

208. Had you anything to do with these confirmed leases? Do you know anything about them?—Yes; I had considerable to do with them: I negotiated some of them for the Natives.

209. Who were you acting for?—There was George Gower's lease.

210. Were you acting for the Natives or for the lessees?—For the lessee in this case. In both cases I acted for the lessees.

211. Do you know what was the attitude of the Natives in reference to the rents accepted at that time?—The Natives accepted a low rent at the beginning, because they anticipated that they would be paid by the improvements made upon the land; hence they accepted a low rate of rent.

212. Did they in any case stipulate for improvements?—They all stipulated for improvements in their confirmed leases.

213. Do you know what any of the stipulations are?—I could not tell from memory. There were several. One was that the land was to be left in good order—well fenced and grassed—at the expiry of the lease.

214. Did you know the value of land at the time?—Yes; I think I had a fair knowledge of land-values at that time.

215. Were rents then high or low?—In most cases they were very low.

216. Can you tell us of any particular case that you negotiated for?—I negotiated the lease that was before the Committee just now—that one of Mr. Caverhill.

217. Who were you acting for?—For Mr. Caverhill (Okahu).

218. Can you tell us anything about the rent of that—whether it was high or low at the time?—My opinion at that time was that it was a fair rent. There were others quite willing to give that rent for it.

219. *Hon. Captain Kenny.*] What was the amount?—I forget at this moment, but I think it was 8s. all through; at the time, it was considered a fair rent. It was higher than the rent generally given for Native land. The reason was that it was looked upon as a remarkably good piece of land, in a good situation.

220. Why was the situation thought good?—It was close to Normanby, and surrounded by a settled district. It was well watered, well wooded, and there was a good road to it.

221. Do you know that property now?—Yes; I know it now.

222. Do you know what improvements have been made?—Yes; I know some of the improvements. I am not very conversant with it. I have not been in the district of late. I merely passed through. When it was taken from the Natives there was a good deal of grass on it. It was a place where they used to cut cocksfoot for grass-seed.

223. How many acres would you say there was grass on at the time?—There was a considerable portion; more than half.

224. Can you give us the name of any other lessee?—George Gower.

225. Is it George now?—Alfred Gower.

226. Were there others?—There were others. I simply advised the Natives.

227. Do you remember any particular case in which you advised the Natives?—Yes; I advised them in regard to Major Turner's lease.

228. Any others?—Yes, Symes's lease.

229. Any others?—I advised them partly on the Makuia leases.

230. So that you knew what their feelings and opinions were in reference to the rent they wanted for their lands?—Yes.

231. I want you to tell the Committee any facts within your knowledge which bear on the fairness of the rents fixed by the arbitrators?—With regard to the rents fixed by the arbitrators, I do not think there is any fairness in them; they are altogether too low.

232. Can you give facts to show that?—I will take the fact of the adjacent land that is let by other people.

233. Do you mean by Natives?—No; by Europeans to Europeans.

234. Give us instances?—There is the Otauto, occupied by Ross: an award has been given in that case.

235. Is that a confirmed lease?—Yes; they reduced the rent very considerably.

236. Do you know what the rent originally was?—It was about 5s., or 5s. 6d., or 6s.—something about that. I would like to mention, in regard to that lease, that there were 1,300 acres in it instead of 1,000 acres. It was 1,000 acres that they were to lease; there was to be an exchange of part of the land, Ross to have 50 acres; but instead of taking 50 acres he took 300 acres, which he is occupying. The Natives were to take a piece at one end, which by them was considered more valuable; he was to have an equivalent at the other. He took 300 acres instead of 50 acres.

237. Do you know anything about it?—It was considered to be more valuable to the Natives because it lay close to their settlement; it was not more valuable to Ross than the other land; it was better for them. The piece he gave the Natives—

238. What was the acreage of the two pieces?—His piece ran alongside his run. When Ross got the survey made he never allowed them to know the difference, and they have not known it from Ross to this day.

239. *Mr. Seddon.*] Do you know that of your own knowledge? Had you anything to do with it?—I negotiated the matter; so I had to do with it.

240. *Hon. Mr. Hislop.*] Do you know the difference in the number of acres?—I do not know what the difference was.

241. *Mr. Peacock.*] There was an exchange of land to be given, but you did not know how much was to be given?—No.

242. Did you know what the quantity of land was to be at the time of the negotiation?—We believed that the quantity would be corrected when the survey took place.

243. *Mr. Levi.*] Was there a written agreement?—Yes.