

145. In your opinion is this section big enough for a man to earn a living off?—It is not of a size that I would lease excepting for some special purpose. A man in some of these small industries could make a living right enough. It is very well situated—close to the sea, and warm.

146. Is the lime of any value?—It will not be, I think, unless it can be used in its raw state. Getting a fuel there to burn with it is what is wanted.

147. Is there any value attached to this section on account of the lime being on it?—I do not think so. There is any quantity of lime in the neighbourhood.

148. With regard to your assumption that influence of some kind was used, could you state roughly what authentic grounds you have for saying that—that the Under-Secretary of Lands or the Minister of Lands was got at?—It seems to me that you want a man to analyse the thing, and it would be rather a difficult matter to arrive at why you come to a conclusion like that. You know yourself—you have arrived at a conclusion many times—

149. But I always arrive at conclusions from facts. I want to find out exactly your reason for making the statement that you did—that political influence, or influence of some kind—we need not use the word “political”—that personal influence was used?—You want to know why I should in the first instance have such an idea brought into my head?

150. Yes?—I will tell you now. Supposing you were sitting on a Land Board and you were the member representing the particular district where a section was situated that was being dealt with, and the Commissioners, with the reports of Crown Lands Rangers, approve of the action we take in letting the section on renewable lease. This has been done in many instances, and there are lots of transactions that the Land Board puts through which come before the Lands Department here. Why should our decision be picked out and reversed in this particular case? That is what I wanted to know, and I looked round for a reason why that was done. There you are.

151. That was your basis for the letter you wrote and the opinion you have stated?—That is so.

152. Are you aware of the matter going before the Canterbury Land Board after that date? You were not there when they rescinded the resolution and adopted the recommendation of the Lands Department?—I was not there then.

153. Have you in your experience had any instance where the Land Board have queried whether it was wise for the Lands Department to recommend in any particular direction over and above the recommendation the Board had previously made? Do you know of cases where the Board have quibbled or refused to carry out these recommendations?—No. I do not think so.

154. It is the usual thing to adopt exactly what the Lands Department say?—I think it would be discussed, and if we thought differently we would express our opinion, most decidedly.

155. Then it is evident that at the time the recommendation from the Department came before the Land Board the Board were unanimous in thinking that the recommendation was a wise one?—Evidently, or else they would not have passed it.

156. *Mr. Witty.*] Mr. Holton had held this land since the inception of the settlement?—Yes.

157. It was on a yearly tenancy, was it not?—Yes.

158. Liable to be taken away at any time?—At a month's notice, I think.

159. The two Rangers reported favourably on this section being leased on renewable lease?—Yes.

160. And the two Commissioners agreed, as well as the Board?—Yes.

161. Do you think the section is large enough for a man to make his home on?—As I have said already, under certain circumstances, Yes; but if it was an ordinary piece of land he would have to go out to work.

162. Mr. Massey was anxious to know whether you and Mr. Rentoul were of the same political colour. What are you: do you belong to the Liberals, or are you a member of the Reform party?—I have always supported the Liberal party.

163. Would you think it would be seeking influence, either political or personal, for a man to write above the Land Board to the Minister of Lands?—I should think the man himself would be probably justified.

164. Would it be using influence to try and get what he wanted?—He probably, being an unknown man, would require some assistance.

165. What is the area of the land that is held by Mr. Holton?—About 300 acres, I think. I am not quite sure.

166. Do you think he has sufficient land to make a living off?—Well, if he has not, this small piece is not going to make much difference. There seems to be an idea in the minds of the Committee that the question of personal interest has been brought in. The thing has never been in my mind or in the mind of the Board. What has been done has been done irrespective of individuals or persons. If anybody had come to me and asked me the same question as Mr. Rentoul asked I would have done exactly the same thing. That is the position I want to make clear. I was not doing this because a certain party wanted it.

167. Now, supposing a man bought the section for cash—or, rather, bought it on the terms—namely, 50 per cent. down, practically, and 50 per cent. in five years—would he not also require something with which to build a house and make other improvements?—He would have to do that. He would have to reside on it.

168. Therefore the £30 or £40 he would have to pay in one month would not be all: he would require more money?—He would have, I suppose, twelve months. That is the usual thing, I think, to give new tenants about twelve months in which to settle.

169. Do you think it is better to let that land on renewable lease than to sell it?—I certainly think so.