

grassing or supplying seed at a low cost, or any measure of that kind?—You cannot get away from the fact that in anything you do to the land you have to touch the pocket, and the pocket happens to be the tenderest spot of all. I think it would be a good thing to give the seed gratis or at a low cost. Of course, there is another way: you can compensate the tenant by giving him valuation at the end of his lease.

59. You think they might be offered first-class seed gratis or at a low cost, or offered compensation?—If I had an estate that wanted more blades of grass on it I would be willing to give the tenant the seed if I could afford it, provided he sowed it properly, so that it would germinate and grow and be a source of profit not only to the tenant, but to me.

60. *Mr. Forbes.*] You think that after a surface grass-sowing the country wants a spell?—It would be a beneficial thing. It would repay the expenditure of the reseeded to give the land a spell, and not allow rabbits or any large quantity of stock on it. A few sheep over a thousand acres would not be seen. I think such a course would be the life of the runs in Otago and Southland.

61. If it was grassed in the ordinary course and fully stocked, there would be greater loss than gain in the grassing, and a great deal of the expenditure would be thrown away?—I am sure that if you were to give the land a spell after sowing it with grass it would more than recoup you within the next five years. In a year like this it would be very advantageous to the occupier of a run to sell all his sheep at the good prices obtaining and sow the run down; but, as I have already said, he must begin early in the spring. It is a mistake to burn the tussock when it is dry at the root, because the soil would also burn. Care must be taken. When you start early in the spring you have the best conditions it is possible to get, and the best results will follow, because the soil is not too dry, and therefore the tussock only will burn and gives you ashes to cover the seed.

62. *Mr. Hall.*] Was it open tussock land you dealt with or bush land?—Both. But I am speaking particularly of the open tussock, fern, rocks, and stones.

63. Is your land similar to the general run of high land?—It is similar, only on a smaller scale.

64. The same treatment would apply to tussock land?—Yes.

65. Have you ever heard of sheep being kept to ragwort solely?—The sheep I refer to had the chance to eat part grass and part ragwort. In the spring-time the young plant of ragwort is palatable to the sheep, and they thrive on it. It never shows up at all that year in flower in any paddock where the sheep have been on it in the spring. I would not care about putting sheep into a thick field of ragwort and confining them to it, especially when it was in flower. I think there would be a danger in that.

MICHAEL O'CONNOR examined.

66. *The Chairman.*] You are from Orepuki, Mr. O'Connor?—Yes, from Te Tua.

67. Are you in occupation of land?—Yes; I have 872 acres.

68. Under what tenure?—Lease in perpetuity.

69. How long have you been there?—Twelve years.

70. Is there any particular matter you wish to bring before the Commission?—I wish to say that this lease is a great handicap to a settler. When he applies for a loan from the Government Lending Board he cannot get it. My improvements were valued at £265 three years ago, and when I applied for a loan of £70 the Board refused to give it me.

71. Did they give any reason?—That there was not sufficient improvements in hand, and yet they rate me for £265.

72. Was the £265 the local valuation or the valuation by the Government officer?—By the Government valuer. He valued locally as well.

73. Did you get the money elsewhere?—Yes; I went elsewhere and got £100 without any trouble.

74. You paid a good rate for it?—I paid the same as I would have had to pay to the Lending Board.

75. You got it at 5 per cent., did you?—I would not get it from the other office at less than 6 per cent. There is a sinking fund of 1 per cent.

76. Of course, in borrowing from a private individual there would be no sinking fund?—No. I hold that the Lending Board do the settler an injury instead of assisting him. They value him for taxes, and they will not advance him anything to help him through.

77. They do not abide by the valuation in lending money?—No.

78. Is there anything else you would like to say to the Commission?—I only wish to say that the lease in perpetuity is a bad tenure for the settler.

79. How do you think it should be modified?—For myself, I would like the freehold. It is all very well for town agitators to talk about the leasehold, but when you have to go miles into the back blocks without a track one expects something better, especially when the lands are loaded for roading.

80. You are near the Waiau?—Yes. My place is about a mile off the road, or about two miles and a half from Mr. Armstrong's.

81. It is mostly bush?—All bush.

82. Have you much cleared?—About 200 acres.

83. *Mr. McCutchan.*] At the time you applied for the loan I suppose the valuer visited your place?—Yes.

84. Did you pay a procuration fee?—Yes.

85. That is a charge you would not have to pay under the Advances to Settlers Department?—No.

86. *Mr. Paul.*] You believe the freehold is the best?—Yes.