

was getting on Mr. Pollen succeeded Mr. Brodrick as Commissioner, and he followed up Mr. Brodrick's work, and fully approved of what he had done with regard to this particular section. It had been again brought before our notice by Mr. Holton. Just after Mr. Pollen's arrival Mr. Holton came down and interviewed the Board. Mr. Pollen was quite satisfied that the Board had done the right thing, and would not listen to Mr. Holton's appeal. He simply followed up his predecessor's action and told Mr. Holton that the thing would have to go on, that the section would have to be offered to the public. Mr. Holton pointed out something about a road—that it would affect him very much, if he was not allowed this section, in getting on to his own section for ploughing. Mr. Pollen seemed to think this was only an excuse. However, to show my feeling in the matter, I said to the Board, "I think we had better postpone this and get the Ranger to inquire if a road could be given Mr. Holton, or whether it is a fact that this section being disposed of would interfere with his work." The Ranger was again sent up, and he reported that a right-of-way or a road could be given in. He did not think it was really necessary, because he believed that Mr. Holton could get up another way. However, to meet the case we decided to give Mr. Holton a road through the section so that he would not be blocked, and as far as I knew the thing was going on and the section would be shortly offered. Mr. Rentoul came to me and asked me when this plan would be out, and I said I thought it would be very shortly. This was about Christmas-time, I suppose. I said, "I think it is just undergoing the preliminary arrangements, and they are busy in the office and plans are not available." Then at the February meeting we got a letter from the Under-Secretary to say that the Department thought that this section was too small to let on renewable-lease tenure, and recommended that it should be let on a short lease of seven or eight years. The following meeting—in March—was my last meeting. Nothing, as far as I remember, eventuated at the March meeting, so that, officially, that was as far as I had anything to do with the matter. I do not know that I am supposed to say anything about what took place after.

5. If you have any personal knowledge of any statements made we shall be glad to hear it?—My personal knowledge is simply this: I saw from the paper—and, of course, was told—that the Board had been asked to rescind their previous resolution with regard to this section, and that it was going to be offered by public auction. I only want to state this—and I do not want to say very much more—that the reason that was sent down to the Board for altering the decision was not the real reason for the changing of the resolution. It seemed to me it was hardly likely that the Under-Secretary or the Minister of Lands would have noticed it, with a small section like that, unless it had been brought under their notice in some outside way. I might go so far as to say this, too, quite frankly, and candidly, and truthfully, that it was common talk in Cheviot that Mr. Holton had been to headquarters about the matter and would upset the action of the Land Board. That was common property. With regard to the excuse or the reason given to the Board to alter their decision, that also appears to me to be futile, because land has been bought and is being bought for settlement purposes cut up into even smaller sections than the one now in question. So that the reason that it was too small for a renewable lease, as the public would see, seemed only an excuse to get out of the position. We have always experienced on the Land Board a difficulty in getting the Lands Department to make these sections that they have bought and cut up big enough. Now, you see the excuse they give is the other way—that this section was too small; and that could not be the real reason, because it is absurd to think of anything of the sort, when in land settlements down in Canterbury you have put perhaps seven or eight small sections in a big settlement for the very purpose of letting them to small men. That is as far as I wish to state.

6. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] You are a resident of Cheviot?—Yes.

7. How long have you been there?—Since the initiation of the settlement, twenty years ago.

8. You know all the settlers?—Yes, very well.

9. You mentioned just now that you were a friend of Mr. Rentoul?—Yes, the same as I am with most of the men at Cheviot.

10. What is Mr. Rentoul?—He was a chemist. He is now beekeeping.

11. Did I understand you to say that Mr. Rentoul called your attention to the fact that another man—Mr. Holton—occupied this small section which is under inquiry?—When he came to me he had noticed that this section was there as a reserve, and he asked me if I would make inquiry and see if the Board could throw it open.

12. How long had the other man occupied this section prior to Mr. Rentoul calling your attention to it?—Since the beginning of the settlement, I think.

13. Twenty years?—Yes.

14. Mr. Rentoul indicated to you that he would like to have it?—If it was available, certainly. He was looking for a place to build a house and make a home.

15. In compliance with his request you went to the Commissioner?—Not necessarily. Going to the Commissioner was my own motion. I thought it was only fair that I should inquire into it and see what could be done.

16. You remember the interview with Mr. Brodrick in Christchurch?—Not distinctly. I know that I waited on him and saw him just before the meeting.

17. You called his attention to the fact that the section was held under a year-to-year lease?—Yes.

18. And that there was another man up there, a friend of yours, who would like to have it?—I do not know that I said that. I do not think I did. I think I would say there was an applicant for it.

19. Still, the applicant was a friend of yours?—Not a particular friend. Most of the men at Cheviot I would call my friend, just the same as him.

20. Do you not work with him politically?—No.