

with it, except that by referring to one of the Journals we saw that a petition had been presented at some particular time, but I cannot say from memory now what the report was. We eventually found an old petition in connection with it, but nothing else could be found. I then drafted a petition, and got it typed in Wellington, for which I paid. I sent the petition to Mr Newland, of Waverley. The petition was signed by Mr George Johnston and, I think, sixteen others, and returned to me. I knew that was not nearly all the west coast lessees.

33 May I ask how many, in point of fact, were there of west coast lessees?—There were twenty-seven entitled to sign. There were twenty-nine all told, but two leases had been issued.

34. Mr Lysaght was mistaken when he said they numbered 100?—Yes, a long way out. There were twenty-nine, all told—that is, firms and others; but I am not counting the individual members—those are the lessees.

35. Twenty-nine lessees either consisting of individuals or firms?—There were twenty-seven entitled to claim for a return of arbitration fees.

36. And twenty-nine altogether?—Yes.

37 Now, you said you got the petition returned?—Yes.

38. What year was the petition presented?—I cannot say from memory

39 *Mr Myers*] In 1905?—I dare say it was.

40. *Mr Skerrett*] The petition is in?—I presented the petition. I went home and hunted up all the information I had, and I had a great deal at that time in connection with the Supreme Court cases. I hunted up every Act and every regulation and *Gazette* that I could find in connection with it to establish the case before the Petitions Committee. The Committee sat, and I previously sent to Mr Newland and told him when the Committee was going to sit, and he and Mr H. Nicholson came down to Wellington to give evidence in support of the petition. I worked up their case in the best way I knew. They gave evidence, and I made a long statement, and gave the Committee as many facts as I possibly could. The result was that the Committee evidently were not satisfied, because in their report they said they had no recommendation to make.

41 *Mr Allen*.] Which Committee was that?—The M to Z Committee. Mr Buddo was Chairman.

42 *Mr Fraser*] What year was that?—I think, 1905. I found that I had omitted to put one or two facts before the Committee—something that had been brought to my recollection after the sitting, by talking the matter over with Messrs. Newland and Nicholson. I moved that the matter should be referred back to the Committee for further consideration and report, that I had further evidence to give them, and I thought that if they had this further evidence before them the report might be altered. The Committee was a pretty full one on the next occasion, and I gave them the additional facts that I had learned in the meantime, and they were so satisfied with the facts that they sent in a report recommending the matter to the favourable consideration of the Government. A great number of members, I may say, voluntarily assisted me to get this report referred back to the Committee, because it was opposed by the Native Minister, Mr. Carroll.

43. *Mr Massey*] Do you remember the date of the discussion?—No, Mr Massey, I do not. I could not say from memory. It went to a division, I think, with the result that it was referred back to the Committee, and I got a favourable recommendation of the Committee. I then, at Mr Seddon's request, tendered him all the evidence that I had given before the Committee. He said, 'I know this case pretty well myself: it is an old-standing grievance, but I should like to know some of the facts.' I gave him the whole of the evidence I had in my possession, and explained anything that he asked me to explain. He said, 'Well, this case has never been before the House or before the Committee of this House in this manner before. If it had you must have had redress years ago.' I thanked him, and nothing was done then until on the supplementary estimates of that year a vote of £2,000 was placed under 'Miscellaneous,' to refund the amount of the award money to the petitioners.

44. *Mr Skerrett*.] The firm of W and A. Symes were petitioners in the petition of 1905?—Yes.

45 Now, I want to put this question to you: Did you have any arrangement, express or implied, with any of the petitioners for any payment to you in connection with the presentation of the petition or in connection with your appearance before the Committee of the House in support of the petition?—None whatever. I never spoke to them on the subject, nor they to me.

46. No arrangement or understanding of any shape or form?—Not in any shape or form.

47 Now will you please continue?—After the money had been placed upon the supplementary estimates and the session had closed, when I got home I wrote to Mr George Johnston and told him the result of the petition. A great number of petitioners then wrote to me asking me how they were to proceed to get their money. Others wrote to me asking why they had not been included in the petition, and I told them that I could not say why it was—that probably it was an oversight, because I had sent the petition to get all the lessees. I wrote then and told them that they would have to make a claim. They wrote back and asked me how, as they did not know what they had paid, and how they were to claim. They had lost all records and everything in connection with their payments, and many of them knew no more about their payments than any one of you gentlemen sitting around this table. They asked me to give them any information that I possibly could supply them with. I did so, and they then wanted me to make out their claims for them. I wrote back in most cases to those who were not my constituents, and told them that I was in business, and that I had got the money on the estimates for them as a member of Parliament, but if they wanted assistance from any one they should go to their own member and get that assistance. They were outside my electorate, and I told them that I was in business and that I could not afford to give them my time in collecting their amounts, and that I should be expected to be paid in my business capacity as land and commission agent. Unfortunately, when I was