

3078. *Hon. the Chairman.*] About this land of Caverhill's, Whareroa: how long have you known it?—Of course I had been all over the land formerly; then I went all over it when the Arbitration Court was sitting.

3079. Did you ever live near it?—Yes; I had a fort or barracks on it during the war.

3080. I mean have you lived there since the land itself has been occupied by Europeans?—No.

3081. *Mr. Peacock.*] Was it not explained to you that the umpire—that is, the third person engaged—was appointed to settle any difference between yourself and the other arbitrator?—I understood that the umpire was appointed for the purpose of establishing or confirming the award.

3082. Did you understand that the umpire was to decide when the two arbitrators could not agree?—No; I understood that the matter was to be fixed by us, the arbitrators, and that in the event of any dispute between us we were to agree mutually, the third person having to judge between us.

3083. Do I understand you to say that you objected to Natives having to pay for improvements at the end of the lease?—I objected because I knew that the Maoris would never be able to redeem the improvements; this law was only good for the Europeans of the district.

3084. Was it in regard to that you said the Natives were being treated in a different way from the white people?—Yes.

3085. Were you not aware that the white people are similarly treated under the Land Act of 1882?—I would like to know whether that law deals with the private property of individuals?

3086. No, with Crown lands?—No; I never heard so, I never heard that the Crown lands were dealt with in this manner.

3087. If you had known that, you would not have thought as you did?—I would like to ask this: If the Maori lands on the West Coast are to be treated in this manner, why should not the same law be applied to European lands?

*Hon. the Chairman:* I presume what the witness means is that these lands are private property.

Mr. GEORGE FRANCIS ROBINSON, Crown Lands Ranger, Taranaki, examined.

3088. *Hon. the Chairman.*] You are Crown Lands Ranger for Taranaki?—Yes.

3089. To what places does your district extend?—To the whole Provincial District of Taranaki.

3090. Have you been connected in any way with what are known as the Public Trust reserves?—Yes; I was requested to revalue a number of sections.

3091. For the Public Trust leases?—Yes; these are my instructions [instructions put in].

3092. Did you get any instructions outside of these?—No; the remaining applications were handed to me by Mr. Rennell.

3093. Have you answered these questions contained here in the instructions?—Yes; I have here copies of my reports.

3094. How many applications for reduction of rent have you reported on?—Two hundred and seventeen.

3095. Does that comprise the whole of the leases that are in existence?—No, I think there are 231 altogether.

3096. *Mr. Stewart.*] Did you deliver a separate report for each?—Yes; I first furnished a general report setting out the basis of the valuation; I then made a separate report on each.

3097. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Will you give me one of these reports, to show the method you followed in making your valuation, and the form of your report?—Yes; any one of these reports will show you. [Report read.]

" 36/88A.

" New Plymouth, 15th March, 1888.

" *Re* memo. from Public Trust Office; 2nd February, 1888; Section No. 63, Block I., Hawera District; F. Finlayson: All in grass, but a small block of bush about 14 acres. None cultivated, but fern burned, tutu grubbed, and grass-seed surface-sown. Land fenced with good furze fences, excepting along Waingongoro Stream. Fair section, but lies to prevailing wind, and is cut up with small gullies. Value of improvements, about £82 10s. Fair annual rental, unimproved, 5s. per acre.

" G. F. ROBINSON, C.L.R.

" R. C. Hamerton, Esq., Public Trustee, Wellington."

3098. You have given the value of unimproved land in all cases—that [pointing to the value on the report] is the unimproved value?—Yes.

3099. You went on the place in each case to look at it?—I examined it carefully. I stated in my general report the whole of my reasons for arriving at my valuations; the letter which is in my letter-book [produced] is a complete explanation. I also could explain verbally.

3100. What did you do?—I saw the lessee when he was living on the place. I went over the whole of the land with him; and, in accordance with my knowledge of lands previously acquired, having been a farmer for many years, and being valuer for the Crown Lands Board, I took notes as to its position—as to its being near or far from other improved lands, and from a market; also as to what could be produced from it if used for agriculture, sheep, or stock-raising. But I may say I was very much influenced by one item of my instructions: I treated the land as if it was land to be offered by the Government—that is, as if it was Crown land. I knew the value which would be placed on such land by the Land Board. That was a guide to me in making my valuation; although in my report to the Public Trustee I stated "I felt hampered by one of the instructions given—viz., to state what would be a fair annual rent for the land as if the same were to be offered by lease by the Government—as I thought that in some cases the Land Board was pricing the land somewhat too high."