

concession to these men—that is, they are to surrender their leases to him, and he will advance them the sum of £150 to make this road, and attach it to their leases. The interest on this £150 runs from about 1d. per acre per year I suppose, and he thinks it is a very small matter. The land has been leased at a price far beyond what the Government would attempt to give for it. If it is a hard matter for the hard-working settlers to pay 1d. per acre, what is it for the Native to receive his 1d. less. What view the Committee will take up I do not know, that remains to be seen; but that is a portion of the administration. I have laid before you the cause of our appearance here. The league which we represent—although we occupy a hundred miles of coast-line—is a complete body. We are to exist until we obtain our rights. If we do not obtain them this year we will come again next year. We represent 270 men. The very fact of our numbers will show you that we are not extensive holders, and all we want in the matter is to have our improvements secured to us. We are willing to pay the rents that are demanded, and which we now pay, but we want to have no further bother about insuring our buildings in the Public Trustee's name, or our improvements interfered with in any shape or manner. The land taken by us at the upset value was far higher than the circumstances then warranted. That is shown by what the Government have done during the last few years. Deferred-payment holders who, at the same time, occupied Government land have been reduced £1 per acre on their payments, simply because their upset value was higher than was warranted by the circumstances of the case. Then, we receive a reduction of about one-half of the former rents for five years. What we want is to be placed under the Land Board of the province, and, if the Land Board occupies the position now held by the Public Trustee, we should deal with practical men; we should deal with a body upon the spot, and we should receive justice. And this is what we ask you to give us. If any one or more thinks that what I have said is not correct, I say, "Come with me, and I will show you that what I have said is correct, and I will show you further proof still."

113. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] How is the rent fixed? Have you no basis whatever?—No, none; the land is put up for tender. That is a wrong system, but it is the one that prevails.

114. *Mr. Warburton.*] You speak of this land throughout as Government land. How do you come to the conclusion that it is Government land?—No, I do not. I say that the land is administered by the Public Trustee.

115. As to the valuation, you quoted Mr. Robinson's, on whose estimate the reductions were made for five years, and you quoted your case side by side with Mr. Elwin's. You take them both to be on the same footing—that the circumstances are practically alike?—You heard me quote those figures, and you saw the excessive valuation that was placed on me by your valuer at the last term. He placed Elwin at £3 8s., and he placed me at £4 18s., while our previous values were equal, mine being rather the lower.

116. Would your land fetch the price that Mr. Jones put upon it in the market?—Of course it would.

117. Without improvements?—Most decidedly not.

118. What do you consider to have been the fall in the value of land since Mr. Jones valued it, during the last two years?—The fall in the price of land has been heavy during the last two years, but I cannot tell you the exact figures.

119. There has been a general fall during the last two years; at what amount do you estimate that fall?—I cannot give you any idea.

120. You had a lease under which you are paying your present rental. You took that lease for twenty years, and under the Act I had authority to offer you a new lease. I had that discretion, but you had your own lease?—Yes, and I took it back again. Why did you not treat them all the same way, and tell them to apply for the lease, and not worry them about mortgages for insurance?

121. You admitted they are all treated in accordance with the law. Their contract under the lease which they took was that they should be entitled to £5 of improvements per acre and no more. They were therefore very properly asked to pay this?—No; not on a value not shown by practical men.

122. *Mr. Meredith.*] Do I understand you to say that the Trustee's valuation of your place in 1893–94 was £4 15s. per acre unimproved value?—Yes.

123. How does your land compare in quality with that held by Mr. Elwin?—Well, I think that some of mine is rather better than Mr. Elwin's. I had more stones on some of mine, and some of it is very indifferent.

124. What rent are you paying for the land at the present time?—£72 a year.

125. What is the acreage rent?—2s. 11d.

126. You say you did not take advantage of the new Act of 1892 to take out a new lease?—No; I did not take advantage of it, simply because my rental would have been over £100. At the present time I pay over £20 a year in taxes in addition to the rent.

127. You pay harbour rates?—Yes; and County Council, hospital, and charitable-aid rates, &c.

128. Supposing you had taken out a new lease in 1892, would your improvements have exceeded £5 per acre?—No, sir.

129. Therefore you would not have had to pay on any improvements over £5 per acre?—No.

130. You referred to this £150 being spent upon the road: to what extent was that £150 allocated to the tenants? I understand you to mean that this £150 was capitalised, and that you, in common with the Natives, paid the interest on it for the making of this road?—No, sir. These persons took up the land, and they have applied to the Trustee, and he has made this great concession: that he will find £150 to make the road to the end of the property they hold provided they surrender their leases and allow him to attach to their leases the interest of that money.

131. Instead of calling upon them to pay the £150 at once he will take the land as security, and the £150 is capitalised?—Yes. There are 4,000 acres of Native land which he holds, and which is not leased, which is touched by that road, and the Natives pay nothing for it.