

chosen, instead of a man who has had experience in the management or cultivation of land?—I can prove him by his works. I have taken the case of Elwin's property, and proved it to within a few pounds.

191. One values Elwin's property at £1,901, and the other at £1,902—just £1 between the two values. Now, I do not want to say anything disrespectful of these two gentlemen, but it looks as if there was collusion between them—as if the man who valued last knew that he was going to value property which had been previously valued by Mr. Jones, and considered that it was advisable to keep as near that valuation as possible. It is impossible for two men, however experienced valuers they may be, to value one property to within a couple of pounds of each other's valuation?—The valuation of Jones was made in 1893, that of Shaw the other day. In every case I have offered to put Jones's values to the test of the market. It is difficult for me to see any collusion in two valuations over a period of two years, though within £2 of each other. If you knew either Shaw or Jones you would not hazard the insinuation. Jones's value was £2,160 and Shaw's valuation was £1,902. I telegraphed to Mr. Hislop on Saturday, asking him what the fall was, and he replied that it was from 10 to 15 per cent. I took it at a $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. below the mean, and this brings the estimate of Mr. Jones to within £1 of Mr. Shaw's. I do not think, whatever inquiry may be made into this matter, that it will be found that they have had any communication with each other on the subject. I have put Jones's values to the test right through the district by the market values.

192. *Mr. Duncan.*] Has there been any sales of property in the district that will bear that out?—I am leasing property every day. I have leased land such as Elwin's was when he took it up lately. Elwin's land would fetch very much more than 4s. per acre.

193. You have heard of people giving too much for land?—Yes.

194. *The Chairman.*] When those valuations were made, were the tenants or occupiers notified of them before they agreed to take the leases?—Yes. In the notice which I sent to the lessee of the meeting with the Natives I gave notice of the value of the land without the improvements.

195. Then the lessee knows the valuation of the land before he agrees to take the lease?—It may be subject to any agreement between the Natives and himself.

196. *Mr. Green.*] Notwithstanding the fact that the rent has been fixed, do you mean that you will, after this meeting, agree to any alteration?—I will not agree to a lower rent than 5 per cent. on the value which I put on the land, unless it is of only a trifling amount, or unless anything below that will be an increase on what the lessee is already paying. I will take care that I will go to nothing below 5 per cent. on the valuation, except in the interests of the Natives.

197. *The Chairman.*] In reference to the insurance. You insist in having all the insurance in your name. Do you not think that is putting the occupiers in an unfair position in this way: that it prevents them from raising any money to assist them in carrying on operations if they require it?—They are getting money on mortgage every day. Some of the land is mortgaged twice. I determine in the interests of the Natives.

198. You have already told the Committee, that you have no other interests to consider?—Yes; and, as any party to an insurance can require that insurance money to be applied to the reconstruction of destroyed property, it does not matter who holds the insurance policy. The mortgagee has only to give notice to the insurance company to be quite safe.

199. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] About the rental on improvements: who made the improvements in these cases?—Under the proposal for a new lease the rental has to be fixed on the value of the land without the improvements, but, as the lessee is entitled to not more than £5 per acre for improvements, anything in excess of that he must pay me for.

200. Has a lessee to pay rental on improvements made by himself?—If you are speaking of trespassers—

201. I want to know exactly, when this valuation was made, had the lessee any voice in the matter at all?—There was no appeal from my valuation. I would say, as a private owner or trustee would say: "These are my terms for the land; you can take it or leave it. I will keep you to the terms of your contract, and I will keep mine."

202. *Mr. Hall.*] Do you administer this land for the Natives as a whole or individually?—Every Native owner of this land has a share, but not a joint or common share, of the whole reserves. The reserves consist of several Crown grants, and the apportionment of the proceeds of these grants is given to the persons named in the grants in accordance with their proportion of interest. Some of these grants comprise land which is not leased at all, and there this difficulty of paying rates arises.

203. You administer them as a whole?—Yes; but I have to keep a separate account of each grant, and make a separate payment to each Native according to his share in that grant.

204. Do you not think that a Fair Rent Bill can be applied with equity to this land?—Not specially to this. I have no opinion on a Fair Rent Bill; but, if a Fair Rent Bill be brought in, it should not be applied to one person or class or race, it should be for the whole colony.

205. Is it your opinion that, as trustee, it would relieve you of some of the difficulties you have?—I would not here like to offer an opinion on a Fair Rent Bill. I should save the private property for which I am trustee from any encroachment whatever.

206. I want to ask you if, in your opinion, your duty as trustee has in some things made it a hardship to the tenant of the land?—I am a machine for securing to the owners of the property and the estates that I administer all that I can secure without regard to the feelings or sufferings of any tenants.

207. Supposing the Government were to introduce a Bill whereby the matter of fair rents could be referred to particular consideration, do you not think that sometimes it would apply to people whose lands you are administering?—I say that a Fair Rent Bill should apply to the colony as a whole if it applies at all; but I presume that a Fair Rent Bill would provide for an increase of rent as well as for a reduction of rent.