

704. When was it added to?—Some time previous to Sir William Fox going to the district. It was added to several years before Sir William Fox sat in the district as Commissioner.

705. Any other improvements?—The European has ploughed the land—that is, portions of it—and sown wheat.

706. Anything else?—No.

707. What was the condition of the land when Walter Symes had his?—When he got the land one portion of it was covered with grass—that is, wherever the Natives had before cultivated it.

708. What improvements have been made since?—He has built a house on it and erected fences.

709. When did he build the house?—Perhaps it was twelve years ago.

710. When were the fences erected?—About the same time.

711. Are there any other improvements on Walter's land?—The Whenuakura River is the principal boundary of the land, so that there is not much fencing required. The lessee has also sown wheat and turnips.

712. And grass?—Yes; he has laid down a portion in grass, and he has cleared a portion of the light scrub.

713. Has he done any of those improvements during the last six years?—The year before last he cleared an acre or two of light scrub.

714. Was all the rest done before the last six years?—All the other improvements were made more than six years ago.

715. Did any other people make offers for a renewal lease besides these lessees?—Yes; there were some overtures made to us.

716. What were those overtures?—Walter Symes offered us a bonus of £50 and 5s. an acre for a renewal of the lease. I should tell you about this: when we held a meeting to discuss the proposal of this European he gave us £4, which we divided with Taurua.

717. What was the money given for?—I will tell you in a minute why the money was given. At the conclusion, when this European found that we would not accept the terms he offered—namely, 5s. an acre and £50 bonus—he made a demand for this £4 he had given us. We returned it to him.

718. Was there any mention of improvements in these proposed renewals?—The European told us that the whole of the improvements, including houses, were to revert absolutely to us, the owners of the land, at the expiry of the lease. I think a clause to that effect was put in the lease.

719. *Dr. Fitchett.*] I want to know whether in the new lease an offer was made of 5s. an acre and £50 bonus. Who was to get the improvements?—There was no discussion as to who was to get the improvements, because we told him at once that we would not accept £50 bonus or 5s. an acre.

720. Now, with regard to the other Symes: had you another offer from him for renewal?—Albert Symes did make an offer to us with regard to the renewal. He asked us to give him a renewal for seven years.

721. Did he make any offer of land?—He did not fix the acreage rate; he simply offered us £90 a year.

722. Did not you accept that?—He also proposed to give us a bonus of £50. We accepted his terms, and gave him a renewal of the lease, the first time being for twelve years, and the second for seven years. Of course, the first lease was granted to Pennington, who had assigned to Symes.

723. When was that?—It was perhaps eight or nine years ago that he gave him this renewal. The seven years' renewal has not yet expired.

724. When will the seven years' renewal expire?—I think there are three years to run. The first lease was given in 1874: that would remain in force till 1886. Then the seven years' renewal would carry it on till 1893, not counting the years inclusive.

725. Did you get a notice calling on you to appoint arbitrators?—I received no notice, but I heard of some such notices having been given.

726. Did you appoint an arbitrator?—No, I did not.

727. Why did you not?—Because I was told that these men would grant a renewal of the lease for thirty years.

728. Did you attend the Court?—I did, at Patea.

729. What did you believe to be the object of the Court being held?—I heard that the object of the Arbitration Court was to grant leases for thirty years over all the Native land.

730. Were you told that the Court was only to fix rents of leases which had already been agreed to be granted?—I never knew clearly what the duties of the arbitrators were to be. The notices that were given to the people were not written in Maori, but one day that the Court sat I heard that it was to grant leases.

731. Do you know that the duty of arbitrators was to fix rents?—I do not know that the arbitrators were to fix the rents. I did not know that that was their duty.

732. Then, what did you think was their duty? I thought that the action of the arbitrators meant simply robbing us of the land—simply confiscation.

733. Do they say whether the leases would or would not be renewed?—I do not know that they had power to grant renewals, or to refuse them. Seeing that they would not listen to any of our objections, it was not clear to me what their powers were.

734. You say they would not listen to any of your objections?—Seeing that they would not listen to our objections, I did not understand what their powers were.

735. What did you do there?—I stood up in the Court and protested against the leases being renewed.

736. Did you give evidence?—Yes, I spoke; I gave evidence.

737. Were you asked questions as to the value of the land?—No.