

CHARLES HEDGEMAN JURY SWORN and examined. (No. 19.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You live at Tikorangi?—Yes.
 2. And you are a farmer?—Yes.
 3. You sold a lease to the last witness, Mr. Foreman?—Yes.
 4. A lease of Section part 10, Block X, Tikorangi?—Yes.
 5. Do you know what year you sold it in?—1899.
 6. And how long had you held the lease at that time?—Thirteen or fourteen years.
 7. Now, did you ever hear of any right to convert that lease from a lease under the Act of 1881 to a lease under the Act of 1892?—Yes.
 8. When did you hear of that?—I cannot say exactly. Mr. Foreman told me about it about 1893.
 9. Did you ever hear of that right after then?—No.
- Mr. Bell.*: No questions.

THOMAS MCKENZIE SWORN and examined. (No. 20.)

1. *Mr. Welsh.*] You are a farmer, and live at Tikorangi?—Yes.
2. You hold a lease under the Act of 1881?—Yes.
3. And the number of the section?—Section 51, Block VI, Waitara.
4. What is the acreage?—91 acres.
5. And the rent?—2s. 6d. per acre.
6. When was that acquired by you?—About 1886.
7. You purchased from whom?—Joseph Terrill.
8. What condition was it in when it was acquired by you?—It was all standing bush.
9. Were there any improvements?—No, none whatever.
10. What steps did you take to improve the place when you acquired it?—I felled the bush, grassed it and fenced it, and built a small whare on it.
11. Did you live on the place?—I used to live there occasionally when I was working there.
12. Not permanently?—Oh, no.
13. When you purchased the place what did you understand to be your rights so far as improvements were concerned?—Up to £5 an acre. I understood we only get improvements up to £5 an acre.
14. Did you ever hear of any right of conversion?—Yes.
15. When?—About the year 1893, I think it would be—the same time as the others round the district applied for a new lease.
16. And did you take any steps to do so?—Yes, I made application for a new lease.
17. Did you continue it?—No.
18. Why not?—Because they proposed to raise the rent from 2s. 6d. to 4s. an acre.
19. You were not able to pay that?—No, because we considered it was unfair. I believe the whole of them except that one section got a reduction.
20. How were things with you financially in that year?—Not too good.
21. Had you been able to pay the rent in the past?—We generally managed to pay the rent, but not always punctually.
22. Was the land paying the rent?—It did not pay it all. I used to go out and work on the road or in the gravel-pit—anywhere that I could get work. At that time 6s. a day was about the limit—we only got a few shillings a day then.
23. After 1893 did you hear of any further rights of conversion?—No.
24. When did you first hear of those further rights of conversion? Have you heard of them since?—Yes, in November last, when I went to Manaia to attend a meeting of the lessees. It was on the 10th November, 1911.
25. When did you go to live on the land?—I believe, in the year 1898.
26. You then went to reside permanently on the land?—Yes, I got married, and built a house and went to live there.
27. Are you still on it?—Yes.
28. If you had known of the right of conversion in 1900 would you have been in a better position to consider it then than in 1893?—I was in a considerably better position at that time.
29. Had you known in 1900 that you could have surrendered and taken a new lease at 5 per cent. on the unimproved value in 1900, the rent to date back to 1896 and the Public Trustee to be paid for your improvements over £5, would you have considered the advisableness of conversion?—I would certainly have had a try at it to see what they wanted to put my rent up to any way.
30. Your land was heavy-bush land?—All heavy bush.
31. In 1893 what was the value of the improvements approximately done by you upon the land?—Well, I am not quite sure, but I believe all the bush was down at that time. If the bush was all down the value would be somewhere between £3 and £4 an acre at that time.
32. And in 1900 what was approximately the value of your own improvements?—My improvements had gone up considerably by that time. I had built a house and sheds, subdivided the place, and ploughed a small portion. I do not know whether the house should be included.
33. What were the total value of your improvements, including the house, in 1900?—I should say they would be between £6 and £7 an acre.
34. And what is the value of the improvements now?—I should say the improvements now, without going into details, are worth somewhere between £10 and £12 an acre.
35. What kind of farming do you carry on?—I milk on part of it and graze on part of it.
36. Are your milking-sheds on that section?—No, I have no milking-shed on it. I have milked in the open paddock all the time, but at the beginning of this year my wife's health broke