EVIDENCE

TAKEN BY

HER MAJESTY's COMMISSIONERS OF INQUIRY

INTO THE CONDITIONS OF

THE CROFTERS AND COTTARS

IN THE

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND

VOL II

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIMENT BY COMMAND OF HER MAJESTY

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2007

Highland 2007 Gaidhealtachd

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comes to; but it used to be ground for a barrel of potatoes for four days' work.

13151. It is not paid for in money; is it paid for in land?—The payment is never in money. In former days it was one day's work for a barrel of potato ground.

13152. Was the farm of Borv given to the present Mr M'Donald or his predecessor?—Mr William M'Neill had it.

13153. But when M'Neill lost it, was it given to the present Mr Macdonald?—It was given to this Mr Macdonald on Mr M'Neill's death.

13154. How long ago is that?—I am not sure.

13155. Who is your proprietor?—Lord Dunmore.

13156. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What kind of stock has Mr Macdonald upon his half? Is it sheep or cattle, or does he crop it; and if he crops it, how much?—Both cattle and sheep.

13157. Does he farm also?—There is not much of it under crop this year.

13158. Is there a fence between the crofters and Mr Macdonald?—There is a stone dyke on the east side; on the other side is macher land, where the sand is constantly drifting up and down, and a fence could not be erected.

LACHLAN MUNRO, Crofter, Bernera (about 60)—examined.

Lachlan Munro.

13159. *The Chairman.*—You heard the paper read by the preceding delegate?—Yes.

13160. And you heard what the previous delegate said?—Yes.

13161. Do you agree with everything?—Yes, every word, so far as I know.

13162. *Have you any complaint to make about the sea-weed?*—No, we have plenty of sea-ware. The wind drives it towards us.

13163. Have you liberty to gather it on the shore of the tack as well as on your own?—That gentleman never prevented us.

13164. He never charged any money for it?—He never charged us any money for it.

13165. Where do you get your peats from now?—The island of Tay.

13166. Have you liberty to take it there without paying, or do you pay?—That island is our own; we pay rent for it.

13167. Is anybody living on it?—No.

13168. Is there plenty of peat?—Yes, but it is falling off.

13169. How far from Bernera is it?—It takes about three-quarters of an hour rowing on a good day with a favourable wind.

13170. Is there any peat on the tack?—There is no peat at all on the island of Bernera.

13171. Do the tacksman's people get their peat from Tay?—No, they get it from another island that Mr Macdonald has called Vacasay.

13172. Is that nearer than Tay?—No, Vacasay is a little outside Tay; but another island where Mr Macdonald's grieve and some of his people live and get their peats is nearer than Bernera—the island of Stroma.

13173. Do you think, if you could get back the farm of Borv, it would make you all comfortable?—There is no doubt we would be. It is the scarcity of the land which leaves us in the condition we are.

13174. Have you anything more to say?—I have to say of my own croft that the rent is £5. My family consists of my wife and myself, and all we can raise on my croft will not support us for three months.

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HARRIS.

OBE.

Lachlan Munro.

13175. What stock do you keep?—Two cows and a mare.

13176. Any sheep?—About six ewes, but it is on other people's land; I buy grass for them. I buy the seed which I put into my ground.

13177. *Where do you get the thatch for your houses?*—We formerly used to thatch our houses with straw, when we had more of it, but since then we chiefly thatch them with bent, which we mostly get from Mr Macdonald.

13178. Does Mr Macdonald make you pay for it with labour or otherwise, *or does he give it to you for nothing?*—That gentleman would take nothing from any poor man whom he could help.

13179. If you had more nets could you do more with the fishing?—Those who are fit for it undoubtedly would. It is past my time.

13180. Had you more nets in olden times?—We never did much with the herring fishery, and had not many nets for that purpose till within the last few years, when a few of them got nets.

13181. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the people in arrears of rent, or are they able to pay their rent?—I have not for five years sold a beast off my own lands till last year, when I sold a stirk to pay the rent.

13182. *Is* the landlord easy upon you in the matter of arrears?—We can say nothing against the landlord. Many things can be done under a laird without his knowledge.

13183. You complain of paying for a doctor. Where does the doctor live?—He lives here at Obe.

13184. Does he sometimes go to Bernera?—Very seldom.

13185. Is he of use to you?—He must be doing some good, for we sometimes send for him or go to him.

13186. And you say you still pay for the old packet. What is this payment?—There was formerly a packet which used to run between this and Uist, and also a packet that ran to Skye. There is no packet now.

13187. Do you say you have still to pay the packet money?—I cannot say positively, except that I heard some say it was so.

13188. Would you rather be without a doctor or pay this money?—Any one of us might break his arm or leg, and then we would need a doctor.

13189. *The Chairman.*—Do you make this payment about the packet distinctly, or is it paid along with your rent?—I pay £5.

13190. What taxes are laid upon you besides that?—I am not very sure. There is 5s. of road money and 5s. for the doctor. I think they all pay that. There is so much in the pound for poor and school rates.

13191. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you need a road in the island?—Yes; we are in need of a road from south to north.

13192. Have you any wheeled carts?—There is one cart in the island.

13193. Would carts be useful to you?—I don't know. On the west side of the island where I live it would be very difficult to make roads for us, it is so subject to the drifting of the sand.

13194. How do you bring your sea-ware up to the arable land?—On horses. [*Malcolm M'Leod.*—In the time of my father there was an assessment of 2s. 6d. for the minister, 2s. 6d. for the packet, and 2s. 6d. for the doctor, and when Sir Edward Scott bought the north end of Harris there was a doctor appointed for that part of the island, and 2s. 6d. was added to the former assessment on our island for two doctors—one for each end of the island. We would like to know the details of the taxes which we are called upon to pay, which are not specified in the receipts that are given to us.]

RODERICK ROSS, Crofter, Geocrab (63)—examined.

13195. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by your people?—Yes.

13196. Have you a written statement?—No. It is only four days since we got notice of this meeting, which was conveyed to us by the Rev. Mr Davidson.

13197. Then what statement have you to make on the part of your people?—It is now thirty-five or thirty-six years since I went to live in the Bays. There were eleven crofts or lots when I went to live at Geocrab. There was only one cottar's house there at that time. There are now twenty-six crofters, who have the same lands among them that the eleven had. I may call them all cottars except three. The rest have only bits of the land that their fathers had.

13198. How many families are there altogether at this moment?—Twenty-six of all classes.

13199. Are the additional families the natural increase of the original families, or have they been brought in from other places?—There is one family that came from Sir Edward Scott's property.

13200. Only one?—Another from Lewis. The rest grew up in the place.

13201. Since you came there, has any common pasture land or any other land been taken away from the people?—No. Before my time the land was divided into eight lots by a surveyor—Mr M'Lade. Then after that there were three additional crofts taken off these eight, increasing the number to eleven, and there was no reduction in the rent of the eight.

13202. But my question was, since the time of the eleven lots has any of the land been taken from you and given to the tacksman?—No. There was no land taken away in Geocrab.

13203. Has the whole rent of Geocrab been increased in your time?—Lord Dunmore has not raised the rent one penny so far as I know, or his father or mother before him.

13204. What stock do you keep yourself?—I have a right to keep four cows, but as I have only half a croft I can only keep two cows. The other half of my croft was given to a brother-in law of mine.

13205. No horses?—There is not a horse to be seen in the place. It is all rocks. We are so surrounded by rocks that sometimes we never see the sun at all. There are three hours of the day when we don't know there is a sun at all. There is no prohibition of horses.

13206. How many sheep do you keep?—I have about a dozen sheep, but I might keep as many as I like.

13207. Is the common pasture very large?—Yes; our hill marches with Lord Dunmore's forest, but there is no prohibition how far we may extend our pasture. We suffer no injury or trouble from being on the same march with him.

13208. What rent do you pay?—£6, 0s. 6d. of rent, and 10s. of taxes. Up to four years ago I was paying 17s. 6d., now I only pay 10s. There was 10s. of road money at that time.

13209. Then what is the chief complaint?—The complaint is that at the time I spoke of first there were only eight or eleven crofters, when we had land enough to let a sufficient quantity of it lie fallow and recover its strength, which it cannot now do.

13210. Is there any part of Lord Dunmore's forest which would be useful as arable ground?—The forest is, for the most part, quite unsuited for cultivation; the only ground near us suitable for cultivation is Luscantire.

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Roderick Ross.

13211. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But there never were any crofters there?—It is not suitable for crofters. It is mostly wild moor, and some pasture lower down.

13212. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has not the farm of Luscantire had a reputation in former times for its cattle?—Yes, the lower part of it—Shellibost and Isibost—is very well situated. That is good land.

13213. You have stated that you only received notice that the Commission was to sit here to-day four days ago. Don't you receive newspapers in this place?—We heard there was such a Commission, but knew nothing of the time they would be here. Mr Davidson himself did not know.

13214. Are you not aware that notices were sent some considerable time ago, though there seems to have been some accident?—[*Rev. Mr Davidson.*—There was notice sent to me, but it was just on Friday last week that I received it from the secretary of the Commission.]—I am not aware that the notices were sent any sooner.

13215. Would there have been more delegates appointed if there had been time?—There might have been more, but they would have nothing more to say than I have told.

DONALD MORRISON, Crofter, Geocrab (76)—examined.

Donald Morrison.

13216. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people?—The time was so short that there was no meeting of the people. It was Mr Davidson who mentioned it to me.

13217. Have you any statement to make to the Commission?—I can add a little more to what the previous witness said. I was there when there were only eight tenants in Geocrab.

13218. How long ago is that?—Before my father's time there were no people there at all. No person can conceive what kind of a place it is without seeing it. There is no highway there for cart nor horse. I was born there.

13219. When you remember at first were the lands held on the run-rig system, or were they already divided into lots?—They had it among them in common. They had no lots among them, but the hill was divided into four parts, each of which was divided between two.

13220. Was the arable ground divided every year or every three years?—Every year.

13221. Was that a better system than the system of making separate lots, or is it better in lots?—The lots were better, but the people in these times preferred to have them in common. I have seen a woman weeping at being separated from her neighbours by the division of the crofts.

13222. Whom did they pay their rent to? Did they pay it to the tacksman or pay it to the laird?—To M'Leod of M'Leod.

13223. Did they have summer shielings then? Did they drive the cattle to the hills, and live there in summer?—We did.

13224. Do they do that anywhere now at all?—I don't think there is any such thing done now. Everybody had shielings in my youth.

13225. But you still have the same pastures they had when you were young?—We have the same hill.

13226. Do you send the cattle up?—Yes, we do.

13227. And how do you manage them if there is nobody living there?—Everybody herds his own cattle.

13228. Who divided the lots of the arable ground every year? Was it the people themselves or the ground officer?—The tenants made the division themselves. When people were removed from Rodel, that was the first thing that spoiled us. There were twenty-four tenants there. Three of them were sent in among us, and the rent was not changed, and these people paying their own additional rents.

13229. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—With reference to these summer shielings, will you explain exactly what was done? At what time of the year were the cattle sent up?—In the beginning of summer.

13230. How long did they remain there?—Till Lammas.

13231. Were all the cattle, young and old, sent up?—All, young and old.

13232. Who accompanied them, and had they bothies?—Yes, the women and children went, and stayed the whole summer, living in these shielings.

13233. They milked the cows, I presume, just as you do at home?—Yes, leaving the milk in the shielings.

13234. Did they make any butter or cheese in the shielings?—Yes.

13235. And the women and children occupied themselves, I presume, in spinning?—Yes, they used to spin with distaffs and spindles.

13236. Was it always a happy time at the shieling? Did they look forward to it with pleasnre?—Yes, they had pleasant times there.

13237. Were you there frequently when a boy?—Yes, I often helped also.

13238. You were there as a child, and helped there?—Yes, and lived in the shielings.

13239. Did you use to sing songs and have music?—Yes, those that could would sing.

13240. And did the woman sing when they were spinning outside, or milking their cows?—It is they that would. In those times they would sing and dance, and have tunes.

13241. Was there any particular song or rhyme that they used to repeat at the time they started?—I have no recollection of any particular chant which they repeated.

13242. It is mentioned in a paper by Mr Carmichael in the third volume of Mr Skene's *Celtic Scotland*?—I never saw or heard anything of the sort.

13243. What were the little huts like that you had on the hills?—Like ordinary houses built of stone and turf. We slept on the floor with the heather below us.

13244. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You mentioned the name of M'Leod of Harris. Did Harris once belong to M'Leod of M'Leod?—Yes.

13245. Do you recollect when Harris belonged to the M'Leods?—Yes.

13246. In whose time did the crofters and small people begin to be removed or sent out of the country?—I don't know when it began, but the last eviction took place in my father's time.

13247. Do you know a namesake of your own called Donald Morrison living not far from here?—Yes.

13248. You have often spoken together?—Yes, I know him very well.

13249. Do you know anything remarkable in the life of that Donald?—I don't know anything particular.

13250. Was he in prison at Inverness?—Yes, he was.

13251. What brought him there?—For something he was concerned in that was done against the authorities at the time the people were being removed. I was at Portree fishing when the cutter brought them to Portree.

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Donald Morrison.

13252. Where did this take place?—These people were removed from the west side of the island—from Little and Middle Borv.

13253. Have you seen in your day many people sent away to America? —Yes I have seen some.

13254. Do you know what became of them? Have you had any good accounts of them out there?—Yes, good accounts have been received of some of them?

13255. Did any of them ever come back to visit this part?—None of them ever come back to see this part of the country.

13256. Did the crofters that remained here in Sonth Harris benefit in any way by the sending away of the people to America, or, if not, who benefited?—No, their condition was in no way improved. They were sent away to the Bays. If there was any benefit derived by anybody it was by those who got the land we had, such as Mr Stewart.

13257. Were there any others who got some of the crofters' lands? Was not the tack of Rodel enlarged by the removal of crofters?—Yes, the land from which the people were removed was also added to the farm of Rodel. That was when Mr Macdonald was factor.

HUGH MORRISON, Crofter, Finsbay (50)—examined.

Hugh Morrison.

13258. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people?—Yes.

13259. How many people were there at the meeting?—There was no meeting. We knew nothing of it till Friday last.

13260. Then who named you to come here?—I was only to-day asked to go by the people of the place, along with two others. The notices that were sent to us were kept back somewhere.

13261. What have you got to say on behalf of the people of Finsbay? —I am one of seventeen families living there, where formerly there were only two.

13262. How long is it since there were two?—Abont twenty years ago.

13263. Where did the other families come from?—They come from every place that was being put in order, and from which the people were being removed.

13264. Was the land of Finsbay divided among them?—Somebody of the name of Trotter came and divided the two lots into ten. There are only ten lots still.

13265. Were the rents reduced to the two men who formerly held them?—The rent remained the same as before for the whole place.

13266. But it was divided among ten people?—Yes.

13267. And now is the same rent divided among the seventeen?—The additional seven are cottars, who pay no rent. There are one hundred souls altogether on the place.

13268. How did these cottars grow up? Were they the natural increase of the place?—Yes, these cottars have grown up on the place. There is nothing else a man can do who has to remain and support his father and live in the place as best he can.

13269. What is the summing of the full croft?—Their highest rents are 25s.

13270. And what stock do they keep? the summing?—One cow, two sheep, no horses. We have nothing to work with but the spade and the crooked spade.

13271. How do the people support themselves? Have they any fishing?—We live by fishing. I began as a fisher on the east coast when I was sixteen years old, and continued it as long as I was able, but I am not able now.

13272. Have you good boats?—Yes.

13273. And nets?—Yes. That is what has always supported us, and not the land.

13274. Do they make more by fishing now than they used to do when you were sixteen?—No, there is no difference in that respect. The fishing has deteriorated here and everywhere else since that time.

13275. But you say you went to the east coast. Has the fishing deteriorated on the east coast?—It is not so good as it was in my time.

13276. We have heard that the wages of the fishermen who go to the east coast have been increased. Are you sure they are not higher now than they were when you were young?—Their wages depend entirely on the fishing that they make.

13277. They get so much per cran?—Yes.

13278. Do they get the same sum per cran now that they got when you were sixteen?—I daresay they get that and more now.

13179. What is the remedy you wish to have for your condition?—More of the land which God created for man to take his living out of.

13280. Is there any land adjacent to your township at Finsbay which could be added to your crofts?—There is; there is a tack beside us.

13281. What is the name of the tack?—Cuidinish.

13282. How long is it since that tack was created?—About twenty-five or twenty-six years ago.

13283. Who lived upon the land before?—Tenantry.

13284. Did any part of it belong to these people of Finsbay as hill pasture?—The people who were removed from Cuidinish were sent away to Australia.

13285. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the present tenant of Cuidinish?—A Mr M'Leod.

13286. Is he resident there?—His son lives there. He has the farm of North Harris.

13287. You say you want land, and are very much crowded. Did you apply to the proprietor or anybody authorised by him for more land?—Yes, we were asking it from the proprietor when he was here this winter.

13288. What did he say to you?—He had nothing to say against it, but the lease has still some time to run. We have nothing to say against the proprietor; he is a very good laird.

13289. Then he did not refuse you?—No.

13290. Do you know how long the lease of this place has to run?—About two years.

13291. Are you living in hopes then?—Yes.

13292. Was there any particular reason for removing them from the farm—the people who were sent to Australia?—No, they went of their own free will.

13293. Were they not making a living ont of it?—They were making a living there. They went away because they thought they would do better in Australia.

13294. At that time did the people of Finsbay not think of applying for it? Were they crowded twenty-five years ago?—We did not ask for Cuidinish then. If we had done so, we would not have got it.

13295. Who first got it when the poor people went off?—Malcolm M'Leod got it first, the father of the present occupant.

13296. Are you in arrears of rent—I mean the people in the township?

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Hugh Morrison.

—No. They are in debt for meal and for food. I have two sons in the militia, and it is on what they get there that we depend.

13297. Does not each man bring home £8 and a pair of shoes, and some other extras from the militia?—They bring home not more than £2 or £2, 10s. They cannot bring more.

13298. As the people are not in arrears to the landlord, may we take it that they are in a position to take this land of Cuidinish, and stock it?—Yes, if we got a reasonable rent that we could afford to pay.

13299. What is your principal food in this township?—Meal and water.

13300. Are you scarce of milk?—Milk is not to be had at all

13301. What food do you give to the children?—Porridge.

13302. What do yon give them instead of milk?—Sugar and treacle.

13303. Do you give them tea?—Sometimes.

13304. Is it a great want in the bringing up of the children not to have milk?—There are some of them that would do very well if they had enough of food without milk, which they have not. We get mussels on the shore near us, which we make use of as part of our food.

13305. *The Chairman.*—Do you get that habitually, or only when you are in very great straits?—It is only when we have no other food that we go to get the mussels to live on.

JOHN MACDONALD, Farmer and Factor, Newton, North Uist—re-examined.

John Macdonald.

13306. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to give any explanation about Bernera, or was there anything incorrect in what was stated?—I cannot say I recollect anything.

13307. Can you say generally whether you think the small tenants of Bernera suffer any peculiar hardships or disadvantages?—The greatest hardships they suffer, in my opinion, is their own doing in the subdivision of the lands.

13308. Is their crowded condition more owing to the natural increase of the population, or to persons having been brought from Pabbay or other places among them?—To the increase of the population most.

13309. Were any brought there from other places?—I was not acqnainted with the place at the time they may have been brought there.

13310. Has any effort been made or any care been taken by the proprietors to carry the young people away or provide for them in any other place, and in any other manner?—The Dowager Lady Dunmore always took a great interest in the young people on the estate, and I believe she would have done something for them, if they were willing themselves to leave the place. She was always willing to assist, and always assisting the poor people on the estate. She is always kind to the people, and I am aware the present countess does as much as is in her power for the people. She often helped them.

13311. They complain of having been deprived of two small islands which had formerly been associated with their place?—I have heard that stated, but I was not acquainted with the place at the time that happened.

13312. How long have you been in the tack at Borv?—Twenty years.

13313. Do you think the people have been deteriorating during that time in their condition?—Not till very recently. The failure of the crops and bad seasons have conduced to that.

13314. Who is in possession of those two small islands which they complain have been taken away from them?—The proprietor, Lord Dunmore. That is Hermitray and Susay.

13315. What use does he make of them?—He has cattle on both islands.

13316. Does he keep any manager living on them?—No, there is no one living on either of the islands.

13317. Do you think that these islands would really be very useful to the people?—Do you think they would do them much good if they had them?—If they could stock them they would.

13318. You have no house on the farm of Borv?—None.

13319. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said that until the last few years the people did not seem to be falling off at Bernera. Don't you think, judging by the number of families there now, that they are very much crowded?— They are very much crowded.

13320. Don't you really think something ought to be done? I don't ask you what, but something ought to be done?—Well, for the benefit of those who remain, and the benefit of those who go away, I really think something should be done.

13321. For the benefit of all concerned?—For the benefit of all concerned, the island should be relieved of a portion of its present population.

13322. How many people do you think there would be there in the time of the famous Sir Norman Macleod?—I cannot say at all. He was living in the end the crofters now possess, and had it as a farm. I don't know whether he had the other end of the island.

KENNETH MACDONALD, Farmer, Scarista-vore (70)—examined.

13323. *The Chairman.*—You have a farm in South Harris?—Yes, Scarista-vore.

13324. Have you been long resident in the country?—I came to Harris about fifty-one years ago.

12325. Does your family belong to this country, or to another part of Scotland?—I don't belong to this part of the country. I am a Rossshireman.

13326. Since you have been here, what do you think of the progress of the country and its people? Do you think they are getting worse or getting better?—So far as I can say conscientiously, they are getting better physically, morally, and in every sense of the word. They are better clad, and they are better fed than they were when I remember them first.

13327. Do you agree with those who state that there has been a great deterioration of the soil by overcropping?—Decidedly. I agree with that. Another cause of the deterioration of the soil is this. In my first recollection of Harris, I remember in the winter time the first thing a man did was to go and clear the snow from the doors, and we had a great deal of frost. There is nothing of that now. The frost congested the soil so that nothing of the sap was lost, but we have perpetual rains now, which drive away the sap. I believe that has as much to do with the deterioration of the land as overcropping. Overcropping we know will exhaust the soil.

13328. Then you think the climate has altered, and altered for the worse?—For the worse, because we very seldom see snow, and frost we have no continuance of, which was not in my first recollection.

13329. If, in your recollection, the land has been more subdivided and more exhausted, how do you account for the fact that the people are better fed and better dressed? Do they earn more wages?—A great deal. I believe that £200 of money comes to Harris now for every pound that

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Kenneth Macdonald.

came in my first recollection. There was no such thing as herring fishing. There was in some places cod and ling fishing. There was no such thing as lobster fishing. I happen to be an agent of the first company that started for sending the lobsters to London. Then an enormous amount of money is brought in now for clothes by the Countess of Dunmore. I remember one year paying an account of her ladyship, £1235 for webs of cloth alone. They still go on manufacturing.

13330. Is it manufactured in hand-looms?—Yes.

13331. What material do they use?—Entirely wool grown in the island.

13332. And the dyes?—And the dyes.

13333. Is there any of the wool of the primitive race of sheep—the old Highland sheep, or is it blackfaced and Cheviot?—It is blackfaced and Cheviot. The old primitive sheep are done.

13334. Can we see a specimen?—Yes, if you go to St Kilda.

13335. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I think we saw them in South Uist?—Yes, but you will not see them in Harris.

13336. *The Chairman.*—Was the wool of fine quality?—I cannot answer that, for I have never seen any.

13337. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How much rent do you pay yourself?—£145.

13338. You spoke about the winters now not being so severe—that is to say that frost and snow are comparatively unknown. Are high winds now more prevalent than they used to be?—Decidedly. When there is very keen frost there is scarcely any wind at all; but now, since we have no frost and constant rains, we have blustering winds continually, principally from the S.S.W. and W.

13339. Most of the delegates who appeared before us said that the old times were better, but have you given an answer to his Lordship in the chair upon very careful consideration and observation?—Yes, very.

13340. You are in constant communication with the people?—Yes. I remember seeing them going to church, and the difference between the clothing and attire of the families going to church then was as different as day is from night.

13341. Is it better in reality?—Better in reality.

13342. But one man, a country tailor, and should know better than others, at Dunvegan, called all the fine clothing the women wear "south country rags," as distinguished from their fine home-spun cloth. Do you agree with the tailor?—I should not agree with that, for they are proverbial in Harris for their good spinning, their good weaving, and their good making of clothes for themselves, not only over Great Britain, but over the whole Continent. You hear of Harris tweeds here, there, and everywhere. My coat was grown on the farm, woven on the farm, and made on the farm.

13343. But many of the people state here that for want of sheep, and being overcrowded, they are not able to spin, and they would like to go back to the old times?—Well, so far as South Harris is concerned, of the number of sheep I can say nothing. Of North Harris I can give every sheep every man has.

13344. We have been told, and I believe, and it is pretty generally supposed, that the temper of the people is much sobered in amusements and otherwise, and that they are not so jovial, and there is not so much amusement in the way of singing and dancing as there was in their younger days. Is that so or not?—Possibly so. They are very sober and most respectable people. I don't believe you could find in any other part of Scotland people more sober.

13345. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—But do you use the word sober in the sense of

being quiet, or as regards temperance—as to their being very steady?—They are very steady.

13346. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any poets or bards among you?—Yes, there was one celebrated poet, but he died about two years ago. The Harris bard, he was always called.

13347. What was his name?—Neil Mackinnon.

13348. Where did he stay?—Luscantire.

13349. I wish to put a question or two in regard to the proprietors of this estate, so far as you know, from the time it left the M'Leods. Who was the first proprietor from the main branch?—Captain M'Leod, son of Sir Norman M'Leod.

13350. Was he a purchaser?—He was the first purchaser. He was the first purchaser from M'Leod of M'Leod.

13351. How many generations of these M'Leods were there?—There were three. Captain M'Leod's son was Mr Hugh M'Leod, but he took his mother's name of Hume, and his son Alexander was the last proprietor of Harris, who sold it to the present Lord Dunmore's grandfather.

13352. How far back was that?—Lord Dunmore bought it forty-nine years ago.

13353. What was the price? Do you know the price?—£60,000 for the estate, and £500 for the purchase of the patronage = £60,500. Tradition said that £15,000 was the price originally paid for it to M'Leod of M'Leod.

13354. We have been told there is a small portion of Harris—the lands of Ensay and Pabbay—belonging to Mr Stewart. When were they sold?—By the present Lord Dunmore, not very many years ago.

13355. And he also sold North Harris?—Yes.

13356. It was the present Lord Dunmore who sold the whole?—Yes.

13357. To Sir Edward Scott?—Yes.

13358. *The Chairman.*—Are you able to tell us about Bernera in old times?—Sir Norman was the whole tacksman. He had not it as property at all. He was a tacksman under M'Leod.

13359. And did he live at the tacksman's end or at the crofters' end?—He lived in the end which the crofters have now—much about the middle of the island.

13360. Are there any remains of his old house?—The walls. He lived in a thatched house.

13361. Do you think he had a large population of crofters and cottars in those days?—I am sure he had not. He just had the servants—all those about him who could work a farm.

13362. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were there some evictions which you remember, from the place where you are now living?—Yes.

13363. When was that?—I can hardly condescend upon the date. It is over forty years ago, I believe.

13364. Were there not very severe measures resorted to for removing the people?—Decidedly—very severe.

13365. Was not the Black Watch actually called upon to take part in that unpleasant work?—No, it was not the Black Watch, it was the 78th.

13366. Where did they come from?—They were brought all the way from Fort George.

13367. And where were the people transported to?—I cannot tell, but I believe they were scattered and transplanted here and there in the country.

13368. You don't think they were carried to the colonies?—Oh, no.

13369. *The Chairman.*—They may have emigrated?—I cannot

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remember. I believe a few of them did emigrate, but I cannot say how many.

