

54. That was really before the date of this petition?—Yes; that is so.

55. *Mr. Green.*] Was this in writing?—No; the communication was not in writing. Mr. Barron and I do not write to each other.

*Mr. Hall:* Their rooms are next to each other.

56. *Mr. Green.*] Was not this the junior leading the senior?—No. Mr. Barron told me that the Pomahaka Estate was going to be offered to the Government, and it was on the strength of that that the telegram was sent to the Chief Surveyor, Dunedin.

57. I would like to know how it was that the thing was first set in motion?—Mr. Barron will be here.

58. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] Do not all the communications to the Lands Department pass through Mr. Barron's hands?—Nearly all.

59. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] I understood Mr. Smith to say that the results of this transaction are perfectly satisfactory to him,—the settlers are paying a certain rental—£897 per annum. Is this actually paid or is it due?—That is the actual rate per annum that will be paid. The condition when the lands are taken up is that a half-year's rent shall be paid at once.

60. So that nothing is paid except what is legally necessary. Is there none due now?—I should not like to answer that question from memory. In some few cases it may have been due in June last. The land was offered for selection on the 20th February, and consequently the half-yearly rental would be paid down on that date to represent the period between the 1st July last and the 31st December next. Therefore no further money is due until the 1st January next.

61. In expressing your satisfaction with the sale you assume the rents will be paid, and you are not aware of any agitation amongst the settlers to get the rents reduced?—No; I am not aware of any.

62. You have seen nothing to that effect in the papers?—No.

63. Do you know if a public meeting is now being got up or not for the purpose of having the rents reduced; and, that being the case, would you feel confident the rents would come in?—It would affect my confidence if the rents did not come in.

64. If you knew that the settlers were agitating for a reduction of their rents, would that affect your confidence?—The mere fact of that would not affect my confidence at all.

65. You are not aware of any objection to the rents, as being too high, made by the settlers?—No, I am not aware of any objection to the rents.

66. You compile the Crown Lands Report, do you not?—I do.

67. Have you read that of 31st March last?—I have, but I do not remember it just now.

68. Would it affect your confidence to see it stated in that report, by Mr. Maitland, to the effect that there was a general feeling that the rents at Pomahaka were too high?—I do not remember that appearing.

69. Do you not think you should have informed yourself of your own reports before you make statements like you have made? You say you had heard nothing to the effect that the rents were considered too high, and yet Mr. Maitland says—

*The Chairman:* Mr. Maitland will give evidence.

70. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] I was saying that the Crown Lands Report I have referred to accounts for the comparative failure by saying there was a general feeling amongst settlers that the prices were too high. Mr. Percy Smith compiled that report. I have not one here?—If I had read that it might make some difference as to the actual words I should use on the occasion.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1894.

Mr. PERCY SMITH further examined.

1. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] Before proceeding, I would ask if you would be prepared to put in the Crown Lands Report? The point is this: He (the witness) said he was perfectly satisfied with the results of the transactions in the Pomahaka Estate, and he said he had never heard any complaint from the settlers as to the price of the land. Is that right?—Yes.

2. On page 22 of that report Mr. Maitland says the following in connection with it: "It (the Pomahaka Estate) has not, however, been taken up so speedily as was anticipated, and there is no doubt that one of the chief causes of this was that the people were led to believe that a large estate in that and the adjacent district would be brought into the market; and this, considering that the land referred to is of more convenient access, militated, and still militates, against the taking up of the Pomahaka sections." You were aware of that paragraph yesterday, Mr. Smith?—I did not recollect it when you asked the question.

3. So that, when you made the statement that you heard no complaint as to the price of the land, you said so under a misapprehension?—I understood so in reply to the question as you put it to me. You said something as to a suspicion.

4. No; that was another suspicion. That was natural enough, as it only appeared in the newspapers two days ago.

5. You said yesterday that you had never heard of any complaint from the settlers as to the price of the land?—I think so; the Commissioner's remarks is not a complaint, I presume.

6. An official complaint, no. You led the Committee, and certainly led me, to that conclusion, but it is open to correction now. You said you were perfectly satisfied with the result of the sale, and had heard of no objections to the price of the land?—Generally I think I said so; I cannot quite recollect the exact words. I wish to add, you will observe, that the Commissioner says, "As far as I have been able to ascertain, the price at which the land was opened was considered somewhat high." Those are the Commissioner's words. That does not apply to the price given for the land at all; it is a separate question.