

Some Natives allege that if compensation for improvements had been provided for in leases the lessees would have had to pay higher rentals.

There is such an obliquity of moral vision revealed in connection with Native-land leases that *ex parte* statements of either lessors or lessees are of little value. In order to get at the real facts the Native version of the story will require to be heard.

F. W. FLANAGAN, Valuer-General.

Valuation Department, Wellington, 21st January, 1915.

APPENDIX XVIII.

LETTER FROM H. SMYTH, WAIKUMETE.

DEAR SIR,—

Waikumete P.O., 4th December, 1914.

I am the owner of part of Allotment 27 and part of Allotment 50, Parish of Waikumete, containing 325 acres 2 roods 15 perches. About four years ago it was valued by the Government at £848, £673 being the unimproved value and the value of improvements £175. The original valuation was more than this, and on my objection it was reduced by something over £200. I enclose the rate notice showing that these figures are correct.

This year the valuation of the property has been increased to £4,875 as follows: Unimproved value, £4,550; value of improvements, £325: total, £4,875. The increased value of the improvements was to some extent justified by the fact that I had put into grass an area of about 10 acres.

At the Assessment Court which was held in Auckland on the 15th June last, and which was presided over by Mr. Fraser, S.M., I was represented by counsel in support of my objection to the increased valuation, a copy of which I now enclose. My counsel asked leave to call the Government valuer, Mr. Morgan, but his request was refused. I then gave evidence, in the course of which I pointed out that, with the exception of the 10 acres which had been sown in grass, the land was precisely in the same condition as it was at the time of the previous valuation; that I had sold within the last three years an area of 101 acres immediately adjoining my present property of 325 acres at £6 per acre; and that there had been no other sales of land anywhere near my property for many years past.

The valuation was sustained.

I may mention that Mr. Morgan, the Government valuer, came to my house about March last for the purpose of preparing the new valuation of the property. He did not, however, inspect it; in fact, he walked from the gate to the house, a distance of about a chain, and back again. It was impossible for him to have seen the property from where he was. He informed me when in my house on that occasion that he valued the property at £10 per acre. I said that that sum was too high, and he said, "Very well, I will not make it heavier for you."

I should like to point out that I did not know until last night that the Commission was sitting in this district. Had I received an earlier notice I should certainly have attended and placed these facts before you.

Yours faithfully,

The Chairman, Valuation of Land Commission, Wellington.

H. SMYTH.

COPY OF REPORT OF DISTRICT VALUER MORGAN.

Re H. Smyth, Waikumete.

Auckland, 2nd January, 1915.

In reply to memo. from Head Office covering letter to the Chairman of the Valuation of Land Commission, I beg to report as follows:—

First, *re* the refusal to first call me to your evidence: The Court informed Mr. Smyth, or his solicitor, that he would have the opportunity of cross-questioning me when I gave evidence, as that was the Court procedure. Every facility was given to the objector, but he is such a peculiar man that his counsel probably wanted to do without calling him to give evidence at all.

The statement that he sold 101 acres adjoining at £6 per acre three years ago is probably correct, but this land was not then and is not now so valuable as the land he still holds, in that it is not so accessible.

The statement that there had been no other sales anywhere near for many years past is quite incorrect, as there have been a great many—some actually adjoining and others near by—and all at prices much higher than my value of his place.

The statement that I did not inspect the property is quite incorrect. I was over both back and front. The house is about 30 chains from the road, not 1 chain, as would be thought by the letter.

The statement *re* my estimate of value is misleading. I did point out to him that it would be better to agree to a reasonable value than to have all the trouble of appealing to the Assessment Court, but he would not agree to anything of the sort. I was willing to meet him in a reasonable way. There are some who like to object to their valuation however low it may be.

There has been a very great increase of value all about the vicinity of this property, and its nearness to Auckland City justifies this. At the time of the previous revision of the district settlement was very backward. The same assessors dealt with the objections at the last Court as did at the previous one referred to by Mr. Smyth, but not the same Magistrate. The assessor for the local body is well acquainted with the property, and since the Court sat he informed me that he had very satisfactory evidence that Mr. Smyth would not sell any of his land at my value. He is making very little use of the land, as can be inferred by the low value of the improvements, and the district's growth is being retarded by his inaction.