13370. Have you ever seen any correspondence between emigrants to America from this island and their relatives in this country?—I have.

13371. Was it of a satisfactory kind?—Most satisfactory. I knew one man who left North Harris. He was not driven away. He was a very industrious man, and in consequence of his industry he now drives to church in his carriage in Australia. His name is Allan M'Leod. There are various others I know of who went to America, and I had letters from them.

13372. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were they voluntary emigrants?—Voluntary emigrants. There was one man, John Campbell, a shoemaker and cottar, who went to America with some others, and most satisfactory accounts were received from him, expressing the comfort he is enjoying. He is in Canada.

13373. Are you aware there is a great disinclination to emigrate?—I am.

13374. Does it exist here?—Yes, I know it for a fact, because I have been making inquiries and making overtures to parties, if they choose to go, to give them every advantage and assistance, and not only assistance to take them there, but assistance to see them comfortably planted there.

13375. To what do you attribute this disinclination?—My idea is that it is the want of education, and that as education progresses the disinclination will disappear. Such is my idea.

13376. Had you ever to do with this estate at any time?—I had.

13377. Were you factor?—For a short time.

13378. Who stays at Rodel now?—I believe the house is being prepared for his Lordship.

13379. There is no resident tenant now?—No.

13380. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you had any visit in the island of Harris from gentlemen who have visited some of the other islands endeavouring to enlighten the people as to their rights, and to stir them up to do something to better their position?—If you are kind enough to let me know the gentlemen you refer to, I shall answer the question, but not till then.

13381. I am not going to name them, because there are some we are not entirely acquainted with, but there have been persons who have visited the island of Skye, and other islands, to stir up the people?—They dare not show their faces in Harris. I was told there was a very celebrated man speechifying on the pier at Tarbert, about ten days ago, the editor of the *Highlander*, and that is the only man who I ever heard came to Harris at all.

13382. Did he not get a good reception?—I cannot tell, because I was thirteen and a half miles away.

13383. So that any expression we have heard to-day of grievances that the people here or in the adjacent islands are suffering from, is entirely spontaneous, and has not been stirred up in their minds by persons outside?—I don't believe it was. I think it was entirely spontaneous.

THOMAS BRYDONE (27)—examined.

Thomas Brydone.

13384. *The Chairman.*—You are local factor for Lord Dunmore?—Yes.

13385. How long have you been factor?—Six months only.

13386. You have not had much time then to ascertain the wishes or condition of the people?—No.

13387. Has there been anything said to-day in your presence on which you wish to make any remark?—No, I don't think there is. As far as the crofts are concerned there seems to be some misunderstanding, because the blame seems to be laid on the proprietors and factors as to the size of the crofts. A crofter, in general, if he keeps a croft, in most cases divides it with some of his sons, who get married, without the consent of the proprietor or factor. It stands to reason that a whole croft will carry one family better than two or three, divided up, and I think if only one family lived on a croft they could make a comfortable living, but it is the cottar that ruins them, and it is cottars who deteriorate the land by constant cropping; and with the most of the land, if there were only one family on it, they could leave perhaps a little of the land out for two or three years, and leave it under grass, and then bring it in again.

13388. Then you think the subdivision of the crofts has generally been the result of the people settling their own children upon them?—Yes.

13389. Are you aware whether in former times the proprietors have made systematic efforts to provide for the younger branches of these families elsewhere?—I don't know, but I think young men ought to have enough courage in themselves to go forth, as I have done myself, and many a one besides. It is much better than getting married and settling down on an acre of land.

13390. Can you tell us the nature of the relief works which Lord Dunmore has provided with a view to the present necessities of the country?—Draining, fencing, and building dykes, repairing piers, and so on.

13391. We heard from Mr Davidson a great complaint about the want of a road along the eastern shore of the island. Has that want been brought to your knowledge?—There has been nothing said to me about it; I know the road, at least the most of it.

13392. Is it now in a very bad state?—Yes; there was a road made part of the way at one time, but it is mostly all broken up. It is not passable for vehicles.

13393. Has any of the recent work been bestowed on that road?—No.

13394. Would it be very useful?—Well, they have got no horses on the east side of the island, and they mostly do all their work with boats. Unless for foot passengers, I don't think it would do much good. They could have ponies, certainly, if the road were made. They could not take a pony there now, but if they had it right they could.

13395. In other parts of the islands are wheeled carriages used?—Only along the main road to Tarbert.

13396. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you in a separate district of roads? Who has the charge of the roads?—The trustees here. I am not sure, but I think Mr Macdonald, Scarista-vore, has something to do with it.

13397. Is Harris a district of itself, or is it connected with the Long Island?—I cannot say.

13398. You have stated that for the subdivision of crofts you hold the landlords are not responsible in any way?—I cannot say, but in most cases they are not in the meantime.

13399. Have you seen any estate regulations bearing upon the management of farms and crofts? Is there such a thing?—I have not seen such a thing.

13400. For the work which has been given by the Dunmore family, do the people seem to have been very thankful and willing to get it?—Yes.

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Thomas Brydone.

13401. Was it paid in money, or put to account of arrears?—It was paid in money.

13402. Probably there would be cottars who would not be much in arrears?—Some of the cottars get money also.

13403. If they were not in arrear they would get the money?—Yes.

13404. Are you authorised to intimate, or are you aware, that there are any further improvements or expenditure going on on the estate?—Well there may be, I expect, in another year.

13405. But you don't know what the nature of those may be?—Road-making.

13406. *The Chairman.*—What value is the labour here, compared with the labour in Aberdeenshire? Do the people work as much or do as much?—No, and they are not paid as much.

13407. For a long day's work in the summer, what are the common wages of the people here?—Twelve shillings to fifteen shillings a week for common labour.

13408. And you would be paying in Aberdeenshire from 18s. to 20s?—Yes, they get from 18s. to 25s.

13409. Do you think the amount of wages has much to do with the amount of work done? Is it the custom of the country?—Well, I think they are fully as well paid on the mainland as they are here.

13410. I mean, if you give a man higher wages, will he do more work?—No, I don't think he will.

13411. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do the family, either one or other of the members of it, live here a good part of the year?—Yes, his Lordship lives pretty often here.

13412. Will he live here four or six months of the year, in the course of the whole year?—I can only speak of the time I have been here myself, but he has been here I may say a few months since last Martinmas.

13413. But he is always here every year?—Yes, and he stays some time, and he knows the most of the crofters, and takes a great interest in them.

13414. Does he speak Gaelic?—Yes he can speak Gaelic.

13415. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Can you speak Gaelic yourself?—Yes.

13516. *The Chairman.*—How did you learn it?—I was born in the south of Aberdeenshire, and I was brought up in Athole, where there was nothing but Gaelic spoken, and I was obliged to learn it.

13417. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—And you find it a decided advantage to know it, to make what you intend to convey to the natives clear?—Yes, it is not suitable for one in my position to be without Gaelic in this country.

13418. Don't you think there might be a great injustice done without any intention, through people not understanding what was attempted to be conveyed to them in a language they did not understand?—Yes, I quite believe it.

13419. *The Chairman.*—What do you think are the prospects of planting in this country; do you think it will be possible to establish any plantations?—I think it would never pay.

13420. But without paying, would they grow?—Well, in some parts of the island they would; in sheltered places they grow very well.

13421. But you don't think it could be a source of profit or improvement to the island?—I don't think it would.

13422. Do you think that much good could be done by fencing—by the erection of stone fences?—I don't know where they are required much. Wire fences would be more suitable for marches in this country.

13423. That is between the tacks and the crofters, for instance?—Yes.

12424. But with reference to the arable ground of the crofters them-

selves, would a good stone fence not be of any value?—Well, they have good turf fences as it is; they are pretty well fenced in Harris as it is.

13425. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there any prizes offered by the ladies of the family for neat houses and neat gardens?—I think there are. It is not that I know it, but I hear the Countess has been giving prizes to those who have the neatest gardens.

13426. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you much struck by the character of the houses here, as compared with those you have been accustomed to see?—Yes, there is no doubt of that.

13427. Do you know whether Lord Dunmore has done anything to improve the houses of the people, and stir them up to improve them themselves?—Yes, I have heard of his doing that himself.

13428. Does he give them encouragement to make the houses more neat and clean than they used to be?—Yes, he does that; I have heard him speak about it when he was here lately.

13429. Does he give them any encouragement in the shape of lime or wood?—They don't get wood; as for lime I have not had any experience.

13430. *The Chairman.*—Have many of the cottages on the estate got fire-places in the wall, or are they generally warmed by the fire in the centre?—I have not been in many of the houses, but I think most of them are in the centre. It is the best part of the house, as they can all get round about it.

13431. And what about the smoke?—They don't mind the smoke, as it keeps them warm, they say. I think their houses are much warmer than most of the slated houses here.

DUNCAN MORRISON, Cottar, Finsbay (73)—examined.

Duncan Morrison.

13432. *The Chairman.*—What have you got to say?—I have a particular hardship of my own to tell of. In the first place, when I was sixteen years old I was sent away on account of a tacksman of big sheep from Borv, where I was, to Cuidinish. My father was sent—the whole family. We were doing there a while as Providence allowed us, till the next depopulation came upon Cuidinish, and when Cuidinish was depopulated and given to another tacksman, I was sent away from it. I was for two years among the sheep at Cuidinish. I have no complaint against the man who took the place, because he could not put me out of it, and I had no other place to go to. After that time there came another schemer, who wanted to put me out of it. Then the factor, Macdonald, showed me some favour, if a friend would allow me to get the site of a house, to escape from the shepherd, and which I did get. I then escaped from Cuidinish, and got a bit of ground upon which I built a house at Finisbay, where I am now—a little bit upon which to raise a bit of crop, and feed myself and nine children. It is about twenty years since that took place, and I have had no means of living there since then except what help I got from my worthy neighbours. I had been paying till I came there to four different landlords, and I never was one penny in arrears when I was removed from Cuidinish, so if I have not been unjustly treated, I don't know any man that ever was. Notwithstanding all that I have borne myself respectfully, and no person in authority ever knew from anything I said how ill I had been used.

13433. Have your sons not assisted you?—Our chief support is one son, who has been in the militia, and in the naval reserve at Stornoway. He is our only support.

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Duncan Morrison

13434. Are you a fisherman?—I never was a fisherman, but my son fishes.

13435. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is the man that put you out of Cuidinish?—The factor, Macdonald—the late Mr Macdonald of Rodel. Notwithstanding that he was very kind to me, and he gave me employment as long as the kelp was worked, which was for about ten or twelve years; but ever since then I have had no employment whatever.

[ADJOURNED.]

ST KILDA, SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1883.

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(See Appendix A, XII.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Rev. JOHN MACKAY (67)—examined.

Rev. John Mackay.

13436. *The Chairman.*—How many years have you been here?—Eighteen years in the month of October.

13437. Would you kindly state whether there is anything here in the condition of the people of which they have to complain, and which the Government or the proprietor could remedy?—Well, I don't know any reasonable complaint they have. They know themselves better. You can hear what they have to say about the rent and some sheep.

13438. I will hear that from them, but have you any general remark with reference for instance to communications with the mainland, and their general condition, and their supply of food?—Well, there will be sometimes they will be very ill off for want of food. In April last they had to go to Skye in a small boat, a fishing-boat, which they got from Mr Young, Glasgow.

13439. What are the regular fixed communications?—The regular communications are twice a year.

13440. What are the months?—June and September generally. Then they are eight months without communications?—Yes, for those eight months without communications.

13441. What are these two communications? Are they kept up by the proprietor of the island?—They are kept up by the proprietor of the island, M'Leod of M'Leod.

13442. There is no stated visit on the part of a Government vessel?—No.

13443. There is no communication here with the coast guard?—No.

13444. No branch of the public service?—No.

13445. And are the posts brought by these two communications?—Yes. There are eight months, and sometimes nine months, before they get any supply.

13446. But are there frequent accidental communications, such as the arrival of yachts or the arrival of vessels?—Yes, there are some steamers, especially the 'Dunara Castle' and the 'Hebridean;' they come twice in summer each of them.

13447. Do they belong to the same company, or to different companies?—I think they belong to two different companies.

13448. And the steamers of each company come twice—that is, there are four arrivals of steamers?—Yes.

13449. In what months are they?—June, July, and sometimes August.

13450. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The 'Hebridean' came three times last year?—Yes, she came thrice.

13451. *The Chairman.*—Do these steamers bring the post or mail, or is the mail only brought by M'Leod's vessels?—When these steamers come they bring the mails.

13452. So you may say you have six mails in the year?—Yes.

13453. But there are sometimes eight months without any mail at all?—Yes, quite true.

13454. Is the place ever visited by any religious mission from the church? Do any of the clergy ever come?—No; one of them may come with one of these steamers, and go away again.

13455. Is there any one regularly deputed by the church to come?—No.

13456. Since you have been here, has there been any material change in the condition of the people, or are they just the same?—Well, I think there is some change for the better as to their moral character.

13457. Their general character has improved?—Yes.

13458. Are there any spirituous liquors sold in the island?—No.

13459. Is there any private drinking in the houses? Have they got any whisky or any spirituous liquors in their houses?—Well, they buy a bottle or two, and when they are out on the hill and catch a cold, they take a glass of whisky after coming home, but that is all they use.

13460. When the steamers come here do they do any mischief by the sale of liquors or in any other way?—I don't think it. Some of these passengers are very loose in their character, and some of them are drunk when they come ashore, but the people avoid them as far as they can.

13461. The visits of these people don't do any harm to the people of the island?—No, they don't hurt them. They are very annoying when they remain here over the Sabbath.

13462. What do they do?—They go about the hills, and go seeing through the windows and striking the dogs and one thing and another.

13463. About your school, what school is there here?—There is a school taught by a woman, Miss M'Kinlay.

13464. Is that school supported by rates or by the proprietor?—It is supported by the Ladies' Association in Edinburgh and by Miss M'Leod.

13465. Do the children attend regularly?—Yes, pretty fair. Sometimes their parents want them to go after some cattle, and they are sometimes absent in that way.

13466. Have they more general knowledge of English than when you came, or is there no change in that respect?—Well, there is a little, not much.

13467. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—We have always heard, and we felt to-day, there was a difficulty in landing. Do you think a pier could be erected at comparatively little expense, which would make it convenient for passengers to come ashore?—Well, I think so.

13468. Would that be an improvement to the island?—It is likely to

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be an improvement. I am not very sure. [After consulting with the people.] It would improve the place very much.

13469. Would it be attended in their opinion with much expense to make one merely suitable for the requirements of the island?—They are not able to say what the expense would be.

13470. You are a minister of the Free Church?—Yes.

13471. And supported by the Free Church?—Yes.

13472. I presume the whole of the island belongs to that denomination?—Yes.

13473. Lord Napier asked you a little ago about the state of the people, and you answered that their moral character had improved during your time. In regard to their circumstances, are they better off in their circumstances and means, do you think, than they were before?—Are they as comfortable in their ways and means as they used to be?—Well, I think they are better off to-day than they were when I came to the island.

13474. Does it arise from the visits of people who come to the island, or what is the reason?—Well, the rents are the same.

13475. Then how do you account for the improvement in their circumstances?—When the steamers come here, they leave a good deal of money among the people; and again there is another thing, that M'Leod gives a larger price for the kealt. It once sold for 2s. and 2s. 4d. and now they get 3s.

13476. Does he take the whole of the rent in that form, or does he take even more than the value of the rent in this kealt?—He will take the whole, everything he can get; he will take the whole produce of the island.

13477. When the steamers come here, are they able to make purchases of fresh provisions? Are you able to sell any butter or fowls or eggs?—No, neither butter nor eggs. We have no hens on the island.

13478. Then steamers can get nothing in the way of food here?—No, unless they buy a sheep; they generally buy a sheep here.

13479. Are the people upon the whole very contented, quiet people?—Well there will be some little things.

13480. You would rather they should state any little grievances they have themselves?—Yes, of course, let them speak for themselves.

13481. *Mr Cameron.*—How many marriages are there in the island in the year?—Some years there are none at all. There were none last year.

13482. What is the average—one or two?—That is the utmost—two.

13483. Do any of the people ever marry with those who come from the mainland?—No, they never marry with any from the mainland; they marry among themselves.

13484. Do they ever get the chance of marrying people on the mainland?—I never heard it.

13485. Do you think they would if they got the chance?—I think they would.

13486. Do you know of any offer of marriage that was ever made by young men of the mainland to any of the girls here?—Well, I cannot call to mind. They are not very fond of strangers.

13487. I gather from what you said to the Chairman that they don't care very much about having communication in the way of mails with the mainland. What they care for most is about getting supplies?—Yes.

13488. They care more about supplies than letters or papers?—They are very fond of papers.

13489. Do they correspond very much with people on the mainland?—Yes, they do.

13490. How many letters do you think will one mail bring them?— Well, I cannot say.

13491. Is there an average of one for everybody on the island?—No, not anything like it.

13492. What do they live upon chiefly? What do they eat?—They eat fresh potatoes, fulmars, and puffins.

13493. Do they kill their beasts and eat beef?—Yes.

13494. And mutton?—Yes.

13495. What time of the year are they most hard up for food?—April.

13496. Have they been pretty healthy for the last year?—Yes, they have been pretty healthy.

13497. I understand they were rather alarmed when they saw the ship coming to-day, for fear there would be any infectious disease on board?—Well, they were that.

13498. What infectious disease were they afraid of?—When they were in Skye in April last the island of Skye was very much affected with fever and small-pox and measles, and they were afraid that such diseases might be among you, because they did not know what kind of a ship it was.

13499. Have they ever had any epidemic amongst them here?—No.

13500. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many births are there on an average in the year?—One or two. There were two last year.

13501. Do the children live?—I am sorry to say they don't live very well. When they come to the age of seven or eight days they generally die.

13502. Do you know if there are more deaths in the island than there are births?—No, there are not more deaths than births.

13503. Then the population is increasing?—It is increasing a little. We had only six of an increase during the last twelve years. We had seventy-one in 1871 and we had seventy-six in 1881.

13504. What is it to-day?—Seventy-seven.

13505. Do you feel the want of a doctor very much?—Well, they are very much needing a doctor at times.

13506. *The Chairman.*—Who attends the women in childbirth?—Miss M'Kinlay up here, the nurse.

13507. Has she been educated for that?—I am told she was. She was sent here by Miss M'Leod, and she attends the women here.

13508. Do the women frequently die in childbirth? Has there been any case of that sort?—Yes, last February a young woman died here in childbirth. She was only married a year and a quarter.

13509. Is there any store for medicines or drugs? Are there any medicines kept in the island?—There is medicine kept in the island, but it will be sometimes very short.

13510. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—With regard to the children dying so early—at the age of seven or eight days—are they as subject to that now as they were in former times?—Well, they are not so very subject to it as they were when I came to the island.

13511. Is it supposed to be attributable to the want of proper care or proper feeding of the infants at that early age?—I don't think it is from the want of any proper care at all, but after seven or eight days they always—especially some of them who die—are struck with lock-jaw.

13512. Do they give them anything but the mother's milk?—Nothing.

13513. There was also an old peculiarity of the inhabitants, that they took a cold when any strangers came to the island?—Well, they are very subject to that still. They always catch a cold when there is a cold in the

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vessel or among the passengers who land here. It begins with one, and goes through the whole village.

13514. Have you noticed it yourself?—Yes, I have.

13515. Following immediately after the visit of a ship?—Yes.

13516. Have you been infected by it yourself?—Yes.

13517. Then you think it was infectious?—It was, very. There were some fishermen here from Uist a few years ago, and they had a very severe cold. There was not a man or woman on the island I think but took it, and I was very ill myself.

13518. Ordinarily they are not subject to colds?—No, they are not. They are very healthy that way.

13519. Are there ever cases of consumption?—No, there is not a case of consumption, so far as I know, on the island: they take so much food, and these fulmars and birds they eat are so full of sap and oil.

13520. Have you known any cases of consumption since you were on the island?—Not one.

13521. What are the prevalent diseases? Are they subject to rheumatism?—Some of them are very bad with rheumatism.

13522. Are they subject to any skin diseases?—They have nothing of that kind at all. Of course, they sometimes have their feet and legs broken out.

13523. I suppose they are all very well clothed?—Very well.

13524. I suppose there is not a ragged person to be seen in the island?—Not a ragged man or woman, if she or he pleases to clothe themselves.

13525. Or child?—Or child. There is plenty of cloth on the island.

13526. Are there any of them on the parochial roll of Harris?—None.

13527. But I suppose there are some old women who cannot support themselves without help?—There are two women. There is one of them who is confined to bed for more than two years. She cannot do anything. She is very ill with rheumatism, and cannot move a limb.

13528. How is she supported?—By her husband.

13529. In the case of old persons of that sort being unable to do anything for themselves, or without near relatives, who takes charge of them?—Well there are none of them in the island who have not relations.

13530. And their relations look after them?—Yes.

13531. Are any of the inhabitants of the island engaged in work out of the island?—No.

13532. They are never in the habit of going to work out of the island?—No.

13533. Or to fish?—Yes, they fish in the island.

13534. But not out of it?—No.

13535. They never go to the east coast?—No.

13536. How many boats have they in the island for their own use?—They have four or five boats.

13537. Sufficient for their own use round the coasts of the island?—Yes.

12538. Are any of them big enough for going to the mainland with?—Well, we sent for a boat last summer to Mr Fletcher Norton Menzies, Edinburgh. They have some money there lodged in his hands, and they wrote him to send them a boat; and after sending the boat, they complained that the boat was too small for going to Harris. You will see the boat down on the beach. The boat is a very steady one, but they say she is rather too small for going to the mainland, and they left that boat and took the boat Mr Young sent them some years ago, about 1867.

13539. Have they any peculiar superstitions here different from those of any other places?—I don't think they have.

13540. Is it the case that nobody in the island can speak English except yourself and Miss M'Kinlay?—Well, they cannot speak very well, but they are coming on very well.

13541. I suppose they are getting a little more knowledge of English?—Yes.

13542. *The Chairman.*—Is there ever any case of illegitimate birth here?—There is.

13543. Is it very rare?—Very rare, but I must say there is such a case.

13544. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many have there been since you came to the island?—Two.

13545. In these cases did the father marry the woman?—No, both of them were very young. There was a girl about twenty-four years of age, and a young lad. He was promising to marry her.

13546. Was he a native of the island?—Yes, but she died in giving birth to the child. There was another case of a younger man who committed fornication.

13547. How do you account for the very small increase of the population. Is it from the deaths among the children being very large?—Yes. Some would make out that the blood is so weak by intermarrying,—they are so nearly connected with each other.

13548. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose Miss M'Kinlay keeps a school quite regularly since she came to the place?—Yes.

13549. Do you keep up your own class yet?—Yes, I teach them here every Sabbath evening—those whom she teaches.

13550. Before she came you taught them yourself?—Yes.

13551. Are they all able to read?—Yes, they are.

13552. They can read Gaelic every one of them?—Perfectly well, and commit portions of Scripture to memory.

13553. Is there anything else they commit to memory besides portions of Scripture?—Nothing.

13554. Nothing in the way of songs?—Nothing. Nothing whatever—the Psalms of David and the New Testament.

13555. They have no poets of their own?—No poets or poetry of their own.

13556. Or no recollection of one?—Well, perhaps they may have, but I don't hear.

13557. I suppose Miss M'Kinlay teaches them to read English?—Yes.

13558. Do you think they are able to understand much of what they read?—Well, they understand very little.

13559. I suppose the whole of the island is in their own hands? They have the whole island among them?—Yes.

13560. Do they all pay the same amount of rent?—No.

13561. What is the biggest rent?—I cannot say. The men are here.

13562. There is no great big man among them that has taken possession of the crofts of others?—No, they pay according to their grazings.

13563. Is everybody allowed to put on as much as he likes?—I think he is.

13564. I heard when I was coming here that there was an emigration from this place. How long ago is that?—A great many years ago. It will be well on for thirty years ago since they went to Australia.

13565. Who had the property at that time?—Sir John M'Leod.

13566. Can you tell how many families went away at that time?—Seven families, I think.

13567. It was to Australia they went?—Yes.

13568. Did they go away of their own accord, of their own free will?—It was poverty that made them emigrate.

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Rev. John Mackay.

13569. Did the proprietor or factor compel them to go away in any way?—I think Norman, the factor, had a hand in it

13570. *The Chairman.*—Did he make them go?—He encouraged them to go, because some of them were poor, and he was giving them meal in order to get quit of them. He got some papers from Government for them to sign, and when some of them saw their friends going away, more came afterwards and signed it.

13571. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Did the proprietor pay their passage?—The proprietor did not know of it, and when he heard that they had gone, he was encouraging them to return, and said that he would do them every justice he possibly could; but as they had gone so far, they did not wish to return back, and he said he himself would send a ship for them if they would come back. This was Sir John M'Leod.

13572. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is this the first strange vessel that has come here this year?—Yes.

13573. Of course you have received no newspapers this year?—Yes, the factor's ship was here on the 3rd of May. M'Leod of M'Leod sent a ship here. I wrote to him in July last, telling him the state of the island, and telling him he would require to send a ship in April with supplies for the people as the crop looked so bad.

13574. Did you get any newspaper then?—Yes.

13575. Did you see anything about this Commission?—Yes, I did; I read about this Commission, and about Glendale.

13576. But you did not know we were coming here?—No, I did not expect you here at all.

13577. *The Chairman.*—Is there any case of great longevity in man or woman in the place?—Well, some of them are very old.

13578. How old is the oldest?—A woman is the oldest person on the island. She will be about eighty—Mrs Rory Gillies.

13579. You don't know any extraordinary case of a person being one hundred years of age?—No.

DONALD MACDONALD, Crofter and Fisherman (37)—examined.

Donald Macdonald.

13580. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you hold a piece of land?—Yes.

13581. What do you pay for it?—We pay separately for the ground that is worked around here, and separately for the hill.

13582. Then what do you pay?—£2 for the arable ground.

13583. And for the hill?—About £3.

13584. Do the tenants all pay the same thing for the hill?—No.

13585. Why does one pay more than another?—According to the proportion of the hill that they had when the laird came into possession.

13586. Then their hill is not in common?—Under the former proprietor each man paid for the actual stock that he had; but since then the proprietor makes them pay according to the stock they had at that time, whatever it is now.

13587. But their stock is all on the same hill; there are no marches on the hill?—No.

13588. Do you pay this in money, or do you pay it in produce?—We pay it with all the produce which the island gives.

13589. What is the produce of the island?—We pay it with feathers, and oil, and cloth, and also with cattle.

13590. At what price does the proprietor take the feathers and oil?—

5s. a stone for the grey feathers, and 6s. a stone for the black feathers—puffin feathers—which are finer.

13591. What does he pay for the oil?—1s. a pint.

13592. What oil is it?—Fulmar oil.

13593. What does he pay for the cloth?—3s. a Scotch ell.

13594. What does he pay for the cattle?—The price varies.

13595. Who puts the price on them?—It was another man who took the cattle last year.

13596. How do they agree about the price?—The factor fixes the price.

13597. Are you bound to give your cattle at the factor's price?—Sometimes when we are complaining, he adds 1s. or 2s. to the price. [Another witness adds: We never got such good prices before as under the present factor.] We get £2, 10s., and we have got £3 for a stirk from him. Though the former factor was as he was, we must admit he gave us better prices latterly.

13598. Are you in arrears of rent, or are the arrears fully paid in St Kilda?—Yes, there are some in arrears.

13599. Are they much pressed for payment of these arrears?—The factor does not press people at all.

13600. A man behind said, that though some were in debt some were the other way. What is the meaning of that?—As in many places, some people are well off and some are ill off.

13601. Have any of them an account against the laird—money due to them?—Yes, that is so. The laird owes some of us money.

