

99. It was better for the State and better for the man?—Yes, in the case of a small area.

100. *Mr. Witty.*] Does not the sale of these small pieces of land allow a man with a large block to mop up the small pieces?—Not necessarily.

101. Does it not give him a chance to do so?—No, I do not think it does. The Cheviot auctions are different from ordinary auctions, and it gives a man a reasonable time to pay. It is only in part-payments, and the balance remains for five years.

102. But he has got to pay?—Yes, no doubt.

103. Do you mean to say that a man who has got the money is not in a better position to buy land than a man who has got a little money even though the terms are good?—The man may be able to raise the money.

104. Who is in the best position?—Naturally, the man who has got the cash; but that does not bar the other man from raising the money.

105. But he has got to raise it afterwards?—No, if he is wise he will arrange where to raise it first.

106. But he cannot say whether he is going to get the land?—He would negotiate.

107. Would you lend a man money on something he has not got?—No, but I would advise a man to make arrangements for the money, and I would find the money if he got the section.

108. Would you pledge him to any price he would like to give?—No, I suppose I would not.

109. I think you said Mr. Holton might be able to give any price he liked?—No, I said I did not know whether he had 5s. in the world. I never heard of the man until I saw his name.

110. Prior to that you stated that Mr. Holton would be able to go as high as he liked and therefore he had a better chance than other people?—I did not know anything about him.

111. The Christchurch Board recommended this land being let on the renewable lease?—Yes.

112. You know the land?—No, I do not.

113. Not knowing the land, do you mean to say you would go against the advice of the Commissioner and the Land Board, who knew the land?—Well, it is not land for settlement. It is merely the disposal of a small piece of land.

114. But, even so, what is the Commissioner and the Land Board for?—They are for looking after land and suggesting, but it does not necessarily follow that what they suggest binds the head of the Department and the Minister to follow.

115. But is it usual for the head of the Department to go against the Board and the Commissioner, who know what they are talking about?—Well, you have got to prove that they know what they are talking about.

116. The proof is here that they recommended?—There is no proof there.

117. They recommended, and some of them actually lived on the Cheviot Estate and knew what they were talking about?—I have no knowledge who lived on the Cheviot Estate except Mr. Holton, who was the lessee. I saw that from the papers.

118. You went by the papers and not by the recommendation of the Board?—By the papers on the file.

119. If you went by the papers, why did you not take the advice of the two Rangers and also the Board?—I exercised my own discretion in the matter.

120. Then you put your ideas against the practical knowledge of those who knew the subject?—In some cases I exercise my own discretion where I think it is the best means of obtaining an end, and then I act accordingly. I recommend the Minister to act, and he acts on my judgment sometimes.

121. Do you not think your judgment was very bad when you put it against the people who had practical knowledge?—I say nothing of the kind.

122. Then will you tell me what is the good of having a Commissioner in Christchurch and a Land Board, who know what they are talking about, if you are going to veto what they recommend?—We do not always veto it.

123. I am speaking of the present case. What is the good, can you tell me, of having the Land Board and the Commissioner in Canterbury, who know what they are talking about, if you veto their recommendation?—Well, they have made a recommendation and I have not acted on it: that is all.

124. In that case the Land Board and the Commissioner in Christchurch are no good?—I do not say so.

125. But by not taking their advice you admit they are not?—I do not. I say they are of very great good very often.

126. And knowing nothing about the subject you veto their recommendation?—I make no such admission.

[Line of cross-examination ruled out by Chairman.]

127. The Board recommend this land for selection under the renewable-lease tenure?—Yes.

128. You said it was too small for a poor man, I think?—I said nothing about the poor man.

129. Well, for a man to live on?—Yes, for a man to make his living on. As it is broken limestone land it may be.

130. There are little creatures as bees. Do you not think a man could make a living out of bees on this land?—I am not a bee-farmer.

131. Do you mean to say a man could not make a living off that land?—I could not say about bees, because I have no knowledge on the matter.

132. Well, take fruit?—Limestone land is not the place I would grow fruit.

133. But if a man had a practical knowledge of fruit and was prepared to take up that land for fruit purposes, would you give him the opportunity?—I have given him the opportunity.

134. Under this?—Yes.