 2797. Would you have taken it if it had cut into other land you were occupying?—No, certainly not.
 2798. It saved you some fencing, I believe?—Yes; a considerable amount of fencing.
 2799. The rent has been considerably reduced: has it been reduced below what is a fair rent for that piece of land?—No.
 2800. Would it have been possible for any person taking that part at 4s. 2d. an acre to make it pay?—No, I could not make it pay.
 2801. Notwithstanding that it adjoins your property?—Notwithstanding that it joins my property.
 2802. *Mr. Rennell.*] Have you paid up your rent in full under the confirmed lease?—Which are you alluding to? I believe there is one not paid up.
 2803. Under the confirmed lease?—I think it is about due.
 2804. Have you not kept money back?—Yes.
 2805. On what account?—Difference of area.
 2806. Deficiency of acreage, is it?—Yes.
 2807. Do you propose paying your rent under the confirmed lease?—I do not care to say.
 2808. Is there not an outstanding question as to rent between you and the Public Trustee?—I believe there is. The Public Trustee wishes me to pay for land I do not own: I decline.
 2809. Through deficiency of acreage?—Through deficiency of acreage.
 2810. *Mr. Stewart.*] What was your object in surrendering the old lease?—The confirmed lease? To get extension of term and a new lease.
 2811. Also, you wanted, if possible, to get your rent reduced?—Yes; I was paying too much under the old lease.
 2812. *Mr. Parata.*] How many acres under the old lease?—Different leases at different rents—1s., 2s., 3s.
 2813. Did you think that 3s. was a fair rent?—It was all heavy bush.
 2814. If the land was not paying would you be likely to apply for a longer lease?—This land cut right into my property. By taking it it would save me a certain amount of fencing. If I did not have this land I should have to do an extra quantity of fencing.
 2815. *Mr. Levi.*] It was of a special value to you?—The Natives came to me and wished me to take it. They said, "If you take it for one year we will forgive you the rent:" they said they would make me a present of it.
 2816. *Hon. Captain Kenny.*] You state that the land is not paying, and you had to make an attempt to make it pay?—Yes.
 2817. Did you clear the whole of it?—I cleared all of it that was of any value. I grubbed all the open land, fenced it, felled the bush, and logged it up in many cases.
 2818. How many sheep would it carry?—I seldom have sheep on it; it is a cattle country.
 2819. You said it was not paying: if you worked it with your own property, how would you distinguish that it was not paying?—I would know the area and its proportion of available land; I would know the amount of rent I would have to pay: I would know the price I would get for stock; I would know, therefore, whether I would not be able to pay rent for the two sections out of the profits I would be able to make by my cattle.
 2820. Was your freehold paying?—I had not the freehold.
 2821. What is the other part?—Leasehold.
 2822. Both are leasehold?—Yes.
 2823. Was the other leasehold paying?—Yes; it paid to a certain extent. I was able to put sheep on that portion.
 2824. The difference was that one was sheep country and the other was cattle country?—Where the land is new sheep pay with us. When we stock it after a few years we have to go back to cattle.
 2825. On account of the fern?—No; on account of lung-worm.
 2826. It is not a good sheep country?—No.
 2827. Is it cropped?—No; there are no roads to it. I could not get a machine there.

Mr. R. H. NOLAN, J.P., of Hawera, examined.

2828. *Mr. Bell.*] You were one of the arbitrators who sat in some of these cases?—I was.
 2829. You are an auctioneer and land agent?—Yes.
 2830. Carrying on business in Hawera?—Yes.
 2831. How long have you been in Hawera?—Between ten and eleven years.
 2832. During that time have you been carrying on business there?—Yes.