13602. In what way does the laird pay them back?—Anybody that wishes it from him gets it from him in money.

13603. Do you generally make meal enough to keep yourselves through the year?—The island would not keep us in meal any time.

13604. What quantity of meal do you get from the mainland most years?—Some families get from eight to twelve bolls in the year.

13605. And that is paid for in the produce of the island in the same way as the rent?—According to the families. Some don't get more than five or six bolls. Our accounts are made up at the same time for the rent and for the meal.

13606. You get all your meal and all your supplies from the proprietor?—Yes, except a few bolls we got by steamer last summer.

13607. Is there any sale for your produce to the steamer?—We have sold a little cloth to them.

13608. Were you getting good prices?—A little better.

13609. You don't sell any cows to the steamer?—I have seen one cow sold to the steamer.

13610. Did they get a good price for it?—A better price.

13611. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you like to have a pier?—Certainly we would be the better of a pier.

13612. How would you be the better of a pier if you got it?—If you saw some of the days when we have to land here you would understand then what need we have of it.

13613. Is it for purposes of fishing you would be the better of a pier, or for the steamers when they come with supplies?—We would rather have it for ourselves—for purposes of fishing.

13614. How many of the men fish on the island?—Two boats go out to fish now. We are fallen off in able-bodied men.

13615. What time of the year do they fish?—Whenever we get the chance.

13616. I suppose there are a great many days in the year when they

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Donald Macdonald.

cannot fish at all?—There are very many days when we cannot go to the fishing, and other days we have other work to attend to at home, and cannot go to fish.

13617. Are you ever kept out at sea by the weather getting bad, and your being unable to land here after being once out?—Yes, we have sometimes been obliged to try and seek shelter in a creek opposite us on the other side of the island when we could not land here.

13618. Does that happen often?—Not often.

13619. Have any boats ever been lost?—There have been no drownings that I remember, but we have lost a boat at Boreray.

13620. What fish do you catch?—Ling and some cod.

13621. At what time of the year do you catch the sea birds?—We catch the birds to get the oil at the beginning of summer.

13622. How do you catch them?—We catch the young ones with our hands before they are able to fly away off their nests.

13623. Do you catch any birds at this time, or in the spring of the year?—We catch the old birds in spring, and at this time of the year with the rod and snare.

13624. On the nest?—Yes.

13625. You put the snare over the nest?—We descend the rocks on a rope, and place the snare over the bird's head, and catch it by the neck.

13626. Have you any idea how many birds are caught here annually, young and old?—I cannot give a guess, probably thousands, but I cannot say.

13627. How much does each head of a family catch?—One day I remember we were snaring the birds at Boreray, when we caught at least 1000. There were twenty men of us.

13628. That was an unusually large number?—I never saw or heard of so many being got.

13629. Do you get any herring here?—We have no herrings nets.

13630. Would you catch any if you had nets?—Yes, I believe so; and we have spoken of it several times, but we have never got herring nets.

13631. Do you catch any solan geese?—We catch some solan geese.

13632. Is it for the oil or feathers, or both?—We catch the young ones for their oil and feathers. We eat them a little. We salt some.

13633. *The Chairman.*—Is there any diminution in the number of birds, or are there just as many as there used to be long ago?—The number of birds varies, apparently, like other crops—more some years, and less other years.

13634. Is any shooting with fire-arms allowed?—It is forbidden to shoot birds when they are hatching.

13635. *Mr Cameron.*—Who forbids it?—It has been a rule in the island as long as I remember.

13636. *The Chairman.*—But do you allow shooting on the island the rest of the year?—There is no prohibition during the rest of the year.

13637. If you had herring nets, would you be able to use them?—We would try, at any rate.

13638. Do you know that the herring comes here, close to the island?—Yes, it does sometimes come into this loch. There were Lewis men fishing here and getting herring three years ago.

13639. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If you got a pier convenient for yourselves and bigger boats and nets, would you be enabled thereby to do with less meal than you are paying for?—If we had to buy the same meal, we would be more able to pay for it.

13640. When the new roofs were put upon your houses many years ago by Sir John Macpherson M'Leod, was the rent readjusted at the time

you got those new roofs?—He made no difference on the rent on account of the improvement of the houses.

13641. Did he put any rise on the land?—We had some complaints here about twenty years ago, for being made to pay for the rocks on which we caught the birds. We paid at that time £1 for the land and £1 for the rocks. When the complaint was made, the laird took £1 off the rocks and laid it upon us for the island of Boreray, for which we had been formerly paying 5s. a head.

13642. Are you acquainted with the history and traditions of the island?—I am not very skilled in these things, but I have heard some of them.

13643. In the oldest history that is written about St Kilda, there is mention made of a cross upon which the people were accustomed to take an oath. Have you ever heard of that?—I never heard of that.

13644. Does the man sitting behind you know?—We cannot say anything about the oath, but there is a cross cut upon the rock at Boreray, the steep island over there.

13645. But my inquiry was about a movable cross which would be held up by a party taking the oath, and it was either of gold or silver?—We never heard of it.

13646. *The Chairman.*—Was any object of curiosity or art ever found in the island—any old coin or old articles?—We never heard of anything of the kind being found here.

13647. Or any stones shaped like knives or spears?—There have been such things found.

13648. Like arrow heads?—Yes; I have heard of such arrow heads being found, and I have also heard of little crocks made of clay. I have seen them myself. I have seen such found where we were digging, of the size of little bowls.

ANGUS GILLIES (35)—examined.

13649. *The Chairman.* Have you heard what the previous witness has said?—Yes.

13650. Have you anything else to say?—I have some little addition to make to it. We are complaining a little that our rent has not been fixed according to our present possession, but according to what it was when the present laird came into possession of the island. And as you have come to this island to see us, I hope that one change will be effected by it, and that henceforward we shall be provided with a doctor, the want of one being very much felt. We trust that this great boon will be provided for us by Government. In the next place, with regard to the school, we trust that the justice that is being done to the rest of the Highland Isles will be done to this island of St Kilda, so that the children may be taught to speak the English language as well as their mother tongue. We have suffered very much too, by the loss of a large boat which we had for the purpose of conveying us to the mainland, or to the islands, and which was lost in a storm, and we have now only our small skifs.

13651. Was it a decked boat?—She was not a very large boat, but bigger than those we have, and undecked. Mr Sands collected the money with which that boat was provided for us. We felt the loss of the boat very much after that, when we wrote to Edinburgh, understanding there were funds there of which we were entitled to get the benefit. We did get a boat, but it appears there was not sufficient money to provide us with a boat of the kind we required, and the one we have got is so small as to

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be of no use, beyond those we have already. That boat was sent us by Mr Menzies of the Highland Society.

13652. Would you like to have a decked boat?—A boat with a deck would be of no use here. A boat would be of no use to us of a greater weight than we could haul up on the shore, at present.

13653. What is the length of keel of the boat you would like?—Twenty-five feet keel, with nine feet seven inches of breadth in the beam.

13654. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There was some destitution last year in the island?—We were much worse off last winter and spring than in former years.

13655. What was the cause of that?—The crop was bad, and we ran out of food. The land did not produce of its abundance.

13656. Where did you get help from?—We went in that little boat I have mentioned to the factor at Dunvegan, and he sent over a vessel with meal for us. We could not bring it in the little boat ourselves. I believe there were very few people in any of the Western Islands that would have undertaken the risk we did.

13657. *The Chairman.*—As regards the larger boat you want, is it of any use to have half a deck, or a place to keep things dry in the boat?—Oh yes, that would be useful. We would not be the worse of that.

13658. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You state that the factor pays 3s. per Scotch yard for the cloth. Do you ask a higher price from Lowland customers?—We would need to have a little more from them than from the factor. There is a difference between the landlord and anybody else, because he will take things from us when nobody else would.

13659. *The Chairman.*—Is there any of the old breed of sheep on the island?—There are some, but they are mostly in possession of the laird.

13660. What is the breed, the wool of which you use for the cloth?—We mix together the white wool and the wool of the black sheep.

13661. Is the wool of the old original sheep much finer?—Some of them; it is at least as fine.

13662. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Where has the proprietor the sheep in the island?—On the island of Soay.

13663. How many has he got there?—I cannot say positively. No shepherd goes there at present; but I believe there are at least 200.

13664. Where does the man who is in charge of them live?—They are under the charge of the ground officer here, but they are on that island like deer.

13665. Has the proprietor always had that island in his own possession?—It has been in the hands of the laird since time immemorial.

13666. Does he send over to shear the sheep?—Not always. I believe it is about three years since there has been any shearing there. Unless you go there at Whitsunday it is no use to go afterwards, for they cast off the wool.

13667. What does he do with the young ones? Does he take them away or sell them?—They are left there, all mixed together.

13668. Does he never sell any?—He does sometimes. We ourselves are the chief purchasers.

13669. What do you pay for them?—They are very small, and we don't pay a great price for them. I think we suffer much by the loss of long lines in the stormy weather here.

13670. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—We have had complaints laid before us in Skye, and the other islands we have been in, as to the smallness of the quantity of land that is in the hands of the crofters. Have you any such complaint?—We have none, because the proprietor

can give us no more than we have except the little island which he has for his sheep.

13671. Do you complain that the rent is too high?—We have no complaint as to the rent except what we have made already.

[ADJOURNED.]

MEAVAIG, LEWIS, MONDAY, JUNE 4, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XXXIV., XXXV., XXXVI., XLI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

[*Mr Mackay*, chamberlain on the Lewis estates.—I am instructed and authorised by Lady Matheson to assure you and the crofters of this parish, that they shall suffer in no way in consequence of anything they may say here to-day. You can assure all and sundry that they shall suffer nothing at her hands or at the hands of her officials in any way.]

MURDO M'LEAN, Crofter and Fish-curer, Valtos (57)—examined.

13672. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate by the people of Valtos?—Yes.

13673. How many people were present at the time you were chosen? Was there a meeting?—A public meeting in the Bernera Established Church, at which about 400 persons were present, and there was a committee of fifty-seven elected in this parish, and circulars sent round through the whole of the parish to attend the meeting for the purpose.

13674. Have you a statement to make on behalf of the people of Valtos?—Yes.

13675. Before we put any questions to you, will you make a voluntary statement of what they complain of and desire?—Yes. I am here on behalf of the people of Valtos, to express the grievances under which they are suffering. What I wish to state before the Commissioners to-day is that we, the people of Valtos, in the district of the fourteen hills, have among us about twenty-four families without any land at all, and these are a burden on the rest. They are not able to improve their houses. They are in very poor circumstances, especially this year. They are unable either to clothe or provide shoes for their children, so as to enable them to attend school.

13676. Do you mean the people without land, or the people with land?—I include the whole. The cottars are a burden on the crofters. They also complain that the taxes are too high—that is, the school rate. We

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Murdo M'Lean.

again consider it would be very desirable to have free education. I believe that the people, in consequence of the want of it, are kept back very much, and kept under subjection. Although they would have grievances they are unable to state them through want of education. Again, they had islands for wintering their cattle, and they had moorland for the summering of their stock. They were deprived of this moorland pasture, and it was converted into a deer forest. The islands were taken from them, and given to the large sheep farmers. Again, their rents were raised. I remember myself when I had to work for a whole week—sixty hours, without food or any allowance whatever, upon the roads. This was in the year 1850. Every man between the years of eighteen and sixty had to perform this work. They had no hand-barrows, and where the wheeled barrows could not go, they had to carry the road stuff in creels upon their backs, or in sacks, and they had to provide themselves with the cloth out of which to make these sacks. I saw that with my own eyes, and I saw the men at the work. Although many of them are not alive to-day, the thing was done in my time. Afterwards this was commuted into 5s. of a charge against every one whose name was in the rent roll.* So far as I remember, this again in the year 1870 was remitted, and a regular road tax was laid upon us. One of the justices of the peace in this country told me at this church that he thought this road tax would not be levied upon any man whose rent was under £10. He said the tax was 3d. in the £1, but would not be chargeable against any man whose rent was under £10. This 5s. again was included in the rent that was paid by the crofters. Then the rent, increased by this 5s., was chargeable with every other assessment. I cannot go over the names of those whose names are entered in the rent roll of Valtos, but I know that for many a croft there were two names so entered, and for every name that was so entered in the rent roll, as far as I was able to know or discover, this 5s. was levied, even supposing the rent charged against them did not exceed £1. So far as I have been able to discover, where there are three names entered for the same croft, in that case also I understand that this 5s. is charged against each. The original rental of the township of Valtos was £150. This 5s. of which I have spoken would, for the whole township, make an additional rent of from £8 to £10 annually, making a total of from £158 to £160. I believe that £40 a year was the total amount of abatement that was made to the township when they were deprived of the islands I have mentioned and of the moorland pasture. But they were deprived of the islands and the moorland pasture before Sir James Matheson bought the estate.

13677. Is the £150 the rent since you were deprived of those islands and pasture?—Yes, I believe they were deprived of the islands in the year 1827 or thereabouts, and they were deprived of the moorland pasture a year or two before. There was no deer forest at that time. We knew nothing about deer forests at that time. At that time the management of the estate was in the hands of trustees, and this deprivation of the island pasture and moorland pasture was made against the will of the proprietor of the time.

13678. Who was the proprietor?—The Seaforth family—Mackenzie of Brahan.

13679. When the hill pasture was taken away, and the islands, was the estate under trustees?—So far as I can learn.

13680. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you remember the name of the trustee?—Yes, it was an Edinburgh lawyer named Mackenzie. It is said by other people that our dwellings in this island are of a very poor character. I don't speak for myself personally, but for the other people, that it is difficult for them to have comfortable dwellings or dwellings in

* See Appendix A, XLL

which they can improve their condition. The reason is that the place is very thickly inhabited; and there are some who have small bits of lots, and these say that they have no inducement to improve their dwellings in any way, because they have no hold whatever of their holdings, in the case of their offending the manager or ground officer in any way, not even offending him, but for no reason at all in particular.* This keeps the people back, and in depressed circumstances. We believe they have mind and understanding the same as other people who have received education, but this keeps them back very, very much. Personally, I am of opinion, although I may be mistaken, that the man who is kept so under subjection has not the same inducement to endeavour to raise either his physical or moral condition as he would have if he were placed in more comfortable circumstances. Then, with regard to the school board and the parochial board, all the seats upon these boards are occupied by the people of the wealthier classes, and the poorer classes are cast aside. The parish church is situated two miles to the west from here, and that was the centre of the parish which extended from Kinlochresort to Dun of Carloway. The parochial board hold their meetings in Gara-na-hine, only four miles from the eastern boundary of the parish. The people complained of this, for they had to cross a ferry ten miles in breadth in any weather. The hour of meeting was fixed whether the members were able to attend or not. Then the books of the board were not open to the inspection of the public. A rate-payer would not be allowed to see them even supposing he wished. Again, the board was managed by the same class as the members. Every official connected with it belonged to the same class as the members. They had no connection with the parish at all; and the people of the parish believed that things were kept secret from the people of the parish, and that they were looked down upon in such a way that they were not thought fit to be entrusted with either the collection or the distribution of the poor-rate. So great was the distrust in connection with these matters that if any native of the island was a banker, he would not be entrusted with the parochial board account. I don't wish to speak of my own personal affairs, but I may refer to them by way of illustration. I am not afraid of them, nor do I ask any favour of those connected with the administration of the estate. As a proof of how the inhabitants of the place were despised and held in subjection, I am going to refer to a personal matter. The three parishes of Uig, Barvas, and Lochs were under the same inspector of poor. He had an assistant in every parish. It so happened that I myself was chosen as one of these assistants—I don't know how—during eight months, and at the parochial board meeting at Gara-na-hine I was paid £5 a year for my trouble. I told them at that meeting that I was now leaving the employment of the board, and I defied them to show I had ever expended unnecessarily or unfairly a sixpence of the public rate. I was willing to continue matters as they were for £5 a year. Mr Mackay, who was chairman, said that I was not paid sufficient for it—that they would not get a common herd boy for the sum of £5, and he asked them to give me a salary of £15, and he himself would guarantee I would do the work efficiently. Well, the matter came to a vote. The man who wished to get my place was a member of the board. Two members of the board voted for this member. Mr Mackay told this particular man that he ought to resign his membership, which he did. Mr Mackay gave him his own vote as chairman, and he carried the day, and he got his salary of £15. They again complain that the school board is chosen in the same way.

13681. Your complaint is that the parochial board and the school board are chosen exclusively from one class, and, as it were, in the proprietary

* See Appendix A, XLI.

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interest, and that the people are not properly represented?—I don't refer to proprietors, but I refer to a certain class of the people whom we call the aristocracy.

13682. You mean the interests of the aristocracy?—Yes.

13683. Then go on to another complaint?—The school board is located and administered in the same way as the parochial board—that is, in the hands of the wealthier classes so far as they can manage to get at it. We never got a detailed account of the income and expenditure of the school board, or a detailed account of the road money. We got it once or twice of the parochial board account, but we never yet got a school board account or account of the road money.

13684. Can you suggest something that ought to be done to remedy these grievances—something which you think would be good for the country and the people?—We know the remedy very well—that the people themselves should have an opportunity of electing members to administer the parochial board affairs. Now, as the law is administered at present, it is only a minority of the people who have a vote—that is those whose rent is over £4. Of the voters in this parish, distinguished into the wealthier classes and the poorer classes, the wealthier classes have a majority of votes, and so we are kept down on that account. That is so far as I am aware or have learned about the matter. Then we think that the parochial board ought to be placed upon an equal footing with the school board, that the members should be elected freely by the people, and not by any good will or favour. Then with respect to road money, the poor man pays it according to his rent just as the rich man does, but I understand he has no voice whatever in the administration of that fund. They have also a grievance in respect to many other matters. For instance they cannot do without heather ropes in order to fasten the thatch upon their houses. There is one day set apart by the gamekeeper upon which you are allowed to go and pull heather to make these ropes, and if you cannot attend on that day, you are not allowed on any other day. If you do, you are liable to be fined for it. Now, it so happened that last year the male population were away at the fishing, and they had only left their wives and children at home, and they were not able to have the heather ropes prepared in time, and they lost their corn because they had no ropes to secure it. That was in the great gale of October. My idea is that they could have secured a far greater amount of the corn than they were able to secure, if they had had ropes prepared at the time. It would not matter if it was a gamekeeper or a large farmer or any one belonging to them that would see them pulling this heather. If they were reported it would be worse for them than if Sir James Matheson during his life had seen every one of them. The township of Valtos is situated upon an arm of the sea, and if their sheep stray here or stray there the large sheep farmer will poind them, and he assumes the right to worry their stock a mile beyond the march, so they themselves say, for I have no personal knowledge of the matter, and the people say that any complaint they ever made to the chamberlain's office upon the subject was not listened to. I made a personal complaint myself to Mr Mackay, the chamberlain, upon this very matter. I myself saw the dog worrying the cattle half a mile beyond the march, through the rough ground, and some of them were injured upon the march. Now, a piece of the township was taken from us and given to this very tacksman. We got no abatement of rent for that. I myself had no stock upon the place. I have no sheep at all. The people delegated me to go and speak to Mr Mackay, that it was their settled conviction to go and keep possession of that portion of the township. Mr Mackay said that the tacksman had it in his lease, but I did

not believe that. I could not understand how a piece of ground that ever belonged to the township could form a part of the tack.

13685. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you represent Valtos alone, or are you also a delegate for other townships?—For Valtos alone.

13686. The grievances you have been stating refer to other townships besides that of Valtos? They are common to other townships?—Yes, I think they are.

13687. But as to the matters affecting the election of various boards, and the heather gathering, and various other complaints, are they confined to the township of Valtos, or do they embrace the other townships in this parish?—They include the whole parish.

13688. So in this respect you have been speaking also on behalf of other townships though not elected for other townships?—Yes, it is a general matter.

13689. Will you explain what you mean when you state that the people were unable to state their grievances through want of education? Do you mean that the want of education prevented them stating their grievances on the present occasion, or how?—Although I am able myself personally to state those grievances, I am not able to write or to send them to newspapers. That is what I had in view when I stated that the people through want of education were not able to state their grievances.

13690. Would it not be better if the people stated their grievances to those who had the power to remedy their grievances rather than by writing to the newspapers?—We did that, and it was in vain. We made a movement to that effect this year, and we did not find a man in the parish both able and willing to wield a pen on our behalf.

13691. You say the people wish for free education. Are the school fees which you pay so high as to be of an oppressive nature?—I consider the fees are too high. If a man has four or five or six children, and has to pay 4s. a quarter for them, and meanwhile has no money wherewith to buy meal, the fees stand very much in the way of his being able to secure the education of his children.

13692. What are the fees?—One shilling a quarter.

13693. How many heads of families are there in Valtos?—About seventy families.

13694. Has each family got a separate croft?—No.

13695. How many of these are cottars?—About twenty.

13696. Have the crofters got any right to common pasture anywhere?—Yes.

13697. What is the average head of stock which each crofter keeps in the township?—If they were limited to the number of cattle that the crofts could feed in winter, I don't think they would exceed a cow for every £2 of rent that is paid in the township.

13698. What is the average number of acres of arable ground?—Not one man there has an acre of arable ground. It is only rocks and stones, sandy ground which was blown by the wind.

13699. What kind of crops do you raise there?—Potatoes and barley. Oats will not grow. The sandy ground burns up the oats.

13700. How many barrels of potatoes does each man plant in a year?—Well, I pay £3 of rent, but I am paying £1 extra. I would plant about five barrels to give justice.

13701. How many do you actually plant?—This year I planted about four barrels. I was short of seed.

13702. And how much bere?—Rather less than a bushel.

13703. What stock have you got yourself on the croft?—Three cows.

13704. Any sheep?—No.

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13705. Or horses?—No.

13706. Just three cows?—Yes.

13707. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Any young ones?—No.

13708. *Mr Cameron.*—Have your neighbours about the same number?—No. Two of them were fed from Aberdeen. I bought the wintering of them.

13709. Do these cows graze on the common hill ground?—Yes, as long as it continues.

13710. Till the end of harvest?—Yes, it is so small for the people that it lasts no time.

13711. You mentioned that £40 of abatement of rent was given when the islands and the moorland were taken away from the township?—Yes; Valtos was at that time £180 of rent.

13712. And that was in 1827?—From 1825 to 1827.*

13713. Do you know what rent for those islands is now paid by the farmer or whoever it is that has got them?—I know the rent one farmer was paying, and I don't think the present farmer pays anything higher. I knew Mr Macrae when he had the farm of Linshader, and when he got the land of Pabbay-more, paid £32. John Munro Mackenzie was factor at the time.

13714. Is that the rent now?—It has passed through two or three hands since then.

13715. What other lands were taken away?—The half of Vacsay. I know the rent that was paid for that twenty years ago. It was £15 for the whole.

13716. Do you think it is higher now?—Yes, I think it is; I cannot tell.

13717. What other islands were taken away at that time?—Flodda.

13718. What is the rent paid for that?—£4 or £5.

13719. Now, do you know the rent which was paid for the moorland which was taken away sixty years ago?—Most of it is in the forest.

13720. Do you know what is the rent paid for it?—About £1000.

13721. That is for the whole forest, but I mean for the grazing which was taken from Valtos in 1825?—Well, I suppose the most part of it belonged to Valtos.

13722. You think the most part of that £1000 now paid was taken from Valtos?—Yes.

13723. Do the people complain of their not having these islands and the moorland, or is it merely that you wish to inform us as to the exact possession?—Oh, they complain of it.

13724. What rent do you think they would pay for it if they got it. It appears to have been valued then at £40?—They would willingly pay the rent it was raising in 1801.

13725. Was that less or more than the rent paid in 1825, when it was taken away?—Well, I think it was rather less. Rents have been increasing till this very day.

13726. But it was valued at £40 a year in 1825?—£32 was the rent of it when the small crofters had it.

13727. And you think the people would now be willing to pay £32 for it if they got it?—As for that, I don't like to go into details.

13728. But about that?—Yes.

13729. Any way, they would not be willing to pay £1000?—No.

13730. And the moorland is now let for £1000 apart from the lands?—The moorland and the land are not together at all.

13731. But you put them together, and said the islands and moorland were worth £40 a year?—Yes.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

13732. And you now say the greater part of the moor which is worth £1000 belonged to Valtos?—Yes.

13733. Then you don't think the people would be willing to pay £1000 for it?—Not likely.

13734. You said £40?—Yes.

13735. *The Chairman.*—When the moorland was taken away from the township of Valtos, what amount of sheep or cattle did it keep?—They kept horses at that time as well as sheep and cattle.

13736. About how much of all kinds of stock?—Well, they had as high as fourteen cows—those that were paying £6 at that time.

13737. But you cannot give me any idea how many sheep or cattle that moorland kept which was taken away for the sake of the farm altogether?—Some of it as high as six score sheep.

13738. Have you any idea how many acres were taken away?—No.

13739. But you think the piece taken away amounts really to half the area of the present deer forest?—I think it is fully more than half the area.

13740. You mentioned that the people were prevented making improvements on their houses or crofts for fear of arbitr ary eviction on the part of the ground officer. Can you state any cases of arbitrary or wanton eviction within your memory?—Yes, by the sheep farmer. I am not stating it at all, but I can show it.

13741. But I mean by the proprietor or factor. Do you know of any case of wanton or arbitrary eviction in your memory, by the proprietor, factor, or ground officer?—Yes, I could tell several instances. At Callernish, for instance, there were regulations given out in 1848, when this parish was lotted by a surveyor, and there were plans and specifications laid out for building a new kind of houses, and the men were going on with these houses and supporting themselves by the shell-fish from the shore. It was a very very bad year. A great deal of destitution was prevalent that year, and one man in this parish died for want of nourishment. These houses were built according to the regulations of the estate, and the work will bear evidence, will show itself. And the people were driven away out of it in the year 1851, and some of the houses are half built and the people in Canada. The people were driven away, and their stock was taken away from them for a nominal price—a sheep and lamb 4s. 6d. a head.*

13742. And the people were emigrated out of Scotland?—Yes, and scattered all through the island, and that was merely through the large farmer keeping the march up to them. He was lodging complaints against them.

13743. How long ago is that?—In the year 1851.

13744. That is thirty-two years ago. But within recent times has there been any isolated case of individual arbitrary evictions?—Yes. There was a case not twenty years ago, and another case at Bernera, through the influence of the ground officer; and even here, in this parish, they have been removed.

13745. You mentioned there was a difficulty in obtaining the heather ropes for securing the thatch of the houses, and that a day was appointed on which they were obliged to gather the heather. Is there only one day of the year appointed?—Three days in one particular week of the year.

13746. Supposing it was very bad weather, or that they were unable to get out, would they get leave to take it on other days?—No, they would have been reported by the officer and fined.

13747. Is any payment exacted for gathering heather?—No, not so far as I know.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

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13748. You stated that in the election of members for the school board the wishes and opinions of the people were not sufficiently considered, and that the representatives were all taken from one class. Have the people ever endeavoured to put forward a candidate for the school board agreeable to themselves?—Yes, but the people were uncertain of the rules of the school board from the commencement, and did not know anything about it.

13749. When was the last election?—October 1882.

13750. Could not you or someone having better education have explained to the people what their powers and duties were? Did you ever endeavour to assist them to elect a delegate in their own interest?—*I did not want to* go in to be troubled with anything of the kind. I had some other business to attend to.

13751. Has anybody ever represented to the factor or proprietor that they would have liked to have representatives of their own class upon the school board? Have they ever expressed their desire?—Well, I suppose they have.

13752. Do you know they have?—I cannot answer that question distinctly.

13753. You said there were twenty families on the township without land. How do these families gain their subsistence?—They have a division of their friends' lots.

13754. You say you are a fish-curer. Can you suggest any means of helping the fishing industry?—Yes, but I considered the fishing a secondary consideration. Land is the first, if the people are to be elevated in any shape or form.

13755. I ask you whether you have any specific suggestion to make—whether secondary or primary—for the benefit of the fishing population?—Yes.

