

7. What led up to his being told: had the Land Board discussed the position, or had it been brought under the notice of the Land Board?—I think the Rangers were up there making an inspection, and then he applied to the Board again to have the lease renewed, on the ground that he had no access on that side to the rest of his holding.

8. He held some land adjoining, did he not?—321 acres.

9. Cheviot Estate land, held under lease?—Yes.

10. What I want to get at is this: had the Land Board discussed the position of his lease prior to his lease coming to an end?—I could not say.

11. Had your attention as Commissioner been called to the position in any way?—No.

12. *Mr. Forbes.*] Were you Commissioner at the time?—I think the case originated under Mr. Brodrick.

13. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] How long have you been Commissioner in Canterbury?—A year and two months.

14. Mr. Holton's lease terminated, you say, on the 31st December?—Yes.

15. Then arrangements must have been made in your time, I think?—No. The question was discussed in Mr. Brodrick's time.

16. Do you say that no discussion took place in your time until the termination of Mr. Holton's lease?—Not in my time.

17. Did any member of the Board call your attention to the fact that Mr. Holton's lease was coming to an end?—No.

18. Then what led up to the present position?—As far as I know it first came under my notice through the Rangers reporting. I do not know what happened before that.

19. About what date was that?—Some time in December of last year, I should think. The Rangers reported, and then a letter came from Mr. Holton saying that he understood the Rangers had been reporting and the section was going to be leased, and he wanted to see the Board on the subject. He came to see the Board. As I say, the reason why he wanted the section was, he said, because he wanted access on that side. The Board got a report from the Ranger there as to his access, and the Ranger reported that if we gave him a right-of-way through this particular section—Section 20—it would be sufficient. The Board decided to offer the section for renewable lease, with a right-of-way for Mr. Holton.

20. Cut the section in two?—Yes. There is a plan of it on the file.

21. Have you any personal knowledge of the country?—No.

22. You remember the correspondence with the Lands Department here, recommending that the section in question should be disposed of by way of renewable lease?—Yes.

23. Have you any idea of the date of that? It was a good many months ago, was it not—I mean the commencement?—Yes.

24. Do you recollect the matter being referred back to you and the Land Board—to yourself, presumably—to consider whether this piece of land was not required as a reserve on account of the deposits of lime which it was supposed to contain?—Yes.

25. You remember getting a report from the Rangers as to whether it was necessary to keep the section as a reserve?—Yes.

26. You communicated that to Wellington?—Yes.

27. Then I think the head of the Department notified you that as the land was not required for a reserve and as there were several applicants for it it would be better to dispose of it by auction?—Yes.

28. Did you agree with that?—It was a matter of administration. I cannot say I agreed with it, because I had made recommendations already that it should be disposed of under renewable lease.

29. You accepted the suggestion?—Yes.

30. What rental was paid by Mr. Holton, or whoever was the lessee previously?—It was £1 2s. 6d., I think, per year.

31. You do not mean £1 2s. 6d. for the whole section?—I think that was it. It was only a year-to-year lease.

*Mr. Forbes.* It was at the rate of something like 3s. an acre.

32. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Have you any idea what the land is worth per acre?—About £12.

33. And it was being leased for about 3s. an acre?—Yes.

34. Do you not think the State was making a bad bargain in leasing land at 3s. an acre the capital value of which was at least £12 an acre?—Yes.

35. And, putting it the other way, if the State got £12 an acre for land which had been leased for 3s. an acre, the State would be making a good bargain?—Decidedly.

36. Do you know of any influence having been brought to bear by the Minister in favour of having the land disposed of by auction?—None that I know of.

37. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You remember the circumstance under which the matter was first brought before your Board—the matter of this section?—Yes.

38. Could you say whether it was because of the Ranger's report?—I think it was on the Ranger's report.

39. What aspect of the question did the Board consider at that particular date: in what manner did they propose dealing with it?—The idea was to lease the section on renewable lease.

40. They recommended leasing the land on renewable lease?—Yes.

41. Was the Board unanimous?—Yes.

42. There is power under the Cheviot Act to sell for cash or let. Was there any reason given by the Board why the section should be let on renewable lease rather than sold for cash?—The Board gave no reason. It was merely a resolution.

43. They expressed no opinion on the question?—No.