

529. What improvements were they?—He cut down forest. I do not think it amounted to 40 acres what he cut down: that is all the improvements I know of that have been done of late—that is, within four years.

530. Have the Natives had any offer at any time for this land?—Yes; Sir Dillon Bell offered to lease it from them.

531. At what time?—At the time Alfred Gower was in possession. I think he might have been in possession for six or seven years when Sir Dillon Bell made the offer.

532. Do you not remember what year it was?—No, I do not remember the year.

533. How much did he offer?—He said if we would extend the lease six years he would give us 9s. 6d. an acre.

534. That was six years after Gower's lease?—I think it might have been five or six years after Gower was in possession; I am not certain which.

535. *Mr. Peacock.*] What rent was Gower paying during these five or six years?—He was paying 6s. 6d.; but for the first few years he was paying 5s. an acre.

536. Were you present when Sir Dillon Bell made the offer?—It was to myself and Komene Takurangi that he made the offer. He told us not to let any one else have this land, and that he would give us £10 earnest money.

537. Did he give you the £10?—Yes, we took it. We agreed to let him have it.

538. Was Alfred Gower present when this offer was made by Sir Dillon Bell?—No, he was not present; but Sir Dillon Bell said that he had seen Alfred Gower first, and he afterwards came and saw us.

539. *Mr. Levi.*] Then, Albert Symes?

*Hon. the Chairman:* Which is that—No. 16 or No. 17?

540. *Mr. Levi.*] No. 17. What was the condition of No. 17 at that time?—It was about in the same position as these others I have spoken of—part bush, part grass, and part fern.

541. What improvements have been made since?—A house has been built on it.

542. What kind of house?—A weatherboard house.

543. When was it built?—I think it was built about two years after he obtained the lease.

544. What other improvements?—He put up fences; he ploughed up the whole of it—at least, I should have said, he ploughed up all the open land; portion of it was in forest. He subdivided it into paddocks for different crops—for turnips, oats, and so forth.

545. Have any of these improvements been made during the last six years?—He put a portion of rape in last autumn and some portion in wheat.

546. Any fencing?—I am not quite clear whether any fencing has been done lately or not; but I know that some cross-fences were put up prior to that. I am not able to say how long ago since the last improvements were made in regard to fencing.

547. What is the condition of Walter Symes's piece?—About in the same condition as all the others—grass, bush, and fern.

548. What improvements are on it?—He put a house on it and some fences.

549. When? Has it been more than six years ago?—I cannot say exactly; but it is more than six years ago.

550. Do you know about Newland's lease (No. 12)?—I have not explained the whole matter to you as regards Symes's lease. He offered us £50 to give him a new lease, but we would not agree to this offer. All he proposed to give us was £50, and 5s. an acre.

551. Was that for renewal?—Yes, it was for renewal; he had only two years of his lease to run.

552. When was that?—The time that Mr. Rennell was acting in the capacity he is acting in; perhaps three years ago. When we would not accept his offer Symes said he had a mind to strike Taurua, because Taurua would not lease the land to him. He said he was very angry; and it would not take him much to have struck and punched him too. Mr. Rennell saw this quarrel: he was present.

553. Well, now, take Newland's: what condition was that place in?—About in the same condition as the others.

554. What improvements were made by Newland?—He has put up boundary-lines of fencing. He has also put in subdivision fences for paddocks to grow oats, wheat, and so forth. He has a piece of land of his own alongside this leased land. He has built a house on our piece of land.

555. When were the fences put up?—They have been put up several years.

556. More or less than six years?—Yes; more than six years. He put up fences as soon as he obtained the lease.

557. Any other improvements?—These are all the improvements that I know of.

558. Did you get notice asking you to appoint an arbitrator in connection with these leases?—Yes; I did receive notice in the English language, and, of course, I did not understand what was meant. But some Europeans told me there was going to be an Arbitration Court held—that the Natives would have to go there. I went and made our objections known to the Court.

559. Why did you not appoint an arbitrator?—Because we did not care about renewing the leases, as some of our people had no land to live on, and those who had land were obliged to give them some to cultivate and live on. I informed Mr. Rennell and Mr. Williams of this.

560. Had they any other reason for not appointing an arbitrator?—Yes; owing to the length of time since receiving our rents from the Public Trustee. I came here in 1887, and made my objections on the same score, but the House took no notice of it, though I brought a petition.

561. Did you attend the Arbitrators' Court?—I informed the Court that we would not agree to give new leases—that we would not make any arrangement about rents, because the Natives objected to give new leases.

562. Did you give any evidence?—Yes.