13756. Then make it?—Well, so far as I can understand, everything that can be done for the fishing curing we have been doing. We have supplied the men with good substantial fishing boats, in the first place. They can go thirty miles from the land. It is the ling fishing that is principally carried on here, and they go about thirty miles from the land, and they have good boats—some of them as large as 33 feet keel, all decked, with the best fishing material. Well, this year was a very bad year—boisterous weather—and the fishing is of very little consequence when there is bad weather.

13757. Excuse me for a moment. I wish you to suggest anything that could be done. You say the fish-curers have given them good boats. Is there anything the Government or the proprietor could do in the way of boats or harbours or anything for the benefit of the people?—Well, the proprietor spent very little money upon the fishing; and as for the Government, I think landing places might help them a little. We are standing very much in need of landing places at Valtos. We have a good natural harbour.

13758. Could you write down a list of the places where you think landing places would be useful?—Yes.

13759. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families were in Valtos in 1825, at the time these places were taken away?—About fourteen families. It is before I was born. It is not likely I would be able to give the number there were before I was born.

13760. The former condition was this, that there were fourteen families in 1825 in Valtos, and they possessed, generally, fourteen milk cows, six score sheep, and some horses. Was that the state of Valtos in 1825?—Well, I did not mean the whole of them had that—so many cattle, sheep,

and horses—but those who were paying as high as £6. I mentioned that.

13761. And the condition now is that in place of these fourteen families there are upwards of seventy, with a very diminished stock?—Yes, that is the state of matters.

13762. Mention the name of the tacksmen who first got these islands which were taken away?—Mr James Mackenzie, Linshader, and Alexander Macrae.

13763. How long was the moor pasture taken away before it was let as a forest for rent? I am told it was only let as a forest for money quite recently. While it was in the proprietor's hands had he any stock upon it?—A tacksman had it before it was converted into a forest.

13764. Who was the tacksman who got it?—Alexander Macrae of Scaliscro.

13765. What rent were they paying?—About £100, but they had Scaliscro.

13766. Where are these islands, and why was this pasture taken from Valtos?—Because they wanted it to be converted into a sheep farm, and through the influence of the ruling power.

13767. It was not for the benefit of the people of Valtos?—No, quite the reverse.

13768. You spoke about some evictions that took place in 1851; from what township?—Carinish and Reef.

13769. These were houses they were put out of, not land?—The whole lands, gardens, grazings, houses, and everything.

13770. Who got the lands from which they were put out?—James Mackenzie, who has Linshader and Pabbay.

13771. Then the eviction was not for the benefit of the crofters who remained?—There were no crofters remaining on those places.

13772. They were all put away?—They were all driven away.

13773. Where were those people taken to? Were they driven out of the island altogether?—No, some were scattered through the parish, some sent to other hamlets beyond the parish, and some were compelled to go to America.

13774. Do you know a person called John Mathieson of Uig?—Yes.

13775. Is he one of the delegates?—Yes.

13776. Has there been a surveyor going round measuring the crofts of the people lately?—Yes, I saw one.

13777. Do you know what he is doing or why he is doing it?—I spoke to the gentleman, and he asked me about my own croft, and I told him it was half a croft I was tenant of, and he asked me for the other name, and the answer I got was a peculiar one.

13778. Are you aware the people generally were rather alarmed at this inquiry?—Yes, they did not like the idea.

13779. Do you know now yourself exactly what the object is?—The opinion I formed in my own mind was that he was from the factor's office, because he had all the crofters that were in the rental in his book. I understood in my mind he came purposely from the office.

13780. Are you aware the object was in order to get the exact extent of the cultivated land of the island merely for information?—That was not all the measurement he made. He measured the lochs.

13781. In reality it was for the use of this Commission, to get exactly the extent of the arable land that was under cultivation?—Well, the people did not believe he was sent from the Commission, because I got one of the schedules to read, and my understanding was that Lady Matheson might get her own schedules for her own side.

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13782. But that surveyor is paid by Government?—Well, he should have told that politely. It would have left the people more satisfied. They were not satisfied with him, because he did not speak very politely to the people.

13783. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said there were fourteen families in 1825 and seventy now. Where have these families come from?—It is the natural increase of the place.

DONALD MATHIESON, Kneep (64)—examined.

Donald Mathieson.

13784. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by your people?—Yes.

13785. Have you a statement to make on their behalf?—They complain of some hardships connected with the administration of the estate—the holdings made less and the rents increased. My father and grandfather lived in this township. In my grandfather's day the township was divided among eight, and the total rent was £40. This was about eighty years ago. The rent is now £80. There are twenty-six families, of whom seventeen are crofters. Some of the township was taken from us, also some of the islands that used to summer our cattle, and also moorland pasture.

13786. How long is it since the moorland pasture was taken away?—The islands were taken away from us about fifty-five years ago. They were given to Alexander Macrae of Kintail. We were deprived of the moorland pasture about forty years ago, and it was given to a neighbouring tacksman. We march with sheep runs all round. About 1850 the township that marched with us was cleared, and a bit of our township was taken from us, and added to that cleared township. The tacksman was Mr John Macrae, the son of the Macrae who got the islands before.

13787. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the name of the township that was cleared?—Reef. In the days I spoke of, in my grandfather's days, when they had the land at a reasonable rent, they were making a comfortable living. They had a pair of horses, five milk cows, and other cows such as young animals that were sent to the islands, and about forty sheep. The horses were done away with, and they themselves had often to do horses' work; and now if a man marries a wife, he must yoke her in a cart. Now, having lost all our grazings, and with the amount of ground we have now, supposing I had two cows, I would require to sell one in order to keep up the other; and if I have about a dozen sheep or so at Martinmas, they will be worried by the neighbouring tacksmen, whose dogs continually harass them, and poind them, so that we are scarcely able to live at all.

13788. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What rent do you yourself pay?—£4, 4s. bare rent, with taxes in addition.

13789. What stock do you actually keep?—Three cows, two stirks, and ten sheep.

13790. No horse?—No, I have no horse. There is no horse in the place. They would not be allowed to be kept there. They were all sold.

13791. How many barrels of potatoes do you plant?—About twelve.

13792. And how many barrels of barley?—One barrel of barley and half a barrel of oats.

13793. What return do you get from these?—The land has got exhausted through continuous cropping, but I get about forty barrels of potatoes and sometimes as low as twenty.

13794. What is the best return you recollect getting within the last ten years?—Sixty. The cattle required it all for the last two years.

13795. What return do you get of bere and oats?—I would make about six returns the year before last.

13796. Of bere?—Yes.

13797. Besides the seed?—Six returns altogether, seed included.

13798. And oats?—The land has got exhausted, as stated before. The best crop of oats I ever had was two barrels out of a half barrel I sowed.

13799. You give most of this produce to your own cattle?—Yes, so they must; there is nothing else for them.

13800. What amount of meal are you obliged to buy?—I bought about twenty bolls last year. I have already bought sixteen this year.

13801. Since when?—Just after the crop is lifted. I begin to buy just after the income of the crop is eaten up.

13802. In what way do you make the money that enables you to buy this meal?—Partially by the selling of stock, and fishing at the east coast and elsewhere.

13803. Do you fish here at all?—Not of late; I am too old now.

13804. Does your family fish here?—Yes.

13805. Have they got a big boat?—No. In addition to the sufferings we endure through the shepherds, we are also injured very much by the deer-forest. Supposing any of our own cattle are feeding out upon our own moorland pasture, no one is allowed by the regulations of the estate to attend to them or follow them except the herd. Even supposing any of them had a broken leg, no other person is entitled to go and look after it. Supposing any of the sheep were losing their wool, or anything of that sort, we are not allowed to go after them to shear them. One day is appointed for that purpose, and if the sheep are not found on that day they must go without being shorn at all.

13806. Has the herd the right to go a second time?—Yes, he has the right, but when the sportsmen come he must look out.

13807. When do the sportsmen come?—At the end of summer.

13808. Do the deer damage your crofts at all?—Not in our particular township, but in other parts of the parish they injure the crops.

13809. How long has your rent stood at £4, 4s.?—About sixteen years.

13810. What was it before then?—I paid at first £3, 15s.

13811. Why was it raised?—I don't know. The rent of our township was raised £10 in one year, and four men were put in upon us. Then 5s. was put upon us for peat ground, and then 1s. was put upon each of us which they called hen money; that is 6s. But now that is rent, and it is not set down as a separate rent.

13812. Were you in the habit of giving kain hens in addition to the rent before?—We never paid any kain hens within my time.

13813. But did they always pay the shilling in your time?—No

13814. Then why was the 1s. put on?—I cannot tell, except that that was about the time it was put upon us by the chamberlain Donald Munro.

13815. Why was it called hen money?—I don't know why it was called by that name.

13816. What was the name of the island you lost?—Little Wia. Our township had the whole of it, and then we had a portion of Vacasay, the island which the previous delegate spoke of. That was what our township separately held.

13817. You mentioned that four families had been put in upon you. Where did they come from?—From another township that was cleared—Dun of Carloway.

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13818. Have any other families been put in upon you at any time besides these four?—Not since I became a crofter. The increase has been the natural increase of the land, except these four.

13819. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who has that island, Little Wia, and the half of that other island?—James Macrae has Little Wia and Alexander Macrae has the portion of Vacasay which belonged to our township.

13820. Have they a good deal of land besides?—They have. Alexander has a very large stretch of country—four townships added together.

13821. Why were these islands taken from the Kneep people?—We cannot tell, except to make the oppressors that came in more comfortable, and provide them with wintering for their stock.

13822. Was it for the benefit of the people of Kneep?—On the contrary, to our great injury.

13823. Is the latter state of Kneep worse than the beginning?—Sevenfold worse—sevenfold and seventeen times, and I say so.

13824. You mentioned that the town of Reef was cleared. Do you know how many families were cleared out of Reef?—Several.

13825. Would there be twenty altogether?—There were about twenty-eight.

13826. What became of them?—They suffered great hardship and oppression in their removal. I remember it well myself. They were scattered here and there, and some were sent abroad—some to other places where hardly a snipe could live.

13827. Who has Reef now?—James Mackenzie, Linshader.

13828. In regard to the forest, is there any fence for keeping the deer in?—No.

13829. No fence whatever?—No, they have the run of our own moorland pasture for grouse and shooting.

13830. Supposing you got these islands back again, would they help you very much in your condition?—Certainly.

13831. Is your own position very much worse than the position of your grandfather?—Very much indeed. I must live henceforth on the earnings of other people—on my own family whom I reared under great hardship. The croft which I possess does not contribute much to my support.

13832. You mentioned formerly you had been in the habit of going away and earning money for the support of your family in other places, but you are now too old to do so. Is that correct?—Yes.

13833. Was it necessary for your grandfather to go away out of this place to earn his living?—Never beyond the bounds of the township.

13834. *The Chairman.*—Does the common pasture—the hill pasture of the township—march with the deer forest?—The grazing of Valtos comes between us and the actual forest, but the sportsmen have the run of all the ground for shooting purposes.

13835. The sportsmen have the right of shooting grouse and deer over your common pasture?—He has the right to go through our crops in the shooting season, and he exercises the right of going through our crops and shooting snipe along the shore and elsewhere.

13836. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With dogs?—Yes.

13837. Do they take dogs through the corn?—They went through it quite common last summer.

13838. *The Chairman.*—Do the shooting tenants do your stock and crop any substantial injury?—Well it never was complained of, but there is no doubt that there were some places where substantial injury was done.

13839. Do the shooting tenants show you any kindness or render you any service of any sort?—We hold no communication with them.

13840. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Or they with you?—There is no communication between us at all.

13841. *The Chairman.*—Do the gamekeepers molest you or do you any hurt?—We have nothing to complain of in that respect, except the matter of the heather. The hill is set apart at the beginning of autumn, and if we cannot get at the heather that week we must do without, whatever injury may befall us for want of it.

13842. Do you get sea-weed from the shore?—Yes.

13843. Do you pay anything?—No, nothing whatever.

13844. Do you get anything from the tacksman's shore or only from your own?—We take it off our own shore, but there was a portion preserved of the shore which belonged to neither tacksman nor crofter, which was occupied by the proprietor for the manufacture of kelp. That is not used now, and we get the use of it.

13845. And do you pay anything?—Nothing. We would not be allowed to go upon the tacksman's land.

13846. Do you live on good terms with the tacksman?—Some ten days ago some of our people went to gather drift-ware upon the tacksman's shore and were prevented doing so.

12847. *Mr Cameron.*—Did I understand you to say that the sportsmen habitually shoot snipe in standing corn with dogs?—I would say five or six times in the season. The shooting tenant pays £700 or £800 for the privilege of shooting over what is our ground and the ground of the neighbouring crofters—the moorland pasture—throughout the whole parish. The proprietor gets that amount of money without any outlay whatever on the place.

NORMAN MORRISON, Crofter and Fisherman, Breanish (61)—examined.

13848. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Breanish?—Yes.

13849. How many people were present when you were elected?—All the male population of the town.

13850. Have you any statement to make on behalf of the people?—I would say, in the first place, that they are crowded so much together that they have no way of living. Our places were crowded first when the neighbouring township of Miolasta was cleared. Six families of that township were thrown in among us; the rest were hounded away to Australia and America, and I think I hear the cry of the children till this day. There were others came from various townships since at different times as these were being cleared, and I instance various examples—one from one place one from another—and not one was placed in among us in that way, but accommodation was provided for him by subdividing one of the lots that were in the place. We were deprived of the old rights of the township moorland pasture. The half of the island of Miolasta belonged in the time of my grandfather to our township and a neighbouring township. We were deprived of that. We got no abatement of rent when we were deprived of that, but when Cameron lotted out the township the rent was increased by £30.

13851. How long is it since the island of Miolasta was taken from you?—Nearly sixty years.

13852. How long is it since the township of Miolasta was cleared?—About forty-five years ago.

13853. As you are sixty-one years of age, you can perhaps remember

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how many families there were in Breanish before the township was cleared and the people taken to Breanish?—Between twelve and sixteen.

13854. How many are there now?—Forty-three.

13855. How many of those are crofters paying rent to the proprietor?—There are twenty-nine names on the rent roll.*

13856. And the rest are cottars?—There are some of them who pay from 5s. to 10s.

13857. Then the number of the families has increased from sixteen to forty-three. How many of that number do you think have come in from the outside, and how many are the natural increase of the place?—Seven came from the outside. We also consider we have a grievance with respect to the herd upon the march. It is fourteen years since a herd was set apart for ourselves and the neighbouring tacksman, and we are quite willing to pay the half of the wages of that shepherd, but we have always had the idea that the neighbouring tacksman marching with us ought to pay the other half. We were also complaining about the dyke that was built about thirty-four years ago. It was built in the time of the destitution, and the people were paid for the building of it by so much Indian meal. Four shillings or five shillings additional rent was placed upon every one that was on the rent roll at that date for this dyke, and we were under the impression that when the expense of putting up the fence was paid this 4s. or 5s. would be taken away.

13858. What good is the dyke?—It never was of much service. It was meant to enclose the arable ground, but being only a turf dyke it stood only two or three years, and it never was repaired either by landlord or tenant. We are also complaining of the fank that was set up in Miolasta after it was cleared. It is only about 20 feet long by 12 feet broad. All the sheep sink into it down halfway to the belly.

13859. Is your township surrounded by dykes?—Yes, we march with a tack.

13860. You have dispntes with the tacksman about sheep?—Yes; I have seen the blankets taken off the beds to pay for poinding money, and I have seen the plaids of the women taken away for the same purpose.

13861. If there was a fence put round all your hill pasture so as to separate you from the tacksman, would that be of service to you?—Yes, it would be of service while it lasted.

13862. If the proprietor was inclined to put up a wire fence round your pasture would you contribute by your labour to put it up?—I am not able to speak on behalf of the people in that matter. We did not consult together on such a question as that.

13863. Do you think it would be a wise thing to do?—It would not be an unfair thing to do, but these things did not occur in the time of the present shepherd.

13864. Did you benefit by your sheep running upon the tacksman's land?—No, we would not allow them there, but then we cannot keep them off. They are none the better of going there at all; once they are caught they are confined.

13865. If you could get back the half of the island that was taken away from you, would you be able to stock it and pay rent for it?—I am of opinion that it would be of great service to them, in order to enable them to pay the rent if they got it back.

13866. If you got back the half of the island, would you be willing to pay rent for it?—I did not take the opinion of the people of the township on that matter, but I should think it would be a great benefit to them to enable them to pay their rent. What I understood to be the feeling of the people was that they wished to plead for the old rights of the township.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

13867. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand that to be that they should get it back without any rent?—Yes, that is the feeling of the people—that they ought to get it back according to the old rights of the place without any additional rent.

13868. *The Chairman.*—When it was taken away from you, was the rent reduced?—No; on the contrary, the rent was raised. There was £30 additional placed upon the township, since I succeeded my father.

13869. What was the total in your father's time?—£72.

13870. What is it now?—£100 now, bare rent.

13871. When was it raised?—The rent was raised since Sir James Matheson bought the property, when Mr Cameron, surveyor, lotted out the place.

13872. What was your individual rent before it was raised?—The rent of the township was raised when I got possession of my croft, and it was raised at the very time the crofts were lotted out, so that I cannot tell the former rent. I already stated the rent to be £5 of bare rent and £2 of assessments. The croft is divided between myself and my brother.

13873. What do these assessments consist of?—There is 4s. or 5s. for the dyke fence I spoke of. Then there is 4s. or 5s. more for moorland grazing. Then there is the school rate and the poor rate, and the doctor's money, and 1s. for hen money.

13874. Where is the moor pasture you speak of?—The moorland ground is summer pasture. At the end of summer the cattle graze upon it for four or six weeks. We don't send sheep there—only the cattle.

13875. When did you get that pasture, or did you always have it?—In my grandfather's time or before that.

13876. Did you pay the 5s. then, or was it included in the rest of your rent?—This 5s. was added to our rent in Sir James's time. I never heard of it before that.

13877. How near is the school to you at Breanish?—About 100 yards from the nearest house.

13878. How far are you from the church?—We are about eight miles from this one.

13879. And how far from the Free Church?—Ten.

13880. You are the furthest away township on the west of Lewis are you not?—Yes, that is inhabited by crofters.

13881. There is no other between you and Harris?—No, there is no other crofter township between us and Harris.

13882. Is there a road to Breanish?—There is no road past Miolasta.

13883. How far are you past that place?—About one mile.

13884. And how far is the doctor from you?—About thirty miles by land, and about eighteen by water by taking advantage of the ferry.

13885. Have you ever had a doctor nearer you than that?—It is only one doctor before that we ever had in the parish.

13886. Is it a grievance to be so far from the doctor?—Very great. When we come down to take advantage of the ferry we have to get a boat from some other person.

13887. What is your stock?—Two milk cows and three young beasts.

13888. And your sheep?—Fifteen or twenty sheep.

13889. And a horse?—No, I never had, and never shall have until I get grazing for it. My grandfather had. My brother has about the same amount of stock that I have.

13890. And what is the rent of your own and your brother's croft?—£3, and there is 10s. of taxes in addition.

13891. Then your whole rent is £3, 10s. Do you consider that rent too high?—Yes, for all the crops we can take out of the place.

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13892. Have any of the other people of Breanish a horse?—No, there is no horse in the township?

13893. Where is the land near you that could be added to you?—Once you pass Valtos there is not a crofter between that and my own house—a stretch of ten miles—and every foot of that is available.

13894. In whose hands are these ten miles?—Two tacksmen—John Macrae and Alexander Macrae, and Mr Mackay. It is not more than ten years since they were removed from one of these townships, but it is a large number of years since they were removed from the others.

13895. Is there very good arable land on these farms?—That was the garden of Uig both for crops and pasture.

13896. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With reference to a remark you made about some people being evicted, that the wail was still ringing in your ears. Who was it that put these people out?—Sir James Matheson's predecessor.

13897. Who got their land?—John Macrae from Kintail.

13898. Who has got the land just now?—Mr Mitchell.

13899. Where does he stay?—Miolasta.

13900. Does he live there?—Yes.

13901. Is he a native of the island?—No.

13902. I would like to get some explanation about the herd you spoke of. You complained that they had to pay the whole wages of the herd with the adjoining tacksman, but I understood you also to say that the tacksman nominated the herd. Is that so?—We appoint him ourselves, at the instance of the chamberlain and Mr Mitchell; but it is not our present chamberlain that imposed him upon us, but his predecessor, Mr Munro.

13903. Would you not, unless compelled, get a herd at all?—A herd is necessary. He is engaged there during the half year, the summer and autumn, and the tacksman's shepherd could not keep the march very well without a herd. We are quite willing to pay the half of the herd; the tacksman has a shepherd upon his side of the march.

13904. But you don't pay any of his wages?—He has a shepherd upon the other side of the fence, and we pay no portion of his wages.

13905. Then, I suppose, the real grievance is that this herd can only be utilised and made use of at the march alone?—Yes, he is appointed entirely for the march. He was imposed upon us fourteen years ago, and we have paid £61 for him since. That would go a great way to pay the arrears of rent to the proprietor.

13906. Do any of the tacksman's sheep come across into your ground?—They don't come much across except in autumn, when they come into our arable ground.

13907. Do you poind them then?—No; since the first shepherd came in there has not been a sheep poinded to the present day, so far as ever I heard.

13908. Notwithstanding that yours were poinded?—Yes, and taken to the man's house. It was called the black prison from John Macrae's time until the present time.

13909. What was the reason you never poinded tacksmen's sheep, were you afraid of the consequences?—That would only make matters worse. The harrowing and harassing of stock would be greater if we were to poind upon one side and they to poind upon the other. Then we have to provide peat ground for the shepherd at Miolasta. His peats are cut for the last fourteen years just where our sheep and cattle rest. This was also done by Mr Munro, the former factor.

13910. Are you and your neighbours worse off in your circumstances

than your grandfathers were?—Very much worse. My father never earned one penny out of the island of Lewis, and he was not a penny in arrears when he died. Neither did my grandfather earn a penny out of the island.

13911. It was not necessary?—No. My great-grandfather marked thirty-six black lambs of his own in one year, in addition to the white ones in Miolasta. Then they had horses, cattle, and sheep in addition; and we have no doubt whatever it was the crowding upon us of other people, and the subdivision of the lots, and the land being taken from us, that has reduced us to our present state. We have no hope of being improved in our condition except by getting enlarged holdings.

13912. And you say there are ten miles that you could walk through without a house?—Yes. Then, if you go to the other side of our township, there is a stretch of twelve miles till you reach Harris, and there is no one there except big sheep and shepherds.

13913. What is the name of the place?—The whole of it is occupied by two men—Mr Mitchell, Miolasta, and Mr Macrae, Edaraoil. There are eight or nine townships cleared there. Each of them would make provision for one or two crofters.

13914. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many descendants paying rent to the landlord has your grandfather left?—Five paying rent.

13915. Are there any heads of families besides?—There is no other. There are young men who are not married. These are all the male heads of families.

13916. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—At what age did you marry?—Thirty-two.

13917. And your brothers, when did they marry?—My father had two families, and of my three brothers one of them married about the same age as myself, and the other two were somewhat younger.

13918. Most of your people marry very soon?—They don't marry so soon now as they used to do in my younger days.

13919. *The Chairman.*—Did you ever pay anything for poinded sheep to the present tenant, Mr Mitchell?—Never to Mr Mitchell, but to his predecessor.

13920. How long has Mr Mitchell been there?—Fourteen years.

13921. So you have not paid anything for poinding for fourteen years?—No, I paid nothing myself. My stock seldom strayed.

13922. Has anybody else paid Mr Mitchell poinding money?—I am not able to say.

13923. Do you keep your shepherd the whole or only part of the year?—Half of the year.

13924. Does Mr Mitchell keep his shepherd the whole year?—Yes, the whole year. I don't know he keeps him upon the march the whole year, but he is in his service the whole year.

13925. But he probably comes to the march during the course of those six months?—I have no doubt he frequents the march the whole year round, when our herd is there and when he is not there.

WILLIAM MACKAY, Chamberlain on the Lewis Estates (56)—examined.

13926. *The Chairman.*—You may probably have some statement which you wish to make in consequence of what has passed to-day?—There are a few things I wish to make a remark about. I wish to explain about this kain money and the 5s. that have been spoken of. At the time the estate was purchased by Sir James Matheson the rent was estimated to be

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about £9000 odd, and each crofter paid 5s. or a week's labour at roads or mill dams, or cartages for churches or manses, or anything of that kind, which Seaforth had converted into a payment of 5s. That was paid by the tenants previous to 1844, as Seaforth's books which I have can show. The kain money it seems was an old custom of bringing a couple of fowls and a dozen of eggs to the laird, which Seaforth converted into a payment of 1s. It was continued to be exacted, either a week's labour or the payment of 1s., for some years. Sometimes the week's labour was expended in the way of making the township's roads. About the time the Valuation Act came into operation, or some years after that, it was represented to the factor for the time being that this 5s. and the 1s. of kain money should be added to the rental and returned in the valuation roll. Accordingly it was added to the rent. Suppose a man were paying £1 of rent, he was paying 5s. and 1s., making £1, 6s. It is only £1 that would be returned in the valuation roll, but it was represented that the 6s. should be included in the valuation roll, which was done, and it is now included in the rent. About the years 1850–51–52 the whole island was lotted. It was formerly on the run-rig system—at least a great part of the island—and then it was lotted by Mr Cameron, an assistant to the factor at that time. Most of the townships were lotted, and after that I maintain there was no increase of rent.

13927. In whose time was the lotting done?—In Sir James Matheson's time, 1850—51–52. There have been townships in which there was some Government drainage money expended, on which they are paying interest. One man talked about the fence at Breanish which was put up by the destitution meal. They were not charged 4s. for that, but there was Government money expended on fencing, for which they were charged interest. As to the total increase upon the crofters since 1844 with the 5s. and 1s. added, the rental to-day is only £89, 3s. 1d. higher than it was then upon the crofters. The increase upon the tacksmen, which, of course, includes the interest on dwelling houses and offices that were built for them, is £401, 2s. 8d.

13928. What is the aggregate increase from the time Sir James Matheson bought the property till the present moment, without the shootings?—It is the land I am speaking of altogether. I cannot give you that at this moment. It is only the crofters and tacksmen I am speaking of.

13929. I am asking the aggregate increase upon crofters and tacksmen from the time of the purchase of the property till the present moment?—About £490.

13930. *Professor Mackinnon.*—On the whole estate?—I am speaking of this parish only. There is Aird Uig, in 1844, £32, 8s.; to-day it is £32, 5s. The township of Valtos in 1844 was £163, 4s. 10d.; to-day, £159, 1s. The township of Uigshader, £32, 8s.; to-day, £32, 5s. Township of Lochganvich, £19 in 1844, and now it is £19. Earshader was £15, 4s., and is now £15, 4s. The number of crofters in this parish on our rent roll is 419, with thirty-eight joint tenants. There are two names perhaps entered. There is no such thing as three names entered. That makes 457 recognised tenants and crofters in Uig.

13931. Is that to-day or in 1844?—To-day.

13932. You have not the number of 1844?—Not for the parish. Then there are subtenants or cottars. They have the land, but not paying direct to the proprietor. There are 147 in this parish. The rental of the crofters and cottars is £1533.

13933. *The Chairman.*—And of the tacksmen?—Of the tacksmen paying above £30, the rent is £1274, 5s.

13934. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many are there of them?—Seven.

13935. *The Chairman.*—Now, what is the area under crofter and cottars, and the area under tacksmen?—There are 63,829 acres, measured off the Ordnance Survey map, under crofters paying under £30 of rent, at the rental of £1533, that is 5¾d. per acre. Under tacksmen, 39,992 acres, at a rental of £1274, 15s. = 7½d. per acre.

