

37 Where is Mr Barron's letter?—He may have sent it up to have it signed. There is the usual printed form of instructions.

38. You have had no reply yet from the agent?—No. This was the day before Mr Arndt was written to. This is the 30th August, and Mr Arndt's letter was the 31st. There does not appear to have been anything more done until the 28th June, 1906.

39. There is nothing more on the file?—No, not to show what was done.

40 What is the next date?—The letter from Mr Walter Symes of the 20th June, 1906, forwarding a petition to the Hon. Mr Hall-Jones, who was then Acting-Premier

41 Do you mind reading that?—Wellington, 28th June, 1906.—Hon. William Hall-Jones, Premier, Wellington.—DEAR SIR,—I beg to forward you herewith a petition from Mr G. A. Eagles and forty-eight others, being all settlers in Toko, asking that Mr Alfred Bayly's property of 1,900 acres be acquired under the Land for Settlements Act. The property is practically subdivided; there are forty paddocks fenced, six houses, and five milking-sheds and yards. There is a creamery and school on the property, a metalled road to the property, and it is two and a half (2½) miles from Toko Township and Railway-station. Two hundred acres of the property has been cleared and ploughed, and last winter it carried 1,900 breeding-ewes, 260 milch cows, 200 store cattle, and about 20 horses. It is really a very fine property, thoroughly adapted for dairying, and is capable of being cut into smaller areas than is held by those who are milking on shares with the present owner, who, as the petition states, will not renew his agreement with them: they are therefore very anxious to continue; but Mr Bayly himself has assured me that he is tired of the share principle, and will sell all the cows off and restock with sheep. If this is done it will be a big loss to the district, drive five or six families out to seek employment, which means closing the school, as there will not be sufficient children left to keep the school open. This in turn means driving the settlers who are living in the locality away, or bringing their children up without education. I was asked by the settlers to interview Mr Bayly on the subject of selling in the way suggested by petition. This I have done, and he is willing to sell at £11 10s. per acre. The price is reasonable—in fact, cheap for land in that district, none of which can be got for less than £14 to £16 per acre. In fact, Mr Barron, the Chairman of the Land for Settlements Board, something over a year ago valued 1 000 acres of his property at £14 per acre, and it has increased in value considerably since then. It will be necessary to deal immediately with this, as the milking season starts in August, and some of the agreements either have expired or do so immediately. I shall be very glad to give you or the Land for Settlements Board any further information, but I strongly recommend the acquirement of this property in the interests of the district and colony. If cut up into areas of from 100 to 300 acres it will be rushed for at Mr Bayly's price.—Yours faithfully, WALTER SYMES."

42. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward* | Will you kindly say which Mr. Barron that is?—Mr A. Barron, Chairman of the Land for Settlements Board.

43. *Mr Myers* | Mr Symes writes on that date recommending this property to the Government?—Yes.

44. Mr Symes was member for the district?—I believe so.

45. Does that letter show any indication of its being signed by Mr Symes as an agent?—No, I do not think so.

46 It is written on General Assembly Library paper?—Yes, as member for the district. Mr Hall-Jones notes it on the 10th July, "Mr Barron,—Kindly ascertain if Mr Bayly is prepared to negotiate upon a reasonable basis." On the 11th July there is a letter from Mr Hall-Jones to Mr Walter Symes acknowledging receipt of the petition: "I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th ultimo, with which you forward petition signed by Mr G. A. Eagles and forty-eight other settlers at Toko, asking that Mr Alfred Bayly's property of 1,900 acres might be acquired under the Land for Settlements Act. In reply thereto I have to inform you that I have carefully noted your representations, and also the contents of the petition, and have instructed Mr Barron, the Land Purchase Inspector, to make inquiries into the matter."

47 Yes, what next?—Then on the 12th July a letter was written by Mr Barron to Mr Bayly as follows: "A petition has been presented to the Government praying that your estate near Toko should be acquired under the Land for Settlement Act, and I am to ascertain if you are still willing to sell, and at what price. I understand you have sold the principal house and some land occupied by Mr Symes in 1904, and if you are agreeable to negotiate please state the area now left, and give section-numbers or a map. I understand your price is now £11 10s. per acre, but I think it is unlikely that the Land Purchase Board would go as high as that rate."

48. Now will you go on from there?—There is then a telegram on the 14th July from Mr Walter Symes to Mr Barron, sent from Stratford, as follows. "Will be pleased to drive you out to Toko if you will advise me when you are to arrive here."

49 Please go on?—Then there is a valuation or report on the property by Mr J. Barron, the Crown Lands Ranger.

50. I do not think it is necessary to read the whole report. I think it will be sufficient if you will give us the valuation and any recommendation that is made?—It says, "The estate is a good one, the soil having a fairly heavy black mould, and of fair depth on the lower parts. On the higher ground the soil is also good, but not so heavy. The property is well grassed and watered. About 1,400 acres will cut up into suitable dairying farms. I estimate that the estate can be subdivided into ten farms, varying in size from 100 to 460 acres."

51 The report also states that the unimproved value is £7 11s. 8d. per acre?—Yes.

52. Amounting to £14,407; estimated value of improvements, £6,393 which makes a total capital value of £20,800?—Yes.

53. The improved value is assessed at £11 per acre?—Yes,