

40. Did you know of Mr. Dalziell's offer to sell your interest for £28,000?—Yes, the price I had sold it to the Napier people for.

41. You would have been quite satisfied to sell it to the Government for £28,000?—Yes, at that time.

42. But then the sale to Chambers, McLean, and Price was still in existence, was it not?—They would have withdrawn.

43. What was the object of your retaining 7,000 acres of this block?—I have got three boys.

44. That is the reason why you retained the 7,000 acres?—I do not know. A man has a lot of objects.

45. On which part of the block are the 7,000 acres situated? Are they all in one piece?—No; there are about five blocks.

46. Are they all connected?—Oh, no; they are different parts. Walter Jones has one of the front portions; then a Mr. Bayly has got a block up the Mohakatino River; and there are other blocks further up the Mokau River.

47. Is it good land, the 7,000 acres?—Fair.

48. Is it the best part of the block?—That is another question.

49. It is not the worst, is it?—These people have been improving the property.

50. Can you tell us how much rent you get from the whole 7,000 acres?—It would be altogether £150-odd a year; but it increases a little later.

51. The rents will be increased shortly?—Yes, in 1918 the increased rent commences, I think.

52. Did you spend any money on the property?—No.

53. These 7,000 acres are vested in Mr. Bowler?—Yes.

54. And you have to cut this land up and sell it?—Yes.

55. In the proper areas?—Yes.

56. What will be the position of the lessees then?—There is time enough for that. They have a valid title, and they are all right.

57. But you are obliged to cut up the freehold. Will any one purchase it subject to the leases?—There are a lot of ways of doing that.

58. It seems to me to be rather an impossible position?—Not at all. Nothing is impossible. Mother Nature has given to me good, fair, clear brains.

59. If you do not cut it up in three years and sell it, the Maori Land Board can do so for you?—Yes.

60. You agreed to that situation?—Quite.

61. Is there any coal on your 7,000 acres?—I do not know. I hardly think so.

62. Mr. Bowler mortgaged your block of 7,000 acres to Mr. Mason Chambers?—Yes.

63. Do you know what the amount was?—I have a lot of dealings with Mr. Chambers. I do not think that matters in this connection.

64. It was collateral security—it was not actually on the block itself?—No.

65. It was in connection with other dealings?—Yes.

66. I do not want to go into other dealings. It was not in connection with this block solely?—No.

67. You have had dealings with Mr. Chambers for a long time?

68. *Mr. Massey.*] Are you paid off, so far as your interest in the other land is concerned—the 46,000 acres?—Yes.

69. You are paid right up?—Yes.

70. Have you any responsibility in connection with the 46,000 acres?—I do not think so.

71. You are right out?—Yes.

72. With regard to these 7,000 acres: is it fairly flat land?—Some of it.

73. Have you sold any of it?—No.

74. Have you offered to sell any of it?—No.

75. Have you put a price on it, or on any part of it?—No.

76. What do you value it at?—I do not know.

77. Is it not a fact that you have had an offer of £2 an acre for it, or have offered it at £2 an acre?—That is hearsay.

78. Have you had an offer for it?—No.

79. Are you quite sure?—Yes; I am here to speak the truth.

80. Are you acquainted with a gentleman named Coverdale?—Yes. I saw him this morning.

81. Was he connected with you in this transaction?—He had nothing whatever to do with it.

82. Coming back for a moment to this 7,000 acres, is it under lease to the tenants who are living on it?—Yes.

83. They are making improvements?—Yes.

84. Have they done much in the way of improving it?—Yes.

85. Is there much of it in grass?—Well, certain portions.

86. What proportion?—I really do not know.

87. At the end of the lease, if you are still the owner, or these boys of yours, I suppose the improvements and anything else there is will go to you or to them—to whoever happens to be the owner of the freehold?—They may want to put it into a deer-park. When there is a twenty-seven years' lease you do not know what may happen.

88. Any improvements that are on the land now or that happen to be made during this twenty-seven years will become the property of the owner of the freehold at the end of the lease?—So I understand.

89. *The Chairman.*] Have you any idea as to what profit Mr. Walter Jones has made on that property of his—which I personally consider to be the best of the block—during the twenty years that he has occupied it?—I could not say that.