13936. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—May I ask what is comprehended in the forest in Uig?—Morsgiel, 15,872 acres, and Scaliscro, 2875.

13937. Is that land completely cleared of stock, or is there stock belonging to the proprietor on it?—It is cleared of stock. There may be a few sheep and a few cows kept, but it is a regular deer forest.

13938. *The Chairman.*—What is the rental of that?—The rental of the two is £1100.

13939. *Mr Cameron.*—Is it under the same tenant?—No, not the same tenant—two separate tenants.

13940. *The Chairman.*—Are both of those in the parish of Uig?—Yes.

13941. Will you state what is the character of the ground in the deer forest—whether it is in general similar to the land held by the tacksmen or crofters, or whether it is distinctly of a different character?—In 1844 it was a sheep farm.

13942. The whole of it?—There were two farms. Scaliscro had part of it, and Mr Macrae of Huishnish had Ken Resort. His lease was out in 1849, and it was converted into a deer forest, and in like manner Scaliscro was under a tacksman. There were no tenants removed from any place in Sir James Matheson's day or for many a year before then.

13943. What was the rental of the whole area when it was in two farms?—I believe the whole thing at that time was rented at about £200.

13944. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does that rent include the farms or merely include the forest?—For these 18,747 acres.

13945. Has the tenant the right of shooting over other lands besides these?—He has the right of shooting beyond. This is what is purely cleared.

13946. *The Chairman.*—I understand that when this area of forest was let in two farms the rental was about £200 as against £1100 now?—Yes, quite so.

13947. When was the forest first formed?—In 1849 or 1850 with this Morsgiel farm.

13948. Was it before Sir James Matheson's time?—No, it was in his day.

13949. You heard that one of the witnesses stated that a large proportion of the forest was taken from one of the townships—Valtos. Was he correct in stating that so large an area was taken from the township of Valtos?—Well, I cannot answer that, because in 1849 the tenant was then at the end of his lease of nineteen years. But I believe the proprietor formed that place as a sheep farm even before the tenant that occupied it—Mr Macrae, Huishnish, who was the tenant up to 1849. The proprietor occupied it before that as a sheep farm.

13950. Can you state what the amount of stock kept upon those two sheep farms was?—I cannot answer that question.

13951. Is there anything you wish to state voluntarily?—I should like to give the stock kept by the tenants and what is kept by the tacksman. In 1882, counting all heads of cattle returned as held by cottars and crofters, there were 1989 head. The sheep, including lambs, 7489; horses, twenty. Tacksmen: number of cattle including calves, 333; sheep, 3406; horses, 8. I should like to give the stock in 1881, because there was a larger number sold in 1882 than there has been for many

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year. Cattle held by crofters, 2386; sheep, 8097; horses, 20; pig, 1. Held by tacksmen: cattle, 434; sheep, 4232; horses, 13. I have also to remark that I have not been able to get the crofts of the different townships measured, but of seven townships that have been measured—Breanish, Earshader, Crowlista, Aird Uig, Valtos, Kneep, Carishader—the area of arable land, excluding rocks and what is not possible of cultivation, is 750 acres, held by 145 crofters. The average rent per acre is 13s. 10d. That is with the hill pasture free. But inside these seven townships there are 105 acres that could be cultivated and that are not cultivated.

13952. Has any of that been cultivated in past times?—It may have been.

13953. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you a note of the instructions you gave to the surveyor?—It was merely to have the arable land on each croft measured.

13954. Actually under crop?—Yes.

13955. You were careful to exclude rocks?—Yes; he excludes that. As a specimen of the number of acres in the crofts in the township of Breanish, one man has 7 acres 2 roods 28 poles, but a considerable portion of that is still uncultivated, and could be cultivated. There is another in the township at £5, 7s., and the area 4 acres 2 roods; and Norman Morrison and Angus Morrison pay £5, 13s. between them for an area of 7 acres 1 rood.

13956. They state that their aggregate payments amounted to £7, with all the different additions. They include in the rates some payments of a land nature, because they included the 5s. and the hen money?—That is included in what I have here—the 5s. and the hen money. Of course, there are taxes to be added.

13957. Does this survey hows how the lands lie, that they are not all contiguous—that there are rocks, and so on?—In his report he gives the whole area, and what is not fit for cultivation is deducted.

13958. It will not show how much is in one field, contiguous?—No, it will just show the area of the croft.

13959. From your own knowledge—taking one of these crofts of 7 acres—how many separate pieces will there likely be in that croft?—There may be perhaps in some of them ten or a dozen separate pieces.

13960. No more than that? I am afraid there is a great deal more?—No, I don't think there is in the place I am speaking of—7 acres. It is not so rocky as some others.

13961. *The Chairman.*—You heard the delegates who have given evidence to-day, or two of them, complain that the local boards were too exclusively composed of persons in the proprietary interest or, as one of them said, in the aristocratic interest. Is it true that there is not on the school board or parochial boards a fair representation of the crofter class?—Not on the present board, but formerly there were four of the crofters on the school board.

54962. What is the reason that at last election this change occurred, and that the crofters became excluded?—There is at least one crofter—I mean a crofter paying £9 of rent—still on the board. There was a regular election, and they had to return whom they liked.

13963. Was there no manifestation at all of any desire to have a larger representation of their own class on the board?—Not that I heard of or saw. At least, the first board I had to do with, I met with the people and allowed them to choose whom they liked to save a contested election. At that time they did agree on the persons to be returned, but at the last two elections it has been contested.

13964. In what sense were these elections contested?—I do believe that church matters had a good deal to do with it.

13965. It was not a question of the proprietary interest against the crofter interest at all?—Not at all.

13966. Do you say that there never has been any influence exerted by the proprietor or by yourself in reference to the selection of candidates?—No more than this, that I always used my influence in advising them to send educated men—at any rate men who could sign their names.

13967. But among the crofter class are there persons of sufficient intelligence to make useful members upon boards of this kind?—There are very few.

13968. But there are some?—There are some.

13969. Do you think it would be useful in the interest both of the proprietor and the crofter that there should be representatives of that character on the boards? Might it not reconcile them perhaps to the taxation which is imposed? Might they not understand the objects of the taxation better?—I suppose the ordinary crofters here would be of no great service on the board. An illiterate man who could do no more than write his name would be of no service.

13970. Might he not gain something by contact at the board with persons of a superior class and intelligence?—Well, they might have had it in their power to return crofters altogether, and if they were all crofters they would be quite unfit to manage the business of the board.

13971. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many members are there on the school board in this parish?—Seven.

13972. And there is one crofter?—So far as I recollect at present.

13973. Could you mention the occupation of the others? You are the chairman I presume?—Yes. There is the minister of the Free Church, Mr Morrison; John Macrae, tacksman; and, I think, Mr M'Ivor, miller; the doctor of the parish; Donald M'Donald, ground officer, Dun of Carloway; the Free Church minister of Carloway; and Angus Gillies, crofter.

13974. Is he exclusively a crofter, or has he some other pursuit or trade?—I believe he keeps a small shop. He was in America for some time.

13975. Don't you think, on consideration, it would be more useful and more acceptable to the people to have a larger representation of the small tenant class?—I believe if there were a majority of the crofters, there would be no prosecutions at all in the way of compelling the attendance at school.

13976. But supposing there were two or three instead of one?—I don't see there would be any objection to two or three.

13977. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you not state that on a former board there were four of them?—Yes.

13978. They had a majority then?—They had.

13979. *The Chairman.*—How did they use their majority? Did they do any mischief?—No.

13980. Did they do any good?—I daresay just as much as the other members of the board did, but in the way of visiting the schools and signing papers and the like of that they did not do much of that.

13981. Is your teaching given by male or female teachers?—We have both male and female in the parish. There are seven schools in the parish. Two of them are taught by females and five by males.

13982. Are they generally Gaelic-speaking people—the teachers?—I think they are all Gaelic-speaking teachers, but I am not sure of one of the female teachers.

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13983. Do you find the people generally desire to have a teacher capable of conversing and instructing in Gaelic?—Well, that is the general rule, and we try to get Gaelic teachers.

13984. You have heard a great deal said to-day of the clearances effected in former times, before Sir James Matheson became proprietor of the estate, and of the diminution of hill pasture, and the consolidation of pasture with large sheep farms, and of the consequent overcrowding of the crofters upon small areas, and consequent exhaustion of the soil. Is it your own feeling on reflection that that policy was carried too far, and that the people are now suffering in consequence of it?—Well, what happened previous to 1844 I cannot speak of. I don't know what took place in the way of clearances or what truth is in that, but there are some of the farms that are now under sheep that have the marks of being cultivated or that crofters have been upon, but I mean to say that in all the townships of this parish there has been no change of the boundaries from what Sir James Matheson found there, with the exception of perhaps straightening a march, when there was a fence to be built. There is one township that spoke here to-day—the township of Kneep. In straightening the march of the township there was a portion taken off it, but there was a corresponding reduction in the rent.

13985. I don't ask you the question with reference to the conduct of Sir James Matheson during the period of his proprietorship, of which we are quite satisfied, but I put the question to you as a matter of general policy, whether you think there was in former times too much clearance and too much consolidation, and whether you think that any portion of the arable and pasture ground formerly taken away might now with advantage be restored to the crofting class?—Well, it would be an advantage to the crofting class to restore it for pasture, but not for arable ground.

13986. Do you think that portions of the hill pasture might advantageously be restored to them for the benefit of their grazing?—Yes, in other parts of the island, but not much in this parish. They have more pasture land in this parish than in any other parts of the island, and better pasture land.

13987. I asked you before whether the land occupied as a deer forest was of a very different character, of a much wilder and less profitable nature, than the usual arable and pasture ground, or whether it is there the same as the rest?—I believe Morsgiel is the barest pasture land. I don't consider it fit for crofters—for arable land; of course the pasture, such as it is, would be of great advantage if they got it. They could keep more stock.

13988. We are struck by the small proportion of the horses kept, and by some remarks made by the delegates as to a prohibition against keeping horses. Is there any such prohibition?—None whatever. I believe in 1844 there was not a horse in the parish, and I never heard of such horses being in the parish as I heard to-day. There were no roads in the parish that a horse could go on.

13989. But horses might be kept without roads—in fact, they were very common vehicles of traffic before roads were made—might they not be useful for carrying sea-weed and ploughing ground?—They might have been, but I am sure there was not a horse in the parish of Uig in 1844 on this side of Loch Roag.

13990. In fact, there is no prohibition about horses on this estate at all?—None whatever.

13991. *Professor Mackinnon.*—One of the witnesses stated that the township of Mangersta was cleared ten years ago?—The people of the township of Mangersta at their own request were removed to Dun of Carloway.

13992. As matter of fact the place was cleared?—Yes, at their own request. It was not a place adapted for tenants. They were in misery and arrears, and then the place was exposed to the sea, and the sea spoiled the corn.

13993. With that exception the marches remain the same as in 1884?—Yes, but there were other places cleared besides that. Reef was cleared in 1850 or 1851. The people were offered their passages to America—such as were willing to go. A ship was engaged to carry so many of them. There were twenty-seven tenants at that time. A good many would not go, so to fill up the ship people were taken from any other part of the island, and those who did not go got the lots of those who went from other places, and a number were sent to reclaimed lands, and there are some I believe in the parish of Ness.

13994. My reason for asking the question is this, that you stated the increase of rent on crofters as £89 since 1844, and the increase of rent on the tacksmen as £401, and you said that the marches were the same?—I meant to say that the increase on the crofters that are now in possession of the land, in comparison with their rent in 1844—all the townships still under crofters—has been the sum I have said.

13995. And in the same way is the increase upon the tacksmen, £401, on the land they occupied in 1844, or on the land they occupy now in addition to what is cleared?—The land the tacksmen occupy now, £401, in comparison with the land they occupied in 1844.

13996. Can you name the various places cleared since 1844?—Carinish was cleared—there were twenty-one tenants there; Reef; the people of Gisla were removed from one place to the other at their own request; Ballygloom; and Gara-na-hine.

13997. What became of the people of these different townships? What became of the people of Carinish?—A considerable portion of them went to America.

13998. Reef?—They are in the same position.

13999. The greater proportion went to America, and the rest were allowed to enter upon subdivided crofts in this parish and elsewhere?—Not subdivided, but lands reclaimed.

14000. So what the delegate said was not true that a croft was subdivided in his township to make room for one that came from another township?—No. I say that 1850 or 1851 was the time that was going on. There were twenty-four tenants in Breanish in 1844, and to-day there are twenty-nine in our rental, but that arises perhaps from some additions; and when we opened the new rental, and find a squatter or subtenant that has been paying rent not directly to the proprietor, but to the crofter, we enter his name.

14001. This man said that six additional men were thrown in upon them from the cleared places, and one man, from another township, and another man from another?—I cannot see how there could be six, when there were twenty-four tenants in 1844, and only twenty-nine now. But there are a number of squatters in the township, which is by subdivision of their own crofts.

14002. When you state that the land under the deer forest is considerably rougher and wilder than that under crops and under large farms, is it the case that some of the land under the deer forest was formerly occupied by a crofter population?—So far as I have ascertained, it is not known to have been. As regards Morsgiel and Scaliscro, I believe that sixty or seventy years ago, or further back than that, there have been crofters there.

14003. Of conrse, the appearance of habitation and of cultivation is to be seen?—On Scaliscro and on the other side of Morsgiel and Ken Rasort.

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14004. I have calculated the acreage and rental. It is a little over 1s. 2d. per acre of the deer forest?—Yes.

14005. Could you give me any idea how many pay £9 in the crofter class?—I know none except the one who is a member of the school board.

14006. So in that case he cannot be said to represent any one but himself. I find the average rent per crofter is about £2, 10s. A delegate here said that the nnmber entitled to vote for the school board, that is those over £4 rental, were not in a majority in the parish?—I think they are. There are only seven tenants.

14007. You think if they agreed among themselves they could carry the day?—Yes, I think so.

14008. Was this man who has been on the school board elected a delegate to-day?—No, he is not here.

14009. *They stated that the hen money was only put upon them* fourteen years ago?—That is not correct.

14010. It has always been upon them, but not in that name?—It was always upon them as kain money up to the time of the valuation roll.

14011. And then it was made rent, so that the difference is only a difference of the name?—Yes. We kept the rent and statute labour and kain money separate, and now it is all under one head.

14012. And the books were handed down from the former proprietor?—Yes. I have the Seaforth ledgers, and I see it was paid then.

14013. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You exercise your authority as factor apart from your position as a member of the school board to get the provisions of the Education Act complied with throughont the island?—So far as I can, I try to get them to attend the school.

14014. Have you not issued an order imposing a certain penalty upon those who do not comply with the provisions of the Act?—I issued an order in this way, that if the children did not attend school and make up the attendance, their parents would have to pay what we estimated would be the loss to the board, 18s. per head.

14015. But where that is not done, what penalty do you impose upon them?—It was imposed one year in a few cases, not for non-attendance, but for absenting themselves on the day of examination without any reasonable excuse. The cases were extreme. The officer had gone to the house, and the parents would not give them up, and the boys would not attend. Instead of 18s. per head the grant was about 10s. 6d. in the parish of Ness.

14016. Have you found that that penalty has had any wholesome influence?—It had a good effect that year on the attendauce.

14017. But probably it has something to do with the opposition to school rates, which is one of the grievances peculiar to this island?—Well, the rates are high, but it is very much owing to the bad attendauce at school. The grants would be much better if they attended school better.

14018. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have you beeu in the Lewis?—Thirty-eight years.

14019. Do you see any difference in the condition of the people during that time?—I do.

14020. Are they better off since you first came here?—They are certainly better clad, and have more money amongst them than they had at that time. I mean they handle more money.

14021. But are they more or less indebted to the proprietor than they were then?—I think they are much the same. The arrears on the crofters in this parish on 31st December last were £809, 5s. 10d. I have seen them more than twice that.

14022. You occasionally remit these arrears?—Every two or three

years the rent roll is revised, and what is supposed to be worthless is wiped out.

14023. Do you know if there is any general complaint among the merchants of the increasing indebtedness of the people to them?—I believe there is.

14024. It is the opinion of the merchants that the poverty of the people is increasing?—Well, it depends very much upon the season and the fishing. If it is a good year, they sometimes pay two rents in one year.

14025. How long is it since there has been a good year?—I may say there is a bad year every two or three years.

14026. But is there never a good one?—Well, since 1853 up to this season there have been, I think, seven or nine seasons when the proprietor had to advance meal and seed, different years, according to the season, from £200 to £2000 in some years.

14027. Has that been due to bad weather or to bad fishing?—Bad weather and storms.

14028. Then, since 1853, you think the condition of the people really has been getting worse?—It is just the same almost. Every two or three years they are in need of seed.

14029. *The Chairman.*—Do you think there has been an exhaustion of the soil on the smaller holdings—a progressive exhaustion?—I think the soil is as good to-day as it was the first day I saw it, from the system of manuring they have. But owing to the system of cultivation the crop cannot be good. They crop it continuously, and never lay out any of it in grass.

14030. But you don't think the crofters are worse now except in consequence of the bad seasons?—The crops are as good; it is the season.

14031. You mentioned five townships which had been cleared in Sir James Matheson's time. You stated that the persons removed from these townships were in a great measure migrated, and that others were placed upon land and wild land newly brought in. Are we to understand that none of the persons evicted from those five townships were placed on subdivided crofts in old townships, or very few?—I don't believe there was an existing lot divided and two put upon it, but there was land reclaimed by Sir James in different townships, and they were placed there, and then the people who migrated out of different townships were migrated into these lots.

14032. But they were placed on newly reclaimed land in different townships?—Yes.

14033. And then did not they share the hill pasture of the different townships?—Yes.

14034. So to that extent they did diminish the holdings of the old township?—They diminished the pasture.

14035. *Mr Cameron.*—We had one of the delegates named Norman Morrison from Breanish, who complained that some pasture had been taken from the crofters in his township, and he was asked by the Chairman whether the rents were reduced. Can you explain that?—That must have been long before 1844.

14036. You don't know about the circumstance?—I know there was no change upon the pasture boundaries since 1844. I know the rent has not been raised since 1844.

14037. What is the present school rate in this parish?—2s. 8d.; that is 1s. 4d. upon proprietors, and 1s. 4d. upon tenants. That was the rate in 1880 also. In 1881 it was 4s. 6d.; in 1882 it was 2s. 8d.; and in 1883, 2s. 8d.

14038. What was the cause of this fall from 4s. 6d. to 2s. 8d.?—In

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1881 we had not all the schools in operation, and we had little or no grant.

14039. Do you expect 2s. 8d. to be the normal rate?—If the attendance improved it would be diminished, and then a great deal depends on the shootings being let. There may have been some shootings not let that year, which would add to the rate.

14040. Of course, if the shootings should not be let, that increases the rate upon those who remain?—Yes.

14041. What is the parochial rate?—In 1880 it was 3s. 4d.; in 1881, 3s. 8d.; in 1882, 2s. 6d.; in 1883, 2s. 4d. It was so in 1883 because the Uig shootings were let, which made a difference of 2d. in the £1.

14042. What difference do all the rentals of the shootings make in the parish?—I have not made the calculation.

14043. I suppose you could easily do it?—Yes.

14044. And what is the road rate?—It is now 10d. It was 1s. last year. But the road rate is laid upon the whole island, and not upon one parish.

14045. So the rates in this parish are about 6s.?—The total rates this year are 5s. 10d. They were, in 1882, 6s. 2d.; in 1881, 9s. 2d.; and in 1880, 7s.—half by the landlord and half by the tenants. I have one other remark to make. It was said there was no compensation allowed for houses or improvements. In the rules and conditions of the estate issued in 1878 and 1879, it was provided that every tenant who before the term of Martinmas 1881 should execute in whole or in part improvements on his lands, and should also erect a dwelling house and offices, or make alterations on his premises, and who should further observe the other rules and regulations (a copy of which I hand in), should, on the completion of such houses and offices to the satisfaction of the proprietor or his factor, receive a lease of his present possession to endure till Martinmas 1893 without any increase of rent. Then follows a description of the houses to be erected. They are to be built of stone and lime, or stone and clay harled with lime, or with stone on the outside face and turf on the inside; to be roofed with slate or tiles, or heather and divots, which heather and divots the tenants shall be at liberty to take from such places as shall be pointed out by the ground officer of the district. Each house to have two apartments, with glazed window, and closet with window in the gable, and the chimney open; the byre to be built at the back of the dwelling house, and to have a separate entrance; a gutter to be formed at the back for removing manure, and so on.

14046. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand there was no complaint covered by that. The complaint was that they could not improve their dwellings because they had no hold upon the ground?—But if they improve their houses they are sure of fifteen years from the date of this, without a rise of rent. Something was said about the poor rate books and school board books, but I shall refer to these on a future occasion.

14047. *The Chairman.*—You might state at once why no publication is made of the revenue and expenditure which occur in these accounts?—The parochial board have published their accounts frequently. The school board have not done so, but the accounts were open to any one with the clerk at the time. I have been eight years factor, and I have never heard of any one in our township coming forward and complaining of being highly rented. I have had one in this parish, and I at once referred the matter to two men, and I never had but one in this parish. I think the rates can be explained very well, from the low rental and the large number of schools—seven schools in this parish.

14048. Do you think it might not be desirable to print the accounts of

the school board for the satisfaction of the people, in case they lie under a misconception?—I am sure the board will have no objection whatever to publish the accounts.

William Mackay.

14049. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you wish to make a statement similar to this in all the other parishes?—It will be quite unnecessary, except a few statistics. There is just one other thing to mention. In my day the tenants of Bosta, in the island of Bernera, at their own request were removed to Kirkibost, another place on the same island. The tacksman gave it up at a rent of £120. I was offered at the time £150, but these tenants of Bosta got it at £120. They got a lease of fifteen years, and with the right of sending to the moor pasture 80 head of cattle and 203 sheep, and they were allowed to hold upon their own ground at Kirkibost one cow and a follower, and three sheep for every £1 of rent. They were to build houses under the terms of their lease, but they have not removed the manure from the dwelling houses, or allowed the smoke to escape. They have now been complaining that it is too large, that they cannot pay ther rents, and wish to divide it.

14050. We have not heard the Bernera people yet?—No, but I daresay they are here. They have been four years in the place—twenty-six of them—and their arrears are £82, 10s. 9d.

14051. *The Chairman.*—Is that a higher rate of arrears than on other parts of the property?—It is, in such a short time. They began free, and had no arrears at all. It has been said that the rent of the island of Lewis had doubled, and that it was now £28,000. I have the valuation roll, and the rental of the estate there was £18,163 including everything, made up in this way—seminary, £15; patent slip (which was £5000), £80; castle, £350; brickworks, £30; Gara-na-hine and Barvas hotels, £139; mills, £198; house property, £556; storehouses, £38; salmon net fishing, £145; shootings, £3754; curing stations, £145; leaving £12,713 as the rent of lands. The land rental in 1844 was £10,443, 4s. 7d., showing an increase of £2270, but against that increase there is outlay upon buildings.

14052. With your consent, we will take the general results of the administration of the property at Stornoway. We are obliged to you for the statement you make, but we think it fair to the delegates that we should go on with them to-day, and there will be ample opportunity for you to make any statement you have to make at a later period?—I have nothing more to say to-day.

ANGUS MACARTHUR, Crofter, Kirkibost, Bernera (55)—examined.

Angus Macarthur.

14053. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14054. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Kirkibost?—Yes. We were formerly at Bosta, in the north end of the island, and all the lots in that part of the island, when I was there, were rented at £3, 10s. When I left it the rent I paid was £4, 17s. 6d. There were tweuty-two families in the township, of whom twelve were in the rental book. We were so crowded there that we did not know what to do. The cottars that were with us there were in such a state that they reduced us to the same state as themselves. We then spoke to the tacksman on the south side of the island, Mr Macdonald, to make an exchange with us, and when Mr Mackenzie and Mr Mackay heard of it they met with us here at Meavaig. The exchange we wanted could not be made, but we were to get Kirkibost, which Mr Mackenzie had. When we

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removed to Kirkibost the whole stock we had was reduced in the proportion of five to three of the sheep, and there was one year kept from us of the cattle. The place we had was so dear that we had two meetings with Mr Mackay, and we were refusing to take the summing he was putting upon us. We then went home and put our heads together, and determined to send two of us to Stornoway to see Mr Mackay, and get relieved from the summing he was putting upon us, and I was one of the two. We argued with him how small the summing was. He would give us no more, and so we took what he offered. We came that year to Kirkibost. It had been fifty-seven years fallow, and we were taking in the ground during the whole winter, and we did not get one stone of meal of assistance. We were wanting also the island which had formerly belonged to Kirkibost, but we could not get it, and we understood also that £20 had been added to the rent of it, which Mr Macaulay had been paying before.* We had been paying £48 of rent in Bosta, and in Kirkibost £120, and we have not a foot of hill pasture on that island more than we had before at Bosta. When we were at Bosta we had to erect a dyke between ourselves and the forest, and we could not put a beast upon it till that dyke was made, the extent of which was calculated to be from five to six miles. We took ashore our boats, on which we lived, and all the men and women had to go and work at that dyke. One shilling a yard was promised us for making that dyke, and we never got anything for it. It was also promised that a paling should be erected on the top of the wall, which was never done. We have not been allowed to send our cattle or sheep to the pasture enclosed by that wall. That was pasture we got in exchange from Sir James. He took our former summer pasture from us, and we got this pasture in exchange.

14055. How long is it since you or your people came from Bosta to Kirkibost?—Four years.

14056. Did you leave Bosta voluntarily, or were you obliged to leave it?—We were obliged to leave it because we were overcrowded.

14057. But still you were not turned out?—No.

14058. You came voluntarily to Kirkibost?—Yes.

14059. You say you made a fence or dyke round the ground at Bosta to prevent the deer coming in?—It is on the mainland. It is not on the island at all; it is on the mainland where we had our summer grazing.

14060. You made a dyke round the summer grazing between yourselves and the forest?—Yes.

14061. Did the people of the township make it all at their own cost?—Yes, all the islanders.

14062. Did they get no wages for it?—Not a penny.

14063. Was that an efficient fence against the deer?—Yes, but the wind and weather were taking it down for some years.

14064. Did the factor promise that a paling should be put on the top?—We were told that by the ground officer.

14065. When it was not done, did you ask the ground officer to have it done?—No.

14066. Why did you not ask him?—We were understanding there was no use doing that.

14067. When you left Bosta, did you get any compensation on account of the fence?—No.

14068. Did you ask for any?—Not that I know of.

14069. When you came to Kirkibost four years ago, and entered the ground at Kirkibost, did you pay rent for the first year, or was the first year given you free?—We paid the first year we came to Kirkibost at the rate of Bosta which we had left.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

14070. Was there anybody living at Kirkibost, or did you build your own houses?—We built all our own houses.

14071. Did you bring the roofs of the houses from Bosta?—Yes.

14072. Did the factor give you any assistance to build the new houses?—Not a penny.

14073. He gave you no assistance?—No.

14074. Was there any road to Kirkibost?—No.

14075. Did you ask for a road?—This year; but it was to the school we asked it.

14076. At Kirkibost how many families are there now living?—Twenty-six.

14077. All paying rent to the proprietor?—All paying rent.

14078. Have you got a full share?—Yes.

14079. How much do you pay?—£9 of rent besides taxes.

14080. What is your summing? How many beasts do you keep?—I had six cows.

14081. How many sheep?—Eight.

14082. Horses?—None.

14083. Any other beasts?—Yes, there are two or three younger.

14084. Have you got the shore of the sea?—Yes.

14085. Plenty of sea-ware?—We don't complain of that at all.

14086. Do you consider the rent at Kirkibost higher than the rent that used to be paid at Bosta?—Yes.

14087. Why did you come to Kirkibost?—We came that our neighbours might get some relief, as there was more ground for us.

