

have been dealt with up to the present to the best advantage?—I say that when the lease expired the last time the estate should have gone up to public auction. I say it is false sentiment to think that any person should have a right to the land after the expiry of his lease. But if tenders are called, I think, all things being alike, the present tenant should have preference.

290. Do you think there has been any disadvantage to the estate by not letting it by public auction?—No, I do not think so, because I think a fair rent was given at the time.

291. *Mr. Ngata.*] You understand the Commission of inquiry is from the point of view of the institution, and not of the gentlemen who want land?—I quite understand that.

292. Do you think that the Te Aute College trust has been unduly injured by the mode in which the lands have been let on the last lease?—I cannot answer, for the simple reason that everything was at a low ebb; but it would have been better if the estate had gone up to public auction.

293. Do you think a better rent could have been got?—Probably it would. I do not say it would.

294. *The Chairman.*] Supposing it had been put up to auction, what amount of capital would a man who took it up need to have in his pocket in order to stock the property and take over the improvements?—Well, probably he would have to pay a half-years rent down first.

295. Would he not need to have £10,000 in order to stock it?—More than that.

296. So that a man who tendered for the property would have to be prepared to put down £10,000?—Quite so.

297. *Mr. Lee.*] Though you have expressed the opinion that the trustees should not have renewed the lease without calling for tenders, still under all ordinary circumstances do you not think there may have been in the minds of the trustees and in the knowledge of the trustees sufficient information to show that they were justified in renewing the lease without calling for tenders?—No doubt an outsider like myself does not know the whole of the questions attached to the matter. But what I say is that a private person can do as he likes, but in the case of trustees, a lease should be open to public competition.

SAMUEL WILLIAMS further examined.

298. *The Chairman.*] I understand you wish to make a statement in regard to a remark in Mr. Dillon's evidence?—Yes, Mr. Dillon made a reference to the question of sentiment. I have always requested the trustees not to consider me in the matter at all in reletting, so that it was open to them to do what they thought proper without regard to me. I think it is clear to the Commission that no sentiment was entertained at the last valuation, for I stood out, and it was not until my friends urged me to accept it that I did so.

JAMES HENRY COLEMAN examined.

299. *The Chairman.*] You are a trustee of the Te Aute trust?—Yes.

300. You have been in this district how many years?—Forty-seven years.

301. You were not a trustee when the last lease was signed?—No. I have been a trustee slightly under three years.

302. I suppose you have an intimate knowledge of the property, and know all the matters connected with the trust and the lease, and so forth?—Yes. I may say I lived on the property from 1859 to 1865. It was then in its original state.

303. You know the improvements that have been made?—Yes.

304. Talking generally, what do you say about the way in which the property has been handled and treated up to date?—Well, from the date that the Rev. Samuel Williams, as he was then, took charge, I do not know any property that has been better developed than this same Te Aute property from its original state of fern and rubbish of all descriptions. There was no grass on it when I first knew it, except a little in the various gullies and around the edges of the swamps. The hills as grazing land were practically valueless. I have read in the Archdeacon's evidence that he let the property to one Mr. Pharazyn for four years at £4 2s. 6d., and that he then gave it up. Well, I was not on the property at that time, but I was in the succeeding year—in 1859. I was under the Archdeacon as manager for five years. I knew Mr. Smith, who was referred to by the Archdeacon in his evidence, and he bought about eleven hundred sheep and put them on the property, which was under a lease to him. Within a year—I cannot say in exactly how many months—he found his sheep were not doing as well as he expected, and he took them away to another place, in regard to which he had arranged with the Natives. The land would not keep them. That was in the year 1860. The place then was in a very primitive condition. There were a certain number of trust sheep on the Maori land, and the year I went there, what with wild dogs and wild pigs, I think we only docked about twenty-five lambs. The rest of them had been killed. There were two thousand to three thousand sheep on this trust land, and afterwards, by the expenditure of the Archdeacon's own money, because there was no means of getting any other money, he fenced in this fern land and put sheep on it. I may say that the Archdeacon provided this money—at interest, of course. The Archdeacon initiated this process of breaking in the fern land. He is really the man who taught the Hawke's Bay settlers how to reduce the fern land into its present state. I myself in the year 1860, with a sack of grass-seed over my back, sowed a good deal of the land adjoining the school residence. This went on for some years, and gradually, by the expenditure of his own money, the Archdeacon got the place to become a self-supporting affair, and after that a payable affair. Then he rented the place, and one lease followed on after another, and I come to the last lease, which I suppose the Commission wish to know most about. It was given in the year 1903. I think the previous lease expired in 1900. There was a hiatus of two or three years between the expiry of the old lease and the taking-up of the new lease. I should like to draw the attention of the Commission to this fact. I have in my hand here the export-values of wool. It is compiled by the Chamber of Commerce, and it is a fairly accurate return. It gives the value of wool exported from the Province of Hawke's Bay for each year from 1874 to 1904. What I wish to refer to are the years