

252. Why was it delayed so long? If this is the only protection the Board has, why was it delayed till the 18th August?—There was no immediate need for hurry. Any transfer would require to be signed by myself.

253. In your private capacity?—Yes.

254. Not as Chairman of the Board?—No.

255. Who pays the rates and taxes on this land?—I do not know who pays them now. I pay none.

256. You are the registered owner of the land?—I discussed that matter with Mr. Dalziell, and he undertook to see that they were paid.

257. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Are any due now?—I have not had any advice of any. I do not anticipate any trouble about it.

258. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] You hold the land as security in any case?—Yes.

259. *Mr. Herries.*] But it is under mortgage—it may be mortgaged for a big sum?—There is sufficient security to meet all rates, I think.

260. Have you any recollection whether the amount it is mortgaged for is a larger sum than the value of the land?—Than the value of the owner's interest in the land?

261. Yes?—It is quite possible that it is. I could not say. I do not know what the amount of the mortgages is.

262. What is the position of the lessees—the original lessee (Mr. Lewis), or the people who got his interest in the lease?—His leases were transferred to me. I hold them in trust.

263. As well as the freehold?—Yes. It brings the leases and the fee-simple into one ownership.

264. Is this the largest transaction that has taken place in your land district as far as price and area are concerned?—Yes.

265. It presented a good many unusual features?—Yes.

266. You have never had a transaction like this before?—Not one of the same magnitude.

267. Nor with agreements like that?—No.

*Mr. Herries:* I do not think I can ask any more questions till we get these agreements.

*The Chairman:* Do you wish them produced?

*Mr. Herries:* I certainly think they ought to be, and the other deeds—the mortgages.

*The Chairman:* We will get them all.

*Witness:* You could get certified copies, perhaps, from the District Land Registrar.

268. *Mr. Dive.*] Did I understand you to state that the land has to be cut up within three years?—Yes.

269. Have you the right to extend that time?—Yes, the Board has.

270. You, as trustee for this company, I suppose, will be favourably disposed to giving them an extension of time, if so required?—Why do you say that?

271. Will you be favourably disposed to give them an extension?—I think it very improbable, unless they can give a very good reason.

272. You are trustee, and you mortgaged the interests in the whole of this land. Have the Natives any say in reference to the mortgaging of this land?—Why should they?

273. They have £2,500 worth of shares in the company. How are their interests being conserved by you as trustee?—I do not see that they have any interest, except their interest in the company. They have no interest in the land.

274. Have they any say in this company?—They have, I suppose, their ordinary rights as shareholders.

275. Have they been consulted with reference to mortgaging?—No.

276. You are trustee for the company as well as the Natives?—I am the trustee for the owner of the property.

277. The Natives are interested to the extent of £2,500?

*Hon. Sir J. Carroll:* They are not owners.

*Witness:* They are interested in the company—they are not owners in the land.

278. *Mr. Dive.*] The Natives are interested to the extent of £2,500 worth of shares in this company. You are the trustee, or owner of the land, nominally: is not that the position?—Yes.

279. In allowing this land to be mortgaged, have you consulted the interests of the Natives?—It is surely not necessary for me to hold a meeting of shareholders.

280. Do you know the duties of a trustee?—I know my duties in this case.

281. Are you conserving the Natives' interests?—I would not say I am not.

282. Are you perfectly satisfied that you are?—Yes, with regard to anything I have done.

283. Are you, or are you not, a very willing agent in the matter of carrying out the demands of this company?

*Hon. Sir J. Carroll:* That is not a fair question.

*The Chairman:* The witness can answer it or not, as he thinks fit.

*Hon. Sir J. Carroll:* I do not think Mr. Dive should suggest anything of the kind.

[Witness did not answer the question.]

284. *The Chairman.*] In this deed of agreement there is a section—section 7—which reads as follows: "The purchaser shall forthwith, after payment of the said purchase-money, take steps to subdivide the said land for sale, and shall use his best endeavours to sell the same in areas not exceeding the limits prescribed by Part XII of the Act within three years from the date of this agreement, or such extended time as may under the provisions in that behalf hereinafter contained be granted by the Board." In the event of the purchasers not complying with that section, what would be your position?—There is a further provision—clause 9.