14088. Is there any ground on the tack which could be given to you? Are you near a tack at Kirkibost?—No, we are on an island.

14089. Have you got the whole island?—No.

14090. Who has got the rest of it?—There are three other villages, and there are two villages under tacks.

14091. Do you fish?—Yes.

14092. Has the proprietor helped you with boats or nets?—No, not the least.

14093. What is it you wish to have now?—That the people should get land.

14094. Which land?—The land that is not cultivated in the parish; and that we would get summer grazing for our stock, and that we would get our rent reduced. If not, we would be worse than ever.

14095. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are upon the island of Bernera altogether?—I cannot tell.

14096. Will there be 500?—I believe there are more.

14097. And it is all occupied by crofters and small tenants?—Yes, except the village we left and another village.

14098. Who has got these two places?—Mr Mackenzie, Linshader, got Bosta and Macdonald got Croir.

14099. If you got back these two places, would they help you?—Yes, a little.

14100. Some years ago there was a little disturbance in Bernera?—Yes.

14101. What was it?—That we were all summoned out of our holdings and the summer grazing, and we could not make out why in the world this was done to us. There was not a penny of arrears in the island. And we do not know what would have become of us if we had not gone to Sir James.

14102. You never got any satisfactory reason why they intended to take these things from you?—The best idea we had was that they expected to

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take this grazing from us, and give it to some of the tacksmen that were in the island.

14103. How many of you went to Stornoway Castle in a body?—Between 300 and 400.

14104. And did you go?—Yes, I was speaking to Sir James.

14105. And you have not been troubled about your grazings again?—No.

14106. You never heard more about it?—No.

14107. What can you sell of your stock in a year out of your six cows and followers and eight sheep?—I could not sell more than one three-year-old, and if I sell that in the condition I am now I will suffer for it.

14108. Suppose you were obliged to sell it, what would you get for it in the market?—I got £5 for a three-year-old last year. I have not sold any this year.

14109. You cannot afford to sell any sheep?—No, if I had money I would buy them.

14110. Do you make your rent of £9 out of your land?—No, I am only taking it out of the sea in the summer time.

14111. Do you go to the fishing upon payment, or have you a boat of your own?—I don't go now. I used to go to the east coast, but now I cannot go because I must be working at the lobster fishing.

14112. Although you are representing here the township of Kirkibost, I suppose what you are saying is very much the position of all the people of Bernera?—Yes, about the summer grazing and about the fence.

14113. Have you got a church on the island?—Yes, one that was built two or three years ago.

14114. Is there a clergyman regularly settled there?—No, there is a missionary there at this time of the year.

GEORGE MACAULAY, Crofter and formerly Fisherman, Hacleit, Bernera (63)—examined.

George Macaulay.

14115. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14116. You heard what the previous delegate said about the fence that the people of Bernera had to put up on the mainland. Does that apply to your township as well as his?—Yes.

14117. And to all the people of Bernera in the same way?—All the people of Bernera are in the same position with regard to that dyke.

14118. And you agree with all his evidence so far as that is concerned?—Yes. But I am not sure about the length he spoke of, as I did not measure it. Before that dyke was made we had another dyke. The hill pasture we had first was out in the mountains beyond that, and it was there we had to build the dyke between ourselves and the forest, when the forest was first made. We made that dyke, and we kept it up for twenty years at our own cost. Then, when we got the pasture in exchange for that former hill pasture, we made a new dyke between our pasture and the forest of Scaliscro. That is the dyke of which the last witness spoke.

14119. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The last witness said they were promised 1s. a head for building this fence. Who gave the promise?—I did not myself hear that promise.

14120. Did you hear that the promise was made?—I heard, when we were summoned out of the grouud, that the chamberlain had promised at that time that we would get payment for the dyke.

14121. How many years before that was the dyke made?—About two years.

14122. And you did not hear of the payment for making the fence until two years or so after it was made?—I cannot say I did.

14123. With respect to the other statement that the factor was to put a paling on the top of the dyke, that was promised?—Yes.

14124. And why did you not ask the factor to put it up?—It was the ground officers that formerly carried on transactions between us and the factor. I was first at Croir, in the north end of Bernera. It is three years since we removed from there, because of the crowding of the people of the place. The tacksman that had Hacleit offered to exchange with us, and the chamberlain countenanced that, and it was done. When Croir was first settled as a township there were only four crofters in it, of whom my grandfather was one, and the rent was £16 on the township. Then shortly after my grandfather got the croft, it was divided among eight crofters, and the rent was raised to £31, 10s., and since then it has been raised to £33, 10s., so far as I can remember. The stock was at first larger than it is now allowed to be by the chamberlain. They had horses in my grandfather's time, cattle, and sheep, but I have never in my time seen a horse in Bernera. The place we came to three years ago, Hacleit, was, fifty-seven years ago, in the possession of Stewart, the ground officer. As ground officer he kept the place, but when he lost the ground officership he began also to feel himself lower in circumstances, and had to go as a poor man to America. It was about £60 of rent when that man went away. It is now £85, 8s. upon us.

14125. How many are there of you who pay that rent?—There are twenty crofts.

14126. And how many families?—Twenty families—127 souls.

14127. And you pay £85, 8s.?—Yes.

14128. What stock is each croft allowed to keep?—There has been no change of stock made upon us yet since we left Croir.

14129. Does that mean that each person in Hacleit is allowed to keep as much or as little as he pleases?—Those who were in Croir are allowed to keep at Hacleit the same stock they had at Croir.

14130. But Hacleit is a far bigger place?—We have had no increase of our summer pasture since we came to Hacleit, though the number of people is greater than it was in Croir.

14131. What is your own stock?—I have very little stock. I have just one beast that belongs to myself. There are other beasts of mine on my grass which only belong to other people, who have not taken them away yet. I mean by that my creditors, who must be paid in that way.

14132. I want to know what your stock is, without counting your creditors?—Two cows, one four-year-old, two one-year-olds, and eight sheep.

14133. And your rent?—£3.

14134. Do you consider yourself better off in Hacleit than you were in the place where you were before?—We have more room, but the land is so rough that it would be a considerable time before it is of any good, even to the strongest of the people.

14135. Did you build your own house when you came to Hacleit?—Yes.

14136. Have you a lease?—No.

14137. Did you take away with you the roofs of the houses from the other place?—Yes.

14138. Did you get any assistance in building your houses except that?—Nothing.

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14139. Then what do you want done?—The people can never rise out of the condition they are in, but they will sink deeper into poverty, unless their rents are reduced, and more land is given them out of which to make their living.*

14140. Do you pay more rent for the place just now than the man who was there before you paid?—I cannot tell.

14141. Do you consider you pay too much for it?—Yes, for all that it can produce of crop.

14142. But even supposing you had the rent reduced, would that place there support twenty families?—It would not. The ground will not yield as much as will support the people that live upon it unless their stock were increased.

14143. How many families do you think that place of Hacleit would maintain in comfort?—The half of the present population.

14144. Where would you remove the other half to?—I have no place for them.

14145. But you came to represent the people of Hacleit here?—Yes.

14146. What have the people of Hacleit to say about that?—They say themselves that there is plenty untilled land in the parish.

14147. I suppose that what the chamberlain stated here to-day was true, that there is less land in the hands of the large farmers than of the crofters in this parish: he stated there were over 63,000 acres under crofters, and 5000 acres less than that under large farms and deer forests. If you think that your own township can only maintain the half of its present population, how can people say there is land in the parish for the total population, though they should get it all?—That is the opinion of the people, at any rate.

14148. Is it your opinion?—I believe the people could be accommodated and live comfortably at reasonable rents if their land were increased.

14149. All that came here to-day from all the townships stated that the place was too small, just as you do. Now, from these figures there is no place in the parish for them?—Though the people are making such money as they can in every place to pay for the land upon which they live, it is not the land that pays it.

14150. But you expect that if there were only ten people in your own place where there are twenty people they would be able to pay the rent?—I don't say they could pay the present rent if there were only ten. If the rent of the township were reduced to £40, and the stock that is upon it at present were allowed to be kept upon it, that would pay the crofters.

14151. So that you would require to send away half the people, and to take off half the rent, before the people could be comfortable in the place where you are?—Yes.

14152. *Mr Cameron.*—When was your last rise of rent?—[Witness produces a paper.]

14153. What was that 5s. of increase put on for?—I cannot say. We got nothing for it at any rate, though the rent was raised.

14154. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When you spoke of putting off half the people, and reducing the rents by half, so as to make them comfortable, I presume you refer to the island of Bernera?—Yes, I refer to the whole island of Bernera.

14155. Then I presume you did not mean it would be necessary to put away half the people off the whole island of Lewis, to make them comfortable?—No. But I think that if the waste land that is in the parish was divided among the crofters, they could pay it and live comfortably upon it. Our mills were taken from us, and the one-sixteenth part of the crop is due to the miller from every person whatever his crop may be. There was

* See Appendix A, XLI.

a mill erected by the landlord, and a miller put into it who has land, to which everybody is obliged to contribute.

14156. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What mills had you before?—We had small mills of our own before. We are not satisfied with the way in which the miller behaves about the grain. He takes his own dues off the grain, and he grinds our grain as it seems good to him.

14157. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you hear the evidence given by the chamberlain?—I was not here at the time.

14158. He said that the 5s. additional rent was placed upon the crofters instead of work which they used to do formerly?—Yes, at first it was work. The 5s. was put on, but there was no work. It was for the roads. Our receipts did not show the road money as an item in the assessments, but summer pasture.

14159. Did you do any work after the 5s. was put on your land?—No, there was no work to do; but additional road money was laid on us.

14160. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—So, in point of fact, you are paying 5s. and road money?—Yes.

Rev. ANGUS MACIVER, Minister of the Established Church (50)—examined.

14161. *The Chairman.*—You have been elected a delegate for the township of Islavaig?—Yes. That township is at the other end of the parish contiguous to Braenish.

14162. How long have you been in Lewis?—I am a native of the Lewis. I have been some twenty-eight years resident in the Lewis.

14163. Have you been a farmer yourself, or held lands in your own hands?—No, I cultivate my own glebe.

14164. So you have some practical knowledge of country affairs?—Yes.

14165. Is it within your knowledge that, in consequence of the overcrowding and continual cropping, the land of the small holdings is deteriorating in quality and productive power?—Yes.

14166. Have you long remarked that?—Yes, it would produce no crops were they not forced with manure.

14167. The manure is entirely sea-weed?—No, not entirely.

14168. Farm-yard manure?—Yes.

14169. Do they import any lime, or have you any in the island?—No.

14170. Have you any knowledge of any case in which lime has been applied to the soil here?—No; I applied a little to the sandy soil on my glebe, but I don't know that any of the crofters use it.

14171. You have heard the evidence which has been given here to-day?—Yes, except the chamberlain's, which I could not hear very well. I heard part of it.

14172. You have heard it stated that at a period comparatively remote, generally before the time when Sir James Matheson became proprietor of the lands, there were a number of evictions and consolidation of small holdings for the sake of sheep farms. Do you think that course was carried so far as to inflict a permanent injury upon the condition of the population?—I have no doubt whatever.

14173. Do you think, if the proprietor were inclined to restore a portion of the consolidated land, either in the form of common grazing or arable ground, the people would be willing and able to take it up, stock it, and bring it under cultivation in the form of enlarged holdings?—Well, my idea is that the crofters could not in the meantime. They have got into

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such a depressed state that they could not stock the waste land unless they were helped by Government, and I don't know whether that would be feasible or not. But it struck me that the only way in which the families here could come to a position in which they would be able to stock the ground and pay their rents is this, that there should be a scale—if the people, for instance, were to get a £5 lot, and give them half a dozen of years of a scale, to pay for the first year £2, 10s., for the second £3, and so on till the scale was completed, from then revert to the £5 originally assigned to the lotter. That is the only way in which I think they would get on in that direction, unless Government did something.

14174. You would advise an improving lease with a gradually ascending scale of rent?—Yes.

14175. Supposing the proprietor were inclined to enter upon a course of that nature, and enlarged the holdings of the small tenants, do you think that the whole population of the island could be permanently provided for in that form without the additional resource and remedy of emigration and improved fishing communities, and so on, or do you think it would be necessary to employ various means for their improvement?—I have thought over the subject very minutely, and I have come to the conclusion that the whole population of the island, which is very great notwithstanding the present position of things, if the rents were brought down, and something of that kind adopted, would likely come to be perfectly comfortable; so far as I can make out, crofters should be comfortable. I have no doubt in my own mind, after careful consideration on that subject, that as crofters they would be perfectly comfortable; and along with education, if the education is properly worked, and the land is divided in some form or other, where the people could settle down upon it,—on arable and grazing land,—I have no doubt the present population could be accommodated well enough.

14176. And live in an improved condition on the land?—Yes. I have made this a subject of conversation with intelligent people in the parish. Mr Mackay has given different statistics; but the conclusion was that the deer forests and sheep farms occupied about two-thirds of the land, and that the sheep farms are undoubtedly the best grazing land, and in summer no doubt the deer forest is equally good. We have in the parish about 4000 souls, and if the estimate of these people is correct, these 4000 people have to live on one-third of the land of the parish. Mr Mackay has different statistics.

14177-8. Mr Mackay has given us the acreage of three different categories of land,—land held under crofters, land held by tacksmen, and land held as deer forests—and he has stated they are calculated upon the Government survey. Have you any ground for doubting the accuracy of that statement?—No; I am not going to dispute Mr Mackay's figures.

14179. You have also stated that the land occupied by the deer forests and the tacksmen was by far the best land, but you qualified that with reference to the deer forest?—Yes, the deer forest is now for summer grazing, not much for winter. I believe at one time, my forefathers really wintered the cattle out on the Morsgiel deer forest, and brought them home about the end of winter, and put them into the islands.

14180. You say you think that the people could all live in comparative comfort on the land in the parish, if it were properly parcelled out among them?—Yes.

14181. But that opinion was formed under the impression that they were now living on one-third, but according to Mr Mackay they are living on more than one-half. If that were so, would not your opinion be

materially altered?—Well, I allow Mr Mackay's figures to take their own place, but I know every inch of the parish. I know every farm and I know the cottar's places, and the deer forests, and I simply make a calculation in my own mind as to the extent of the country. If we leave this church, and go along to Islavaig, there are about ten miles of coast land all along there. Now, here is a population of about six hundred people into a narrow place, and I find there is only a space of about a mile in extent for that number of people. There are other sheep farms—there is Mr Mackenzie, Linshader, who pays between £500 and £600 of rent.

14182. Still you don't dispute the acreage furnished by Mr Mackay?—No, I am not going to dispute his figures.

14183. Then, granting for the moment that, according to your scheme, the whole crofting population could be for the present comfortably accommodated on existing land in the parish, what do you think with reference to the natural increase of the population? What would become of them in the next generation?—My opinion is that what has taken place in the past will never recur, and my reasons are these. When I knew the parish first there were very few people who could speak English. Now there are a great many who can speak English. I find also that now the people are leaving the country more than they did formerly. I find that there is hardly any who are properly educated who remain on land. They move off to other places. The only difficulty in that case is the poverty of the parents, in giving them encouragement. If the Education Act is properly worked, along with the material comfort for the people, I have no fear in my own mind of the consequences. I believe the thing will ease itself.

14184. You think that, in consequence of increasing intelligence in the next generation, the congestion of the people would be relieved in a natural manner?—Yes; and I go even further; I go further, and say that this island would become scarcer of people.

14185. With the increasing intelligence?—Yes; but of course, if the people are left in this depressed state, educate them as you may, there is no possibility of their moving. Suppose a boy comes of age, what has he to do? He must simply take the end of the oar; there is no alternative. Let the people be put into a comfortable position, and their children will undoubtedly move off. That is the natural tendency of the young men here.

14186. But in the course of the process you advise, the larger tenantry or tacksmen would be wiped out entirely?—Yes, that is the case.

14187. Do you think there would be no disadvantage in removing almost all the persons of superior education and intelligence belonging to the middle classes of the country?—The fact is, these are not intelligent at all. The man who pays a rent of between £500 and £600 in this parish cannot write a letter, and most of the other farmers in the parish are equally behind. I say with the greatest confidence, that a great number of those crofters are far above them in intelligence. I have no hesitation in saying that. A further grievance is that these people have been introduced into the island,—all strangers to the island,—and it has always been a grievance to the natives that they have been put down here, and that it is they who are taken into the favour of the people of the estate.

14188. You mean that all the tacksmen and larger farmers in this parish are persons of foreign extraction?—Yes, and all of inferior education.

14189. Have they done nothing at all to improve the breed of cattle and sheep in the country?—I suppose so. Mr Mackenzie, Linshader, has a very good stock of cattle.

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14190. Are they of no use in local administration as forming members of boards?—Yes. They are just put on to these boards because they are sheep farmers—because of their position in that respect—not on account of their intelligence.

14191. Do they give any work to the cottars or labouring classes?—They give two or three men work at smearing sheep in the autumn.

14192. Are they generally kind to, and on kindly terms with the poor tenants?—I suppose they are much about what ordinary neighbours are. That is all I can say. The people simply visit them, as they visit one another.

14193. Your memory probably extends thirty or forty years back here. What change in the circumstances and condition of the people do you observe?—There is a great increase in the population. That is one thing. Another this, that I was brought up seventeen years of my life in the island of Bernera, and there is scarcely any improvement in the circumstances of these people—in their houses or anything else. They are never looked after. Their houses are never cared for by the people of the estate. The houses of these farmers are attended to, and roads are made to their places, but none of that attention is given to the crofters, and I find the houses are as far behind to-day as I can remember.

14194. Do you find no substantial change in the character of the crofters' houses?—I find that the people are improving their own houses, but there has been no encouragement given to these people since I remember. I know that by their own exertions and their own work, and any means they have, it is wonderful to me the improvement they have made on their houses. I will say that for the people in my own parish. I believe in other parishes in the island they are not so far advanced.

14195. Do you observe any change in their dress or food?—Yes. They dress more gaudily, but we don't grudge them that.

14196. Are they better dressed than they were at a former period?—Yes.

14197. What about their food?—Their food is not so substantial as it was. The food is tea and bread, and if they happen to get fish, but there is no meat. I remember when the people used to kill their cattle and sheep regularly at Martinmas. Now they cannot afford to do it. They don't eat substantial food; and I find that the young people cannot stand hard work as they used to do. I find a good many of the young people have lung complaints by hard work in connection with boating, and other things,—and that was scarcely known when I was a boy.

14198. Are any of the children prevented from going to school for want of clothes, or are any of the adults prevented going to church for want of clothes?—Yes.

14199. Do you know if there is a want of bedding in the houses?—Yes.

14200. Is it still the custom to manufacture cloth to a great extent in the houses, or is that going out?—They do manufacture cloth, but a great many of them have no material.

14201. Could they not buy the wool in the country?—They do.

14202. Do you think the habit of weaving in the houses has diminished, or is it sustained?—They send a good deal of wool away to Greenock and Wick, and other places to be manufactured. They find it more profitable. But they do weave still.

14203. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are a native of the island of Bernera?—I came there when I was one year old.

14204. And for some time you have taken a material interest in the condition of the people?—Yes.

14205. Do you approve of the demand they generally make, and which we have found in other places, that there is a necessity for getting larger holdings?—Undonbtedly I do; I think it is the only remedy.

14206. Although there may be a minimum croft for some people, would you have a gradation of crofts in order that the more enterprising and wealthy of them might rent crofts up to £30 or £40?—Yes. The only danger is that it would throw out too many, who would come on the island as a burden.

14207. Then what is the maximum rent of the croft you would consider right?—Well, it struck me that if Lewis were put into the position in wbich it was in 1843, and the island reduced to this.—given out in lots ranging from £4 to £6 or £7,—that would make them perfectly comfortable.

14208. You made a remark, in answer to Lord Napier, that the big tacksmen are nearly all strangers to the island of Lewis?—Yes.

14209. Can you say that that class of people have been of any particular benefit to the island or to the parish?—No.

14210. What is the population of Uig?—About 3500, I think; it is not 4000, at any rate.

14211. You also stated you were well acquainted with the whole parish?—Yes.

14212. And you are prepared to assert, of your owu observation, that the lands in the hands of the tacksmen are much more productive than those in the hands of the crofters?—Yes, except Valtos, where but for over-population the grazing would be equally good. I think the sheep farmers have the best graziugs in the parish, apart from that. But it is just reduced from the over-population.

14213. Have you any idea of the number of acres, once under cultivation, which are now under sheep in the large farms and not under cultivation?—Yes, in sight of my manse there are three townships that used to be well cultivated.

14214. I presume you cannot condesceud on the number of acres, but you can say they are very considerable?—Yes.

14215. And their utility as a corn-producing country is lost?—Yes, eutirely.

14216. From the chamberlain we had 63,000 acres occupied by crofters, 39,000 occupied by large farms, and 18,000 under the forests, so they are about equally divided into two. Putting the whole altogether, it would make 120,000 acres for the parish of Uig. There are 4000 of a population. Surely 120,000 acres are fit to support 4000 people in comfort?—Yes.

14217. And a good mauy more?—We could take a good many more from other parts of the island.

14218. So that in reality the figures of the chamberlain don't alter the conclusions you have come to?—No, undoubtedly not.

14219. Could you name anything that has been done for the crofter population in this parish on the part of the proprietor—anything directly for their benefit—within the last twenty years? What money has been expended, and in what form, if any?—I don't know. I got a snbscription of £10 from Lady Matheson to build a church in Bernera, and that is all I kuow of for the last twenty years.

14220. That is all you can say as to direct benefit?—Yes.

14221. We have been told there is a good deal of consumption of tea at present, and we have heard in other places that there is a scarcity of milk. Does that scarcity exist in this parish?—Very, very much.

14222. Is that not a serious disadvantage to children in their upbringing?—Yes, they don't look like children at all.

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14223. *Mr Cameron.*—You mentioned that the people were in a very distressed state. May I ask whether that state has been going on gradually, and since when you have noticed it?—It is going on gradually, and it is in a very critical condition this year. For instance, I made up a calculation last week with the fish-curers in this parish, and I find there are thirty-six large fishing boats that cost about £110 each, and a crew of eight men for each, and after I made a calculation I found from the fish-curers that they only made out eight and a half months. Now, of course, the charge of laziness will be brought against them; but to prove they are not lazier than other people, there is a boat that came from the east coast to fish at Valtos three months ago—a much larger boat than the Valtos boats. They are there for three months; and I find some of the Valtos boats have beat them. That is just owing to the boisterous nature of the sea and the currents, and I must say for those people that they show the greatest courage in facing the sea. They get up at two in the morning sometimes in winter. I only make that remark to show that this depressed state of things has not come upon the people by any fault of their own. Their boats have been launched for the last six months, and they have not been able to fish even what would be able to keep one individual alive during that time.

14224. Do you think they are more depressed than they were ten years ago?—Yes.

14225. And you think that ten years ago they were more depressed than they were twenty years ago?—Yes.

14226. Then the depression has been going on gradually?—Yes.

14227. And you attribute that in a great measure to the increase of the population, and the want of means of subsistence?—Undoubtedly.

14228. I suppose that increase of population arises chiefly from natural causes, from the subdivision of the holdings?—Yes.

14229. How do you account for the people not discovering for themselves that this constant subdivision and increase of the population would be sure to lead to these lamentable results?—I do not think they calculated in that way; it has been going on gradually and very slowly.

14230. Don't you think it might occur to them, that if their grown-up sons would either go away to the mainland or emigrate, that would be for their interest and happiness?—They are so attached to each other—that is one reason; and another reason is that families cannot exist in a poor state if you take away the strong part of the family. The rest will crumble down. They have no people to pay the rents, and the one supports the other. I believe that is the reason for this state of things—not but that they would move off. The fact is, many of these young men require all their earnings to keep themselves and their parents and friends in life, and they have no money laid by. They simply keep alive, and in a very short time they have no money at all.

14231. I gather from what you stated in answer to the Chairman, that you think that in process of time, when the people become more educated, they will see that the subdivision of the land and increase of the population is not for their benefit?—They will see two things, I think. They will see they will be better off in other parts of the world, and they will be encouraged by their circumstances to move away to other places, to better parts of the world. I find in my own experience, in the school we have been teaching in Valtos, that, after fourteen years' absence, very few of the young men are there now. Some are away in England and America, and making fortunes there. Another striking feature is that those in very poor circumstances don't go off. I find they are still fishermen here.

14232. You don't seem to have a very high opinion of the intelligence of the tacksmen and large farmers; and therefore I won't ask you if they have done anything to teach the people to better themselves. But I will ask if the ministers have ever endeavoured to persuade them how much better it would be for their grown-up sons to betake themselves either to the south or some other country to better themselves?—I can speak for myself. In the presence of 1500 lately, I said to them on the platform that from my knowledge of the world I would only be in the Lewis till I could get away.

14233. Do you think the gentlemen of your cloth, so far as you are aware, follow that course?—I don't know.

14234. Did I understand you to say that £4 to £6 crofts would make the people perfectly comfortable?—Yes, at a reduction of rent.

14235. We will call it a fair rent. You think a fair rent of £4 to £6 would enable a family to live in comfort without any outside land?—Yes, of course, that would mean a very considerable reduction of rent. I understand that the rents in Lewis are more than doubled, between shootings and farmers and everything else, and if 50 per cent. or less were taken off, and then give the people holdings of £5, they would be perfectly comfortable.

14236. Have you been reading in the newspapers the evidence which has been laid before the Commission in other parts of the Western Islands?—Yes.

14237. Have you noticed that crofters in several cases have stated to us that these crofts of the size they had, even though they got them free, would still be insufficient to enable them to earn a livelihood?—I am not sure I saw it exactly in that form.

14238. Now, as to this scheme of yours, of dividing the large farms. I suppose under your scheme the rents would be very considerably reduced to the proprietor?—Yes.

14239. Have you formed any idea how much they would be reduced?—I took it in a comprehensive way of looking at the total population of Lewis, which is now in a critical state, I formed the idea that if they are to come out of this it must be by a great reduction of rents, and giving them the lands, and then things will come right.

14240. But have you made any calculation by what amount it would be necessary to reduce the rents?—I have said already, by one half.

14241. Do I understand you to mean the proprietor would get half as much rent for a large farm if it were subdivided among crofters?—Yes, that is as far as I would go.

14242. Does that include the expense of building houses and making fences?—They would need to do their own houses. If they got it at that reduction, I should think they would be bound to build their own houses.

14243. If they are so depressed, do you think they would have capital sufficient to build houses and stock the land?—They are endeavouring as it is.

14244. But with holdings on a larger scale, would they be able to do it?—Well, that is the only way I see they could stock it. I don't see how they are to stock it unless Government came forward and took some scale such as I have indicated.

14245. So your plan is that the rent of the large farms should be reduced by half, and that the Government should besides assist the crofters to stock their land, and to go to the necessary expense beyond their own labour in building houses and reclaiming land?—Yes.

14246. By what process do you think you could induce the proprietor to make this sacrifice?—Well, I have thought of that, and I have been

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thinking as to what should be done between the two evils. Here I find these people, either through the mismanagement of the estate people or whoever have brought them to this—I find these people been driven away and forced into corners, and if that has come about under the management of the proprietor, and the people are in this stage that something must be done, they must make some sacrifice for those people who are actually being sacrificed in the meantime, for somebody must come to suffer. Of course, I grant it would be so far a loss to Lady Matheson.

14247. But how would you bring it about?—I don't know unless you legislate upon it?

14248. But what form should legislation take? It would be very difficult to make the proprietor reduce the rent of his farms by Act of Parliament?—I don't know. I don't see any difficulty about that. I look upon land as different property from anything else, that is my starting point, and I look to the comfort of these people first.

