

241. It is their duty to do so, is it?—Yes, I think so.

242. *Mr. MacDonald.*] In regard to the section which was granted to the adjoining owner, is there not provision made in the law that where an area is not considered sufficient to maintain a family they can obtain adjoining land?—Yes. We were working well within our province.

243. *Mr. Witty.*] If this land had been let on renewable lease it would have had to be advertised and balloted for?—Yes.

244. Therefore the beekeeper who wanted the land would simply have to run his chance with other people?—Yes.

245. Do you know if there were other people wanting that land in the district?—I have heard of two applicants.

246. Therefore the beekeeper would only have a chance with other people?—That is so.

247. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] In the case of Barrett's section, do you know that the Board had the power to refuse the transfer to any one except a resident settler? You know, as a matter of fact, that the Board controls all those things?—That is so.

248. *Mr. Guthrie.*] You spoke of the first letter that you got recommending a lease for a short term?—Yes.

249. Is it not a fact that that suggestion was made because the Lands Department thought the section might be required for a reserve, and it was to be leased under the Domains Act?—No; the reason given was that the section was too small for a renewable lease.

250. When you wrote the letter to the *Lyttelton Times* you were under the impression that some undue influence had been used?—Yes.

251. You had not before you then the evidence of that file which has been placed before you to-day. Would you still, if writing that letter, write it in the terms in which it appears there?—Yes.

252. Then you are still under the impression that undue influence has been used?—Yes; I certainly think that some interference came from outside in connection with it.

253. After you have heard Mr. Massey's statement and have been informed of what appears on this file, do you mean to say you are still under the impression that undue influence has been brought to bear, or interference with him, in this matter?—I certainly think influence has been brought to bear; I do not know about undue influence.

254. After you have seen what is on this file, you are still of that opinion?—Yes.

255. And after you have heard what Mr. Massey has stated here, you are still of opinion that there has been interference with him?—Yes.

256. *Mr. Witty.*] Have you seen the file?—No.

257. You do not know that there is a letter from Mr. Holton to Mr. Massey with regard to that section on the file?—Yes, I believe I heard there was. I have not seen the file.

JOHN RENTOUL examined. (No. 4.)

1. *Mr. Guthrie* (Acting-Chairman).] What is your occupation?—I am a bee-farmer just now.

2. Where?—At Cheviot.

3. Have you any statement to make in connection with this case?—Yes. I had heard that the section in question would perhaps be available for putting up for competition, and about March last year, I think it was, I wrote to the Commissioner asking if that was so, and I think I saw Mr. Gibson in reference to the matter. I was informed that there would probably be no difficulty in having the section put up. I was informed also that as the temporary lease run out at the end of that year—at the end of last December—it would be dealt with then. In January I again wrote asking if there was any likelihood of the section being dealt with in the immediate future, and I got a letter from the Commissioner stating that it would probably be two or three months before it could be ready for disposal. In February I noticed a report in one of the Christchurch papers that the Under-Secretary of Lands had written suggesting that the section was too small for renewable lease, and that it should be put up on a seven- or ten-years lease. I wrote to the Commissioner and pointed out that it seemed strange that when there were applicants for the section under renewable lease it should not be put up under that tenure, and that a seven- or ten-years lease as far as I was concerned would not be of any use, as I wanted the section for residential purposes. I got a reply to the effect that I would be informed what was decided to be done with the section at a later date. I saw the Commissioner in April when I was in Christchurch, and he said that nothing further had been heard about it, and I would be informed later on. Nothing further happened, and I wrote to Mr. Forbes asking him if he would expedite matters, as I would like to know this winter if there was any possibility of getting the section. That is as far as I was concerned in the matter.

4. Is that all the statement you desire to make?—Yes.

5. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Did you approach Mr. Gibson with regard to this section?—I did in the first place.

6. Do you remember the date?—I think that was about March of last year.

7. You desired the section for the purposes of your business and residence, and so on?—For a residence.

8. Was it particularly suitable from your point of view?—Yes, particularly so.

9. You still desire to get possession of it?—Yes.

10. What do you think it is worth?—For a man who wants to make a home on the section it is worth what he can afford.

11. What is the value of the land?—It all depends what you intend to do with it. As grazing land I should say the price put upon it by the Land Board is a fair one.