

108. There is a further letter from Mr A. S. Hobbs "Yours of the 29th ult. is to hand, and am sorry to write that when I gave up the leasehold in question I gave up all documentary evidence to the fire, never dreaming that at this distant period there could be any chance of a refund. Thanking you for your several references to the matter." There are also some letters from Mr Newland dealing with the matter?—Yes.

109 And one from Mr Siggs dated 17th February, 1906 "Last month I received a letter from G. Johnston, of Waverley, re the amount paid in lifting the awards on the Whareroa and Tirotiromoana leases. He stated the amount I had paid was £147 9s., but I think it was nearer £300. Unfortunately, since coming down here I have got out of touch with the matter. I am sorry to trouble you, but would be glad if you would let me know what is being done in the matter, and what the amount of the claims really were. I was told to write to the Public Trustee, but he had referred me to the Lands and Survey Department for information, so I thought I would ask you what course would be the best to take, knowing that you had so kindly interested yourself in the matter. Thanking you in anticipation." Was he a constituent of yours?—No, he was living at Palmerston, and is still living there, I think.

110. Now, there is a letter from Mr Gower dated 6th August, 1906, as follows: "W. Symes, Esq., M.H.R.—DEAR SIR,—I wrote you some time ago for a copy of the petition of the west coast lessees, and the names of those that had been paid and those that had not, so that I could get another petition prepared for signature, to be presented at the coming session. Kindly attend to this matter at once, and oblige, yours faithfully, W. GOWER, Whenuakura." That is a letter to which you replied saying you would supply the information?—Yes, upon payment of £20.

111 That was information in your possession to enable Mr Gower to prepare a petition dealing with other matters?—He had received the amount of his refund long previous to that, and I did not feel called upon to give all the information without being paid for doing so.

112. Was he a constituent of yours?—He was a constituent of mine, but it had nothing whatever to do with my parliamentary duties.

113. Now, do you remember having an interview with Mr S. Gower?—Yes.

114. Will you look at the letter from S. Gower [Exhibit W produced]? You might read that letter, and tell me whether it is a correct statement of the facts as to your interview with Mr Gower?—Yes, it is.

115. Did you ask Mr Gower for payment of the sum of £5 or any other sum by way of commission?—I never asked him for a shilling in my life by way of commission either in this case or in any other case whatever.

116. I want to ask you a few questions relating to the sale of Mr Alfred Bayly's property to the Government?—Yes.

117 Now, what was your first connection with that matter?—My first connection with Mr Alfred Bayly, and the only connection, was in regard to the settlers who were then milking under an agreement with Mr Bayly. Some of them—I cannot remember how many, but two or three of them—met me in Stratford, and told me that their agreements with him would shortly expire, and that he had assured them that it was not his intention to renew the agreements, that he was tired of the whole matter, and was going to close all the dairy farms, sell the cattle, and restock his place with sheep and put a manager on. I think they told me that Mr Jackson was to be the manager. They said, "We do not want to leave this if we can possibly help it. We should like the estate acquired by the Government under the Land for Settlements Act, and how can we approach the Government with a view of this being done?" I said, "Well, I do not know of any other way excepting by petition." They said, "What sort of petition do we want?" I said, "Well, the first thing you want to do is to ascertain from Mr Bayly if he is willing to sell, at what price he will sell, and if at the price that he is asking, including the expense of cutting up the estate and roading it, the place would lease or could be made remunerative." They said they would, and I heard nothing further about the matter until they brought me a petition signed by, I should say, close on fifty. At any rate, I should say there were over forty signatures upon it. If I remember rightly, it was during the sitting of Parliament, and I think they came to me on a Sunday. I used generally to go home on Saturdays and return on Monday or Tuesday, and they brought the petition to me on the Sunday or Monday morning. They wanted me to get all the particulars from Mr Alfred Bayly—that is, the area that had been stumped and ploughed, the number of buildings, and any other particulars that I might deem necessary to support their petition. Some time on the Monday I rang up Mr Bayly on the telephone, and told him that I had just received a petition signed. I dare say I gave him the names of the petitioners, and said that a number of people were asking me to forward this petition for the purpose of purchasing his place by the Government under the Land for Settlements Act, and was it correct, and he said "Yes." He said that he had told them he was willing to sell at a price. I said, "Well, they also want me to get any particulars that you can supply me with," and he gave me all the particulars, which I wrote down. When I came back to Wellington I wrote a letter setting forth the particulars that Mr Bayly had given me, and sent them in support of and with the petition to the then Premier, I think the Hon. Mr Hall-Jones. The only reply I ever had in connection with that was—I do not know whether it came from Mr Hall-Jones or whether from the Land Purchase Board—but some one wrote me acknowledging the receipt of the petition. It must have been from the Minister, because he said it had been referred to the Land Purchase Board. I never wrote any more letters in connection with the matter, either to the Government or to the Land Purchase Board. I never interviewed a Minister or any member of the Ministry, and neither did I interview any member of the Land Board in connection with it.

118. And in forwarding the petition and the letter accompanying the petition were you in any sense acting as agent for Mr Bayly?—No, there was no suggestion of agent.