14249. You have not formed any definite plan of how it should be done?—I have not drafted a Bill.

14250. *The Chairman.*—How do you propose to arrive at a fair rent?—I would just arrive at it in that way. If I take the Lewis, and look at the state of the case, I would say it was rented a half too much for the people if they are to be comfortable as crofters. Of course, if they are to live from hand to mouth, as they are now, it could be left at anything you please.

14251. *Mr Cameron.*—But you mentioned that overcrowding was caused by their own action. How can you say now that it arises from the bad management of the estate?—I charge them both with it. I say that the proprietor and the crofters are both at fault. The crofters were breaking through the regulations of the estate. I don't say whether that is right or wrong; but I find the proprietors have allowed it, and that being so I have simply to face the question as it stands.

14252. Don't you think, if encouragement were given in some way or other to the proprietor to allow some of the lands which are now occupied by large farmers to revert to the crofters without any compulsion such as you indicate, the people would be in the position of being able to take advantage of it, and so greatly increase their holdings and diminish the number of people living in the present townships?—That is quite true so far as I can make out. That it would be a temporary relief, I have no doubt. Suppose the people were induced quietly to take these waste farms, they would likely resort to them, but my fear is that they would come back sooner.

14253. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What would be the size of the croft for which you would consider £5 a fair rent?—Well, the land here is not, properly speaking, arable land.

14254. Take the stock of it?—I would say six milk cows, fifty sheep, and a horse.

14255. Then to revert to the comprehensive survey you took of the island, what is the total population of the island?—About 24,000, exclusive of Stornoway.

14256. That would be about 4000 families?—I don't think it comes to so many.

14257. If it were about 4000 families, supposing you got a £5 croft for every family in Lewis, what would be the rent of the estate? Four thousand families at £5 would be £20,000. That is a bigger rent than the present?—No.

14258. It is only £18,000 now, and you want the rent back to

£10,000. Don't you see if you got the rent back to £10,000, as a matter of fact, the whole island, from end to end, would give only £2, 10s. a croft to every family, Stornoway excluded?—You need in that case just to make the rental smaller in proportion.

14259. I understood you had worked out the matter?—I just thought it out in my mind, but I did not work out the figures.

14260. If you require a £5 croft to maintain a family in comfort, that would give £20,000 of a rental, and the rental you would affix to the estate is only £10,000. I find there are 3811 families. Now, that would only give a £2, 10s. croft to each family?—Well, that would keep them all right.

14261. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The rent has nothing to do with it?—The rent has nothing to do with it. It is the comfort of the people that I look to.

14262. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You consider that a croft of £5 would be necessary for the comfort of the people?—That is perfectly true, so far as I knew at the time, without coming to figures; but what I mean is that the whole island, even with this population of crofters and cottars, the whole surface is quite sufficient. Reduce the rent by 50 per cent. to £10,000, and divide it between these 3811 families of crofters and cottars, and you will have a perfectly comfortable class of crofters.

14263. So instead of a £5 croft, you say that what would maintain a family in comfort would be the 4000th part of the surface of the island—Yes; if the population is distributed over it, I am quite sure they will be all right.

14264. But you are quite convinced, at all events, that this parish is quite able to maintain its present population?—Yes.

14265. And you don't think it is to its advantage to have large farms at all?—No, I think, if they are continued, things will grow worse and worse.

14266. I understood you to make an objection to strangers immigrating into the island. What if Scotland should make the same difficulty—what would become of the Lewis?—The difficulty is that these strangers have been used to lord it over these people, and that they have been used as instruments to that effect.

14267. Are they all strangers?—There is just one native. I don't know there are more than two or three natives in the whole of the large farms on the island.

14268. You also stated it was your opinion that there should be a removal of some of the people. Should not the fact that some people are going away and doing well, and are able to maintain their people in more comfort than if they remained at home, influence the young men here to go away also?—Yes, and it has that tendency.

14269. Then how do you account for the population increasing year by year?—There are not a great many of them leaving.

14270. Why don't more of them go?—But where will they go, and how will they go? I see a number of young men here, and I don't know but I can count on my fingers the number who could bring themselves to Glasgow.

14271. But suppose they were assisted to go, do you think that would induce them to go?—I daresay it would induce some of them, but would you have the young men to leave and not families?

14272. Would there be families willing to go if they were assisted?—The state of feeling just now, so far as I can make out, in Lewis is to get the lands. I must tell the Commission that frankly. It is not emigration.

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14273. Don't you think the two could go on together—emigration and getting the land?—I am afraid the people could not get it done just now. The land must be settled first, I think, before you will get the others to go a foot. It is one in a thousand that will consent while such a movement is being made towards getting the land. There will be very little chance, until some arrangement is come to, of the two going on together.

14274. And you share in the feeling that till the land question is settled there should be no emigration?—I say I have no feeling in the matter. My feeling is to see the people get the very best done for them.

14275. Are you not convinced that, no matter what permanent arrangement of the land may be made, it would be of the greatest advantage to them and their families that a great many should emigrate?—No doubt of that. Having seen a great deal of Canada, I often say that to my people, and elsewhere.

14276. And any influence of yours you would use to encourage them to set it agoing?—If I could see that those people could be settled down with some degree of safety and comfort; but to take them in their present depressed state of circumstances, and bundle them off to the forests of Canada or to the plains of Manitoba, I would take no responsibility in that, unless I could see them fairly settled down and having some hold of the ground, because I know that in emigration which was carried on here thirty years ago to Canada very serious consequences took place.

14277. You would like a readjustment of the land at home as well as emigration?—Yes, I would like any people who go to go voluntarily. But to use the slightest pressure upon them I would be no party to.

14278. I don't mean pressure—I mean suasion. When you know it is so much for their good, you would endeavour to use your influence, when a readjustment was made at home, to get them to face emigration?—I have been trying the use of suasion upon them for the last seven years, and what are the consequences? None.

14279. *The Chairman.*—But if the people saw there was a serious and substantial desire to afford means of improving their condition at home, do you think that would make others contemporaneously more inclined to emigrate, if they had encouragement to do so, and support in America?—Well, my idea of the state of feeling among the people is, that they would all see the land readjusted first before there was any movement. I mean to tell the Commission frankly the feeling of the people—that the first thing they would like to see is the settlement of the land, but that some would move off contemporaneously with this arrangement I don't believe. I don't think that that is the feeling at all.

14280. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think the people believe that if the land were entirely redistributed there would be enough for them?—Yes, that is their feeling.

14281. Do you know any crofter in comfortable circumstances in this parish?—Yes.

14282. Could you name him?—There is one crofter at Valtos—John Buchanan.

14283. What rent does he pay?—I don't know; but of course the comfort in connection with it is from the young men he has. He has three able-bodied young men who are fishermen, and work the land as well.

14284. But do you know any one in the parish who has sufficient land to be comfortable?—I am not aware just now. I mean that I would like to see the crofter so that he could pay his rent and feed his family as a crofter should do, and pay his way.

14285. I quite understand that. I merely want to know if you know

of an instance of such a crofter in this parish?—Well, I cannot remember just now any one more than another. There was one brought forward to-day as a member of the school board—Mr Angus Gillies, Kirkibost. He is a comfortable crofter.

14286. Do you know what rent he pays?—£9.

14287. Do you think that if all the other people in the island had similar crofts at £4, 10s. they would all be comfortable?—Yes.

14288. And you think there is land enough in the island to give all those people similar crofts?—That is my decided settled opinion; of course I have not gone into facts.

14289. And Mr Angus Gillies' croft is not too large?—No.

14290. *The Chairman.*—It may be right to say that as you seem to be under the impression that the large farmers were all, except one, not natives of Lewis, a paper has been put into my hands stating there are seven farmers with above £30 of rental in the parish of Uig, and that four of them were born in the island of Lewis and three of them were born elsewhere?—The only one I know is a farmer in Mangersta—Mr Donald Mackay.

14291. Perhaps you mean by strangers persons of strange extraction?—There may have been some of these born in the island. I understand what that is driving at. The fathers of these were the first who really depopulated the place, and the people look at the children of these as really not natives of the island.

14292. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Children of the stranger?—Yes. I am only expressing the opinion of the parish, which I am bound to do as a native, and which has been in existence for the last fifty years in this parish.

14293. In regard to emigration, you stated that a number of the people in this parish are supported by their children, who go away and earn money in other quarters?—Yes, to the east coast fishing.

14294. Then would it not be a cruel thing to send away those young men and deprive their parents of their support?—Yes.

14295. And if there is to be any emigration at all, I presume you are in favour of emigration by families who are willing to go?—Yes, by families. Of course, my idea is this, that in the present state of the people emigration is out of the question—either the one way or the other—in the meantime.

14296. You were asked a question about what assistance the Government would give in the event of these crofts being enlarged. If any assistance were given, I presume you mean that in time the crofters would pay it back?—Yes, they are ready to repay it with interest.

14297. They don't expect to get eleemosynary aid?—No.

14298. In your parish there are 120,000 acres and 4000 people—30 acres for each man, woman, and child—is that not sufficient?—Yes.

14299. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What do you mean by saying that emigration is out of the question at the present moment? Suppose a wise and judicious scheme were organised, would that not be a great benefit to the island?—It would be a great benefit, granting you get the people to agree, and if you saw they were properly settled in the places where they were going.

14300. Have the results of former voluntary emigration—for there has been nothing but voluntary emigration within the memory of any of us—been satisfactory?—The results have been satisfactory so far as the circumstances of the people in America are concerned. They are in comfortable circumstances.

14301. A good many were removed by Sir James Matheson with their

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own will, and were very well provided for?—Well, I am not going to say as to that. Some people say it was voluntary. But there was a great deal of forcing, and these people were sent away very much against their will. That is very well known, and people present know that perfectly well. Of course, they were not taken in hand by the policemen and all that, but they were in arrears, and had to go, and remonstrated against going.

14302. Is there any particular reason why the people of Lewis more than those of the other Western Islands, or of Scotland, should be kept at home and not helped to populate our colonies? Have they any particular claim to be astricted to their native soil?—No, but I don't want to see our colonies populated first, before we get our own land populated.

14303. Then when would you commence emigration from Lewis?—Just when they commenced themselves, and there is a very serious difficulty in this island in this respect. For instance, we have 1600 Reserve men drilled in Stornoway. The country knows the eulogy pronounced upon them by the Duke of Edinburgh. I don't think he would like very well to see those people taken and sent away to other places.

14304. But does it follow that they would all need to go?—If there was a removal, say of 2000 or 3000 of the inhabitants of Lewis, would there not still be a larger population in it than there ever was before?—But is this emigration to be carried out on the same principle as it was thirty or forty years ago, to clear the ground, and not to give them lands which are waste in the meantime?

14305. If it were done with the view of giving more land to the people that were left, would not that be a benefit, even supposing you did not touch the big farmers at all?—I would like to answer that by asking how could it be done.

14306. *The Chairman.*—By encouragement and by offering them favourable terms. I am not suggesting emigration without corresponding measures in the country for the benefit of the people who remain, but why should they not emigrate from an island like Bernera, with encouragement?—Well, I am telling the Commissioners what is in the minds of the people, and that they are not for that in the meantime. What they would have in the meantime is the lands at home, and for my part I cannot see that that is a wrong or an unjust demand.

14307. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—At half rent?—Well, they want a reduction of rent.

14308. Fifty per cent. in fact?—Yes.

14309. *The Chairman.*—You say you have some experience of the colonies. What are the colonies to which you think the people of this country, having regard to their habits of industry at home, could emigrate to with the best advantage?—Lower Canada. I don't know further.

14310. Are there any portions of Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward's Island, or the countries nearer the seaboard, in which land could still be got in considerable areas and at moderate prices?—I think so.

14311. It seems to me that the climate at Manitoba is so severe, and so unlike the climate of this country, that it almost amounts to a hardship to send the people of this country there; or do you think they would accommodate themselves to it?—From all I can gather, I don't think there is much difference between the climate of Manitoba and South Canada. I have been out in Lower Canada at 34° below zero.

14312. I think there is a great difference in the duration of the winter?—Yes. If there is to be emigration from this place, and if they are disposed to go, so far as I am concerned, I would go at the head of 2000 of them to Manitoba.

14313. Don't you think Australia and New Zealand offer some advantages superior to Canada?—Yes, but the distance is so very great. I understand it costs about £100 to send a family to Australia.

14314. And it would perhaps cost £40 to send them to Canada?—Yes.

JOHN MATHIESON, Crofter and Fisherman, Aird (42)—examined.

14315. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14316. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people at Aird?—Yes. '*Aird Uig.*—I, John Mathieson, was elected by the people 'of Aird Uig township as one of the delegates to represent them before 'the Royal Commissioners, and I beg to submit a few statements here for 'their consideration which may throw some light on the grievances of the 'crofters, and the doings of the landlord and factor. Aird Uig is a small 'township in the most remote corner of the island of Lewis. It was first 'inhabited by crofters about fifty-eight years ago. Six crofters had taken 'it then at the rent of £30. It was then a piece of uncultivated moss, 'with the exception of two or three small patches which was once used 'by a shepherd. The crofters then got many good promises for com-'pensation for improvements, &c., and never got any. There was a good 'piece of hill pasture taken from them at the coming in of a new factor, 'on account of them not having written agreements on the rights and 'boundaries of the township, but no reduction of rent. There are now 'nine crofters and five cottars in the township. There are a few of the 'first crofters still living in the township, who have toiled all their lifetime 'taking in land and making improvements, and never got any compensa-'tion but their rents raised. I will give one instance here of how factors 'treat some of their honest crofters. One of these first crofters, a very 'honest and respectable man who paid rents in the township for about 'fifty-five years, and was never one shilling in arrears all his lifetime, 'was about twelve years ago going to pay rent to the factor, a distance of 'thirteen miles, and being in his old age and getting frail, was a few minutes 'behind the rest of the crofters, and did not answer his name when called, 'was fined five shillings, and about thirty-five shillings put on his rent for 'having so much bad manners as to complain that it was not right to fine 'him under the circumstance. Of course that was the law of the factor, 'and he had to submit to it, and pay it. That is the kind of treatment 'and sympathy the landlord and factor shows to their crofters even in 'their old age. One of the principal grievances of the crofters is too 'little land—especially grazings—too high rents, and the system of over-'crowding. About years ago five shillings was put on the rents of 'every crofter in the township for hill pasture or summer grazing, and we 'never got it, though repeatedly asked. Another sore grievance to the 'crofters is the want of a road to the township, and also the impropriety 'of the site of the schoolhouse, which was erected a few years ago utterly 'against the people of the two townships concerned, an act which is looked 'upon throughout all the country as a disgrace in a Christian land, and 'which inevitably deprives the children of the township of the benefit of 'education, and this is altogether ascribed to the influence of the present 'factor. The highway is almost three miles from the township. There are 'a number in the township who ate not a diet of their own produce for 'the last twelve months, and from year to year have to carry all their 'necessaries on their backs almost three miles, as already mentioned, over a

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'rough and dangerous ground; and as a proof of this, a few weeks ago a 'person got his hand broken or dislocated carrying a bag of seed for his 'ground. We have ever been assessed with road money, and getting 'no benefit. Our township, which was formerly paying only £30 'rent, is now about £38. This year the Lewis Relief Committee had 'under consideration the necessity of a road from the public school-'house to our township, and gave sanction to make the road, but 'the factor persists in not giving us the road or any comfort whatever. 'These funds are apparently under his own command, and he thinks he 'may use them as he pleases. As a surveyor from Lady Matheson has 'lately taken in a report of the arable land of the crofters, which may be 'brought up as evidence against crofters, I may just say in a word that 'his report of measurement is wrong, and should be discarded until fair 'justice is done in this matter. Another general grievance is the undue 'influence of the factor over crofters at elections, getting himself and others 'of his own favourites and caste elected. These are only a few of the 'grievances which may be offered, but time will not permit me at present 'to go further on.'

14317. What was the name of the old crofter who was fined 5s.?—John Mathieson. He is not now living. He was my uncle.

14318. Who wrote this paper?—A lad belonging to the place.

14319. Have you read it and understood it?—Yes, I know the tenor of it. Some of it was read and explained to me.

14320. Was it communicated to all the people?—They all know its contents.

14321. How far is the new schoolhouse from the township?—Two and a half miles.

14322. Do the children go or do they not go?—The strong ones go in summer, but very few go in winter.

14323. This paper complains that the schoolhouse was built in that position contrary to the wishes of the two townships. Could it have been built in any place more convenient to all the country round, which it is intended to serve?—Yes, I don't believe the site could be worse chosen anywhere.

14324. Who fixed upon the site?—The chamberlain is the only one whom we can hold responsible for the school being built there.

14325. Was the place not fixed upon by the school board?—Well, he was chairman of the school board, some supporting him, and some opposing him. Those connected with him in the administration supported him, and the thing was done.

14326. You complain that a road has not been made from the public school, and that there are funds in existence to make the road. Have you applied to the factor to make the road?—Yes, oftener than once.

14327. Do you still hope that the road will be made?—We had some expectations that the road would be done at the expense of the committee who superintend the destitution funds in Stornoway, but we have no hope of it now that Mr Mackay has out-and-out refused to go on with it.

14328. Had you any reason to believe that there were funds at the disposal of the relief committee for this purpose?—Whether or not, there is expended in this parish, and upon the rest of the property, money to make roads elsewhere that not only would bring the road to the schoolhouse, but to our own homes.

14329. It is stated here that there was an old crofter who had paid his rent for fifty-five years, and, being about twelve years ago a short time too late in appearing on the day, was fined 5s., and in consequence of

something he said 35s. was added to his rental. Are these facts within your own personal knowledge?—The man himself told me.

14330. Was the additional rent of 35s. actually levied from him?—Yes; he stood out against paying it for a time, but latterly he paid it, and took several years in doing so.

14331. Was that only for one year?—I believe it was remitted to him before he died. I believe the present chamberlain, Mr Mackay, remitted that sum.

14332. Was the additional 35s. for one year only, or was it for every year?—For every year. He paid it for a number of years.

14333. Are you sure there was not some other reason for putting on the 35s.?—I am not aware. My own father was constable at the time, and he asked him what was the reason, and that was the sole reason he gave him, namely, that he stated to Mr Munro that the land was his so long as he paid rent for it, and this additional sum was imposed upon him for his presumption.

14334. You say there are now nine crofters and five cottars in the township. Are they all paying rent to the proprietor, or only the nine crofters?—The nine crofters only.

14335. Have you one of the nine crofts?—Yes, my father is still living, but bedridden, and my name is on the rent roll along with my father's, but I am the only mainstay of the house.

14336. What stock do you keep?—Sometimes three cows and sometimes four, but when there is a bad year, the one pair eats up the other. The summing is three cows with three calves until the calf is a stirk, or four cows with no calf at all, and twelve sheep.

14337. And what is your rent?—£3, and the assessments are sometimes as high as 14s.

14338. Has any hill pasture been taken away from you?—Yes, some of what was within the marches of the township when it was originally lotted has been taken away from us.

14339. Whom has it been given to?—To the adjacent crofting township.

14340. How long ago is that?—I only heard it from my mother. I don't remember the case myself.

14341. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you once a member of the school board?—Yes.

14342. Why are you not a member now?—It is not exactly easy for me to explain that matter. My opinion is that it was because the whole population were unable to express their opinions properly upon the day of the election.

14343. Do you believe that the influence of the chamberlain was used to prevent your return?—I believe it was in one way, and even two I may say.

14344. How many crofters were on the last board when you were on it?—Four.

14345. How many are on now?—One.

14346. Was it agreeable to the crofters generally that their numbers should be so far reduced at the last election?—I believe that some at least of the people would prefer that some of those that were out should be in; and I am further of opinion that the crofter members that were upon the late board were better members, both from the point of view of the administration of the estate and giving expression to the feeling of the estate, than the present board are.

14347. I understand you have some experience about the encouragement that is given to the people for building houses?—Yes, I know the encouragement that is given in the district where I live.

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14348. Will you give us an instance of the encouragement given to the people to better their houses or benefit themselves?—If they transgress the laws of the chamberlain, that they should be threatened with removal out of their holdings even if their houses were half built up.

14349. Is there, in point of fact, discouragement to the people to improve their dwelling houses? Do they feel that?—I believe that if the people would get the assurance that the places would be their own, they would make all their endeavour to make their houses better.

14350. Do you want your own croft enlarged?—I consider it too little.

14351. What do you mean by stating in the paper that the surveyor is not doing right in the way he is surveying the land?—That he is measuring places that are incapable of cultivation.

14352. Do you know what is the extent of your father's croft?—No, I do not know.

14353. Are there four acres?—I should scarcely say it was four.

14354. How many distinct pieces is it composed of? Is it contiguous or broken up into a number of patches?—We made one piece of it finally, but it was only a piece here and there at one time.

14355. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you aware that the surveyor is putting down uncultivable land as cultivable land in his report?—I cannot say as to that. I only know he measures with the chain ground that is uncultivable.

14356. But if you don't know he is returning it as uncultivable ground, how do you know he is not measuring rightly?—I cannot understand how he should measure, side by side, the uncultivable and cultivable grounds in any other way.

14357. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have the rules of the estate been made known to you under which compensation is given for building houses?—Yes, I have got a copy; but I know another thing. I attempted to build a house, and I lost the skin off my back carrying stones in a rope, and since I could not engage a mason to build it I commenced to build it myself, and when it was up to the level of the walls I had a letter from Mr Mackay telling me that when my father died I would be turned out of the croft, and he did not give any promise in that letter that I should get any payment for the work that I had done.

14358. If it was finished, don't you suppose you would get payment?—I could not be certain. Mr Mackay promised that the ground officer should come every year to see what changes and improvements were made on the houses and lands, and I have not seen one coming yet for that purpose.

14359. I suppose one would come if you asked him?—We asked him often enough for other purposes, and got no reply.

14360. Was there a contest for the school board when you were elected?—Yes.

14361. And was the last election, when you were thrown out, a contested one too?—Yes, but the people did not get an opportunity of recording their votes on that day. It was a very wild and tempestuous day, and they could not cross the sound. When I was a member of the board I asked the board to meet alternately upon either side of the sound, so that this portion of the parish should get some justice. Mr Mackay would not agree to that. He never inquired what difficulties we had in attending upon him, day and night, at Gara-na-hine, at his meeting. As an instance, I got a notice to attend a meeting after night fall on a Saturday evening and the meeting was to be on the Monday at mid-day. A boat could not cross, and I had to walk back and forward twenty-two miles each way, and after all there was no quorum; only Mr Mackay himself attended.

14362. Then it is the fault of the bad weather that you were not elected at last election?—Not perhaps that I was not elected—but I believe that is the reason why a number of the crofters were not elected.

14363. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you protest against the polling place being where it was?—Yes, I protested against that, and the people also object to the polling place being on the other side of the sound.

14364. But the crofters had a majority on the last board, and fixed the polling place, did they not?—Well, if it was they who fixed the polling place, I was not present at the time. I heard nothing about it any time I was at the meetings of the board till I saw the notices posted up on the walls of the church.

14365. Is Mr Mackay omnipotent at the board meetings?—At some of them. He was omnipotent certainly upon some occasions when I was a member of the board, and upon other occasions not.

14366. Would you and the other members be alarmed for the consequences by their going against the chamberlain if he were very firm upon any point in connection with the board?—I would not be afraid in the least. There was scarcely a day but myself or the others had an argument and discussed matters.

JOHN FERGUSON, Crofter, Carishader (67)—examined.

14367. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14368. Have you got a statement to make on behalf of the people of Carishader?—Yes. They complain that when the township was lotted out the rent was about £28. Some of the lots were as low as 8s. each, and it was arranged that those who paid only 8s. of rent should be raised to £1, so that they might carry some stock more or less. There was a piece at the end of the town which was not calculated in the lots, and it was arranged afterwards that this should be added to the smaller portion of the lots, and that no rent should be paid till they took a crop out of it, because it was uncultivated ground. Now this portion was valued at £1, and belonged to the township. It was taken from them, and added to another place, and they pay the £1 to this day. Old men told me that the township had it for sixty-five years at a rent of £1, and the lots that paid formerly 8s. and 12s. now pay, the one £2, 6s. and the other £2, 7s. Again, six or seven years ago, although we ourselves had such small holdings—one having £1 worth and another 6s. or 7s. worth—a man was brought in upon us, and given a place upon the other end of the township. The passage that our cattle had for going from the township to the hill grazing was given to this man, but we continued to send the cattle through this passage as of old. We did not wish to be deprived of this portion, though we could bear to be deprived of the rest. The men that were sending their cattle by this passage were sent to Stornoway, and had to pay £6 there for trespass.

14369. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where did the man come from who was put in upon you?—An Irishman.

14370. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is he there yet?—Yes.

14371. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What was his employment?—A hawker.

14372. Was it by the factor that the hawker was settled there?—It was the factor told us he set him there.

14373. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people are there in this township altogether?—Seventeen families.

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John Ferguson.

14374. When was it originally lotted out?—About thirty-five years ago.

14375. How many people were there then?—There were eight before that time. It was made into twelve lots then.

14376. Do they complain of overcrowding?—Yes, that is the complaint. How can it be otherwise, when the poor people cannot get either food or clothing out of it?

14377. Do some of the young men go away to earn wages?—Every one that can move.

14378. Have you yourself been in the habit of moving?—Yes, I have ten of a family. I have been thirty years going though the whole country to obtain a livelihood.

14379. Are they in arrears of rent in the township?—No, I am not aware the town is one penny in arrears.

14380. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any sheep ground away from the township altogether,—away on the hill?—Yes, we have some away in that way. They are all mixed up in that district.

14381. There is a common hill ground for the sheep of the whole district?—Yes.

14382. Then have you cows grazing nearer hand that belong to the individual township?—Nothing outside the fence. Once we send them outside the crofts, then they are upon the hill pasture—cows and sheep together.

14383. Do they not send the sheep away from the crofts altogether to this hill in the distance?—We keep a man standing in front of the arable ground to keep them away from the crofts.

14384. I see the sheep all down upon the low pastures? Would it not be right at this time of the year, to send the sheep up into the hill ground?—We are not allowed to send them there.

14385. I thought you said you had a large common hill ground?—We cannot very well do that. Supposing we should send a man with a dog to chase them away any considerable distance from our arable ground, they would be sure to be over our march upon the neighbouring tack, and the tacksman's shepherd would poind them.

14386. Have you got the hill fully stocked, as much as the hill will carry?—Rather overstocked than otherwise.

14387. If you had more arable land, then, you would not be able to keep more cattle?—No, unless we get more pasture, though it would be a great advantage to get it, still without more hill pasture we could not keep more stock.

[*Mr Mackay.*—It was stated that it was for trepass that the people were fined £6. It was no such thing. The people assaulted the Irishman while he was building a dyke, and it was a fiscal matter before the sheriff, with which I had nothing to do.]

ALEXANDER MACDONALD, Crofter and Fisherman, Crowlista (48)—examined.

14388. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by the people of Crowlista?—Yes.

14389. Where is Crowlista?—It is upon the headland, three miles away from here.

14390. Is it a good place for fishing?—Somewhat good, but only accessible from the middle of spring and during the summer months.

14391. Have you got any pier or landing place?—No. We have a sort of breastwork which the fish-curer set up, where we can land when the tide is in.

14392. Is there any good station for making a pier or jetty?—Yes.

14393. Would it be very useful to the place?—Yes.

14394. How are you off for boats?—Very good boats.

14395. How did you procure the boats?—From the curers. None of the people possess any of these large boats. They have small boats with which they fish lobsters.

14396. Were any boats ever given to the fishermen by the late proprietor?—Never, since I remember.

14397. What character of boats did fish-curers supply? How long and how wide?—From 30 to 33 feet long by 14 feet broad.

14398. Have they any deck?—They are half-decked, with a side deck.

14399. How many men go in each of those boats?—Seven or eight men.

14400. How long is it since this kind of boat was introduced?—It is not very long since we commenced with these decked boats, but we always worked with boats that were not altogether so large as these.

14401. Are the new boats better and safer than the old ones?—Yes, I consider them better.

14402. How are you paid by the fish-curers?—Are you paid by the cran?—The fishing is for cod and ling, and the curer comes as one of the crew and gets a share; that is to say, when there are seven men in a boat the curer gets an eighth, and when there are eight in the boat the curer gets a ninth part.

14403. Who purchases the fish?—The curer purchases the fish.

14404. Have you got a curing house?—Yes.

14405. How much should such a boat cost, all found, with masts and apparatus?—About £80. There is one that perhaps may have cost £120, but the average would be about £80.

14406. Do none of these boats belong to the fishermen themselves?—No. The small ones do, but not the big ones.

14407. Do you go round to the east coast fishing?—Yes, every one that can.

14408. Do you get higher wages and make more money now than you did many years ago at the fishing?—No; the payment is according to the amount of fish received. The payment is partially in arrears; and of late years we have not been so successful as in former years, so that less money is made. The rule is that wages are given to a man, and, in addition to that, 1s. per cran of the fish caught.

14409. Are the wages the same as they were when you began first?—I believe a hired man gets more in wages now than he got twenty years ago.

14410. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—To whom does the boat belong in which you fish?—Hector Mathieson, curer, Valtos.

14411. Do you work as a hired man to Hector Mathieson?—No, only as one of the crew of the boat.

14412. Do the crew get a boat on loan on payment of one-eighth of the fish?—Yes.

14413. That is at home?—Yes.

14414. How do the crew pay for the boat when they are away from home?—We don't bring the boat to the east coast fishing at all.

14415. Then for how many months in the year do you use this boat?—From the beginning of spring until about mid-summer.

14416. And the boat is not used at any other time of the year?—No, it is not used the rest of the year.

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Alexander Macdonald.

14417. What payment do you get from the curer for the cod and ling that belong to yourself?—A ling counts twice a cod, and the year before last some ling were bought for 1s. and some for 10d. That was the rate the year before last. This last season we don't know the price we will get till the time of settlement comes.

14418. When is the time of settlement?—At Martinmas.

14419. Are you paid in cash at that time?—No.

14420. What do you get?—Meal and fishing material, and this year especially we have drawn already more than the account for the fish will cover.

14421. Do you ever, in any year, get a sum to your credit, which is paid to you in money?—Very seldom now, but there were seasons when I commenced first when such was the case.

14422. How long is it since you were first in debt to the curer?—I never worked for any man in the parish till this year. I used to fish for Mr Smith at Stornoway.

14423. Do you know the price you have to pay for the meal for which you have to settle at Martinmas?—I cannot tell the price I shall have to pay at Martinmas for the meal I take now from the curer, but I can tell the price of last year's meal.

14424. What was the price of last year's meal?—They said it was 24s. per boll.

14425. And you leave it to the kindness of the curer to fix the price of the meal and the price of the ling at Martinmas?—Yes, poverty compels us to do that.

14426. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is the curer taken bound to keep the boat in working order and to supply tackle?—The curer is bound to keep the boat in working order, but he pays for no share of the fishing material. In the event of the boat being lost, as to who should have to pay for it, I cannot say, but if it were lost through no fault of ours I would consider it hard to have to pay for it myself.

14427. Is the boat insured?—I am not aware she is.

14428. Was it the same arrangement you had with the Stornoway curer?—The same arrangement.

14429. Were you getting supplies from Mr Smith in the same way?—Yes.

14430. Have you anything else to say?—I have to state that we poor people have been sent to a headland of the sea where it was not worth while to send sheep forty years ago, and that was the reason we were sent there. We were crowded all together upon it. In my father's days there were sixteen crofters there. There are forty houses now. Many of these were sent from the other townships that were cleared—poor people that could not go away to America. Because there was no other place for them, they were hurled in upon that headland. When I open my own door there is no place within the range of my sight except where there are big sheep. There are now so many poor that there are twenty-three crofters in the township who have only one cow each, and not one of them can say it is his own cow after all.

14431. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rent does each crofter pay?—From 15s. to £5 each. There may be some lots which are rented higher than that, but these lots are subdivided. There are three crofters upon one lot, where each pays £3.

14432. *The Chairman.*—Was it in the time of Sir James Matheson that this township was founded, or was it before his time?—It was portioned out into lots during Sir James's time, but there were crofters there before. I don't remember it ever being held by a tacksman. We have been there ourselves for four generations.

14433. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many of the forty were brought in from other townships?—I believe that over twenty of the present families are the descendants of outsiders that came in within the last forty years.

14434. How many outsiders have gone in in Sir James Matheson's time?—About six. Some of them were sub-tenants of other people. But when other two townships were cleared before Sir James got possession of the property, there was a considerable number that came in then. The place was poor before, and then when those who were too poor to be sent to America were added to those, it made them poorer still.

14435. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it with the *cas-chrom* you cultivate your land?—Partially with the *cas-chrom* and partially with the spade.

14436. We are badly off for peats. They are far off, and there is no road to them. They are two miles away, and it would take two hours to get a cartful. There is no road there.

14437. You never have horses for ploughing?—There were horses in my father's time, but when the people were thrown in upon them the horses had to be sent away.

14438. But I mean you don't hire horses?—No.

[ADJOURNED.]

BREASCLETE, LEWIS, TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XXXVI. and XLI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

NEIL MACLENNAN, Crofter, Breasclete Park (47)—examined.

14439. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14440. Have you got a written statement?—Yes. 'A *Statement of the* 'Grievances of Crofters in Breasclete Park (should be called Callernish 'Park).—I have been elected by the crofters of Breasclete Park as their 'delegate, and the following is the statement I have to make on their 'behalf. We are now thirty-three years in Breasclete Park. We were 'formerly in Reef, where we were born and brought up, as also our fathers 'and grandfathers. The land there was good, and was quite convenient 'to the sea for fishing, and therefore we lived pretty comfortable. A 'stranger who wished a sheep farm then fixed upon Reef as a suitable 'place for that purpose. The result was that we got notice of removal 'from Mr Scobie, the then factor. We had no arrears of rent, and there-'fore we refused in a body to do this, and stood out against it for three 'years, when Mr Scobie's term of office expired. We then naturally 'expected justice from the next factor; but, on the contrary, he took up 'at once the work his predecessor had begun, and at last got us forcibly

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'ejected. Four families, of whom my father was one, came to our present 'holding, and some of the rest had to go to America. When we came 'here there were no stones to be got for building a house, and as we had 'to turn our attention at once to the working of the land which was 'nothing but a peat moss, we had to make temporary huts at the sea-shore 'to shelter us until we got houses made of turf on our lots. I myself 'remember all this perfectly well. About fourteen acres were allotted to 'the four families, and as the land was so very bad we got the island of 'Kiva for grazing at a rent of £5. This was our best help at that time, 'and we held it for five years, until the late factor Mr Munro came in, 'when it was taken from us. There are now nine families on the same 'amount of land as was originally allowed to four. Further, we have 'reason to complain of the annual increase of the rates, which has now 'reached to not less than 3s. in the £, the rights of which we cannot well 'understand; in short, when we came to our present holdings, the rent was 'only £11, 8s., and owing to the overcrowding and increase of rents and 'taxes, it has come to £15, 4s. 5d. sterling. We want more lands, with 'fair rents, fixity of tenure, with compensation for improvements, and we 'hope the Government will see their way to help us to stock our lands and 'build houses, which we are all willing to pay with interest through course 'of time, and humbly hope Her Majesty's Government will be pleased to 'grant us our humble request.—NEIL M'LENNAN, Delegate.'

14441. *Mr Cameron.*—How many heads of families are there now in this place you represent?—Six.

14442. And the rent of the six amounts, as I see by this paper, to £15, 4s. 5d. including taxes?—Yes.

14443. Do you know the proportion of that which is rent and that which is taxes?—I am not able to give the separate items.—*Mr Mackay,* chamberlain. The rent is £14, 4s.

14444. What amount of stock do the people at Breasclete possess?—From two to four cows each. Some of them have no sheep; some as high as twelve; perhaps some few over twelve.

14445. Any followers?—Yes, the cows have their followers—young beasts as well.

14446. It is stated in this paper that the island of Kiva was taken from you, after you held it for five years. Was any reason given by Mr Munro for taking it away?—No reason whatever, except to order us out of it.

14447. Who got possession of the island after it was taken away?—The innkeeper at Callernish.

14448. Was the island far away from Breasclete?—No.

14449. Was it very convenient for the crofters at Breasclete?—Yes.

14450. Was it good grazing in winter as well as summer?—Yes.

14451. Any arable ground upon it?—Very little.

14452. What stock did it keep?—If it was kept without stock during the summer, it would winter about eighteen cows.

14453. You say in your paper that Reef was a more suitable place than Breasclete, and allude particularly to the fishing. Was it a better place as regards the quality of the land?—Yes, the soil was better.

14454. Was there less rock upon it?—There was more rock there than here, but the soil was different; here it is peat moss, and there it was sand and good soil.

14455. Did the crofters possess more stock at Reef than they do now?—I believe we had more, and they would be better; but I believe, when Reef was cleared, there were too many people there at the time.

14456. Where did the other people go who did not come to Breasclete?—Some of them went to Ness, some to Borv, and some to Lochganvich,

on this side of Stornoway. Those that went to Lochganvich had afterwards to go to America.

14457. How many families left Reef besides those who came here?—There would be about thirty-one or thirty-two families. Four came here, and the rest went elsewhere.

14458. The paper states that they refused in a body to remove, and held out for three years. What form did their resistance take?—Just refusing to go.

14459. Did the factor serve summonses upon them?—Yes.

14460. Did they refuse to receive the summonses, or did they receive them and then refuse to obey?—The sheriff officers were in the habit of leaving the summons in the key-hole.

14461. And you refused to receive them?—The people just disregarded them.

14462. Was there any violence used or any encounter with the police, such as we have heard of in Glendale?—There were no police sent there.

14463. In fact, it was a passive and a peaceable resistance?—Yes, there was no violence.

14464. How came they to go away at last when Mr Munro insisted upon it?—So far as my own recollection goes, and the testimony of the only old man now living who came from there at that time, there were works going on—roads and so on—under Government, and it was by these works that they were in the habit of providing for their families, and paying their rents. So, when they were turned out in this way, and refusing to leave the place, each foreman having charge of the works got notice that no work was to be given to the people of this place. They then fell into arrears of rent when they did not get work, and so, when this additional hold was got on them, go they must, because the rent was not paid.

14465. This paper states they were not in arrears. Was there much poverty amongst them at that time?—Some of them were poor enough. The years in which they were sent away were very bad years. One of the men who was sent from there to Lochganvich, and afterwards was sent to America, was unwilling to emigrate. The officers came to his house and quenched his fires, and sent him out of the house to the steamer that was waiting to carry him away, and his only cow was left at the back of the door, and he got nothing for it. His brother afterwards sold the cow, and sent the proceeds to him.

14466. What was the nature of the works you alluded to which were a help to the people at that time?—District roads.

14467. Were those works executed by Sir James Matheson?—It was the proprietor who paid the expense of these roads. There was a little Government help and Government meal at the same time.

14468. How long did those works continue after the period when work was refused to this particular township?—I cannot tell.

14469. Were there any other works going on that employed the people, except roads?—Not under the proprietor. There was fishing going on.

14470. But there were no works by the proprietor?—No.

14471. Do you know how many people were employed on these roads?—I cannot tell how many. The whole population was getting work, that is, all those who applied got work, and paid their rents.

14472. Was there any other work going on in the island except what was supplied by the proprietor and the fishing?—No.

14473. Are there any works going on now?—Nothing on this side of the country except the fishing.

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14474. Can you tell us when the works given by the proprietor ceased at that period?—I cannot tell.

14475. It must have been some time ago?—Yes, a large number of years ago.

14476. How many people were present at the meeting at which this paper was drawn up?—All our young people were there, unless there was one who was from home.

14477. Who wrote it out?—A lad belonging to the place.

14478. Did he compose it, or copy it?—I supplied the material myself; a lad belonging to the place, who lives in Stornoway, composed it, and a lad who lives here copied it.

14479. Was the last paragraph beginning 'We want more land,' which is in a different handwriting from the rest, composed and copied by the same parties, or was it done at a subsequent period?—The native of the place who lives at Stornoway, and who composed the rest of the paper, composed the last paragraph, and it is in his handwriting.

14480. So the last paragraph was written in Stornoway?—Yes.

14481. And the rest of it was written here?—Yes.

14482. Who was the lad who composed it?—A lad of twenty, one of ourselves. He writes a good hand, but does not know English much.

14483. *The Chairman.*—When the people came from Reef to this place, to whom did the land here belong?—It was waste land—peat mosses, which belonged to the people of the district. Sir James Matheson, the proprietor, had meanwhile trenched it somewhat, and turned the ground.

14484. Did they get any money for the houses they left at Reef?—Not a penny.

14485. Did they bring the roofs of the houses here?—Those of us who came here brought the roofs of the houses with us. Others left these things there, and they went useless.

14486. Had they any assistance from the landlord to build their houses?—No, nothing.

14487. While they were preparing their ground here for cultivation, did the landlord continue to assist them in preparing the ground?—No, nothing except what was done before we came.

14488. Did the people of Callernish, on whose ground they were settled, have their rents reduced on account of the ground taken from them?—They themselves say no.

14489. Did the four families who came here get a share in the hill pasture belonging to Callernish?—Yes, they got a share.

14490. Was the rent of the people at Callernish for the hill pasture reduced?—They themselves said they got no reduction whatever.

14491. What is your own present rent?—£1. It is a piece of land that never was cultivated before, and that I trenched, and I believe I have it cheaper in consequence.

14492. What is the rent of the other crofters who pay rent?—There is no new lot besides mine, and I believe my neighbours pay £1.

14493. I do not mean the new lots, but the old lots?—One pays £3, 13s. 6d. of bare rent, and another £3, 1s.

14494. Take the one at £3, 13s. 6d., what stock does he keep?—The regulations of the proprietor was to have one cow with its followers and four sheep.

14495. But I want to know what he actually has?—Three cows, one or two young beasts, and three or four sheep perhaps.

14496. Any horse?—No, there is no horse upon that lot.

14497. Are there any horses at all?—Yes, there are three horses in the place among the six people.

14498. Where do you get your sea-weed?—We get some of it upon that island we had ourselves long ago, and some on another island.

14499. Do you pay anything for it?—No.

14500. Do you pay anything for the peats?—No.

14501. Have any of the people availed themselves of the regulations of the estate respecting building better houses?—Yes, they have improved their houses.

14502. Are they satisfied with the regulations about the houses?—We would be quite satisfied with them so far as the houses are concerned, if there was sufficient land to maintain ourselves in connection with them.

14503. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When did you last sell any animal?—I sold one last year, at the autumn market.

14504. What did you get for it?—About £5. It was a three years-old.

14505. When will you be in a position to sell the next?—I will be obliged to sell one this year, in order to provide food for my family, unless I find some other means of maintenance. Although I should sell all I have, I would not get out of debt.

14506. Is that beast the only thing you are able to sell of the produce of your croft?—Yes, that is the only thing. I buy something every year to feed them in winter.

14507. How much are you generally obliged to expend for meal and provender in the year?—Some years I expend £25.

14508. Have you any sheep?—Five head of sheep—three sheep and two lambs.

14509. Are you in the habit of selling a lamb annually?—No, I never sell a sheep. The ground is bad, and the young ones die in winter unless they are hand-fed.

14510. Do you know the Christian name of the person who was mentioned in the paper as Mr Scobie, who began first to trouble you?—John.

14511. Who was the person who actually did force you out,—who succeeded Mr Scobie?—Mr Mackenzie, who succeeded Mr Scobie.

14512. Were these things done in the time of Sir James Matheson?—Yes.

14513. Where was the house you refer to where the fire was put out, and the animal was left behind the door?—At Lochganvich, five miles along the road between here and Stornoway.

14514. Who was the person that was forced away?—Angus Maclean.

14515. Were you a witness of the matter, or did you hear of it at the time?—I knew the man, but I was not present when the thing was done.

14516. When was the latest money expended on your locality by the proprietor, or has there been anything done from the time you entered?—I am not aware that he expended a penny since we were settled there.

14517. *The Chairman.*—Are the three cows and the young beasts, and the three or four sheep, supported all the year round upon the ground you occupy, or have you to buy provender for them in winter?—There is not one of us who has stock in the place but is obliged to buy provender for them. There are some in the place who have no stock at all, and we can get fodder from them.

14518. How much have you to spend in an ordinary winter to buy supplementary food for your stock?—From £1 to £2 every year.

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John Maciver.

JOHN MACIVER, Crofter, Breasclete (56)—examined.

14519. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14520. Have you a statement to lay befor the Commission?—Yes. 'Breasclete, *May* 1883.—In answer to the questions that are required, we 'the tenants have to say that the rent of our town when Sir James 'Matheson came to the estate was £110; the number of tenants at that 'time being thirty families, and it has increased to forty-four families, and 'the rent arose to £122; of which five lots were cut out of the grazing 'pasture which our village had, and was rented, besides the former sum, 'these five are of the forty-four above mentioned; and besides that, 'another piece of arable land and grazing was taken from us, which was 'valued at £7, and that is turned on the rest of the town. And besides 'that, there is twenty-five having no lots, but squatters among the rest. 'This is the fourth chamberlain since Sir James Matheson came to the 'estate, the second one of them, namely, John Munro Mackenzie, was 'taking from them their cattle for the rent between £1 and £2, which 'would get at this time between £7 and £8, and that was reducing the 'mind and stock of the people.'

14521. How many people were present when this paper was adopted?—Almost every one in the place.

14522. Who wrote the paper?— A native of the place.

14523. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When was it that the rent was raised from £110 to £122?—About thirty years ago, when the place was lotted out. In my first recollection there were only thirty families, but when the people were thrown in upon them, they increased. People all got poor after that, and they were huddled together, and it was at that time, thirty years ago, when the place was lotted out, that the rent was raised.

14524. Does the £122 include rates and taxes?—No, it is exclusive of taxes.

14525. The paper states that 'five lots were cut out of the grazing 'pasture which our village had.' Who got these five lots?—Men that were thrown in upon us.

14526. Where did they come from?—They came ont of the place.

14527. There were no outsiders?—No.

14528. Where is the piece of arable land and grazing which was taken from you, and which was valued at £7?—It is in this very town, beside the mill. It was cut off our township when the place was lotted out, but our rents were not reduced when we were deprived of that piece of ground.

14529. Who has it at present?—The miller has it.

14530. Does the miller pay rent?—We do not know. We got no abatement anyhow.

14531. Then £7 worth was cut away, and given to the miller, and you got no reduction?—Yes, that is the case.

14532. You complain here that there are no fewer than twenty-five squatting among the rest. Do these pay any rent?—No.

14533. Do they do anything in services or labour for the crofters?—No, nothing whatever.

14534. Have they got any stock?—Some have and some have not.

14535. Do they get potato ground in small quantities on payment of rent to the crofters?—From their own relatives they do.

14536. What does the township propose to do with these twenty-five cottars?—To get land.

14537. But where?—Where it is?

14538. Where is that 'is'?—It is lying waste, the best part of the land throughout this island, under sheep and deer, and the poor people kept in the worst parts of it, where they cannot make a livelihood out of it, and the best parts taken from them at every corner.

14539. How then do these poor people live?—They can scarcely be able to live at all.

14540. I presume, from what you stated, that they are all connected with each other,—that they are friends and relatives,—and therefore the crofters are kind to them?—Yes, they have relatives in the township.

14541. Are the crofters paying poor rates?—Yes, and road money.

14542. Does it come to this, that besides paying their legal poor rates, they have practically to support these twenty-five families?—Yes, that is the case. These twenty-five people must be kept up. Must not one poor family support another when there is no other way for it?

14543. How many of them are on the poor's roll?—Perhaps about six.

14544. With regard to the complaint you make against the then chamberlain, John Munro Mackenzie, taking from you the cattle for the rent at between £1 and £2, for which would be got at this time between £7 and £8, will you explain exactly what you mean by that?—These were very bad years, like this year. The markets were low, and when there was no other way for it the cow had to be sold, though it would only fetch 20s. or 25s., and so the factor took them away, and he himself priced them.

14545. Did he keep them for some time until better markets prevailed, or did he sell them at once?—He sold them as he was able to do it.

14546. Has the proprietor laid out any money on the improvement of this township within your recollection?—I am not aware of any, unless perhaps, as the previous delegate stated, some Government meal was given away for assistance.

14547. Have you received any of the money that has been collected this year by charitable people?—I myself got a little meal. Some in the township got some, and others did not.

14548. Were the most of them in circumstances requiring assistance?—Yes, the greater part of them. I could except very few here not equally in need of it.

14549. Was there any complaint as to the mode of distribution?—It is quite impossible to get any person in the world who can satisfy every person.

14550. Did you get any potato seed?—I got half a bushel.

14551. Was that from the proprietor, or from the charitable funds?—I have not paid for it, and I do not know whether I shall be called upon to pay for it or not.

14552. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What rent do you pay?—25s. bare rent. My brother pays 25s. also. There is road money and poor money, and moorland pasture money, in addition to that.

14553. What do you pay for moorland pasture?—Five shillings.

14554. Where is that moorland pasture?—Away out of here.

14555. Have you paid that 5s. ever since your lots were made by Sir James?—In my first recollection, we did not pay for that moorland at all.

14556. How long is it since it was put on?—It was in Mr Munro's time that we commenced to pay it,—off and on perhaps about ten years ago.

14557. How many beasts do you keep?—Two cows, a stirk now and again, six or seven sheep,—sometimes perhaps only four, no horse. Though we keep two cows, what is the use of that? The one only eats up the other.

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14558. Have you to buy food for the cows?—Yes, otherwise we could not keep them living.

14559. Where do you get it?—Any poor person here and there, who may not have stock of his own, may have it to sell.

14560. How much money do you spend on food for the cows in a year?—From 12s. to £1.

14561. Do you consider your rent exorbitantly high?—Yes, considering the nature of the soil, which is very bad.

14562. Would you be surprised to hear that we have come upon a great number of people in Skye who pay more than £5, and are barely able to keep two cows, and have no sheep or horse?—We ourselves could not keep one cow for all that grows out of the ground.

14563. *What do you think would be a fair sum for you to pay for the ground you have?*—I would take one-third off.

14564. What is the most rent that anybody pays in Breasclete?—£4.

14565. How many cows does that man keep?—Three or four cows and young beasts, and about twelve sheep.

14566. Do all the Breasclete people complain of want of food for their cattle, the same as yourself?—Yes, and of scarcity of land as well.

14567. Where do they all get food for their cattle?—If they cannot get fodder, they must buy food for them.

14568. What kind of food?—They buy some stuff from the mill,—meal-dust.

14569. Is that the only kind of food they give them, besides fodder and grass?—Sometimes we give them meal; and when we are not able to buy anything at all for them, then they and we must want.

14570. Where does the corn come from out of which this bran is made?—It comes off everything we grind.

14571. So it is the produce of Breasclete, after all, that feeds your cows?—Yes, it is only one-third of that meal-dust that comes to us. Three shares go to the miller himself.

14572. How long does the corn you raise support your family?—I only send a boll of oats and a boll of barley to the mill every year.

14573. Then do you buy meal all the rest of the year?—Yes.

14574. How long do the potatoes generally last when it is a tolerably good year?—They carry us through the winter, along with other things, in a good year.

14575. How long did they last this year?—We bade farewell to them this year at the time of lifting them.

14576. Have you no potatoes now to eat?—No.

14577. What is the food of the people of Breasclete at present? What do they take in the mornings?—Meal from Stornoway.

14578. What is their breakfast?—Some porridge, and some more or less of bread, just as it comes.

14579. Do they take any tea?—Every one that can.

14580. What do they take to dinner?—The one that can have tea will have it. There is no milk.

14581. What do they take with the tea for dinner?—Bread.

14582. Anything else?—Those who fish may have more or less of fish.

14583. Do not most of the Breasclete people fish?—There are three large boats fishing out of the township.

14584. How many small ones?—One.

14585. Are there only three boats in the whole village?—There are four fishing this year.

14586. How many men to each?—Eight.

14587. To whom do the boats belong?—Three of them belong to Mr

Smith, fish-curer, Stornoway, and the fourth belongs to a native of the place.

14588. How are the men paid upon these boats by Mr Smith?—The boats are his, and they give him the fish.

14589. What pay do they get?—He gives them so much per ling,—tenpence or a shilling. A cod counts half a ling,—fivepence or sixpence.

14590. Who pays for the lines they use?—The fishermen themselves.

14591. Do they buy them from the fish-curer?—Yes.

14592. When does he account to them for the fish they get?—At Martinmas; but he supplies them with meal when they are working.

14593. Do they know at the commencement of the season what the price of the fish is to be?—Sometimes they do, and sometimes not.

14594. Has he accounted to them yet for the fishing of this year?—No, there has been no settlement yet, but he is providing them with meal meanwhile.

14595. What does he charge for meal?—I cannot say: I never worked for him.

14596. What are you paying for meal just now?—Eighteen shillings to £1 per boll.

14597. *Mr Cameron.*—You said you would like the rent of your croft reduced by one third,—that is, from 25s. to 17s. Supposing the other 17s. were taken away also, and you had your croft rent free, would you live comfortably upon it?—It would not be proper that I should ask it for nothing.

14598. But is the size of your croft, and the productiveness of it, such that if you sat upon it rent free you could live upon it and be comfortable?—No.

14599. There is nothing said in your paper, but in the other paper the crofters ask that they should get assistance of Government in building houses and in stocking new crofts. Do you agree with that?—Yes, if we could get it without any difficulty about it.

14600. In this paper of yours there are a number of grievances, but you do not ask for any particular remedy. Do you and your fellow-crofters wish to get larger holdings, in the same way as the crofters in other townships have asked for them?—Yes; the thing of all others that I want is more land.

14601. Then do you wish that, in order to stock that land and build comfortable houses, you should obtain Government assistance, or would you be able to do it yourselves?—If they got more land, and if for the term of two years they got assistance, which they themselves might pay back afterwards by instalments, they could manage. If they got more land to work, it would be of the utmost service to them. They would be able to get increased stock as well as more produce.

14602. *The Chairman.*—Have you got a road near Breasclete?—Yes.

14603. Who made the road?—It is a kind of a road; we made it ourselves.

14604. Is it a good road?—It is not what I call a good road.

14605. Did the proprietor contribute anything to make the road?—I cannot say for certain, unless the assistance we got this year can be held as a contribution towards it. The greater part of the work upon the road was done this year.

14606. Did you receive any money wages for making the road?—No, no money wages as yet.

14607. Has the proprietor built any dykes or made any improvements about the place?—No; as many march fences as are set up were built by ourselves.

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14608. You said there were twenty-five families of cottars who were a burden to the crofters. Are these twenty-five families almost all relatives of the crofters?—They are all relatives of one or other of the crofters.

14609. Are some of them sons or grandsons of crofters?—In some cases there are three married couples in the same house.

14610. Then do these cottars, who you said were a burden to the crofters, sometimes assist their parents or other relations, or do the parents and relations always support them?—They mutually assist each other.

14611. Are many of these twenty-five families of cottars engaged in fishing?—Not the majority, but some of them are.

14612. Do any of them go round to the east coast fishing?—Yes.

14613. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Did you say that oats were ground at this mill here, the produce of Breasclete?—Yes, it is there we grind all the oats we have.

14614. Is this part of the Lewis quite capable of growing oats?—Yes, oats will grow.

14615. To advantage?—It depends on the soil in which they are; sometimes they yield an average crop.

14616. In several places which we have visited among the Western Islands we were told the land would not grow oats at all. Does that apply to this neighbourhood?—Some of the ground in this district also, though it may grow oats, will yield no fruit, but in others it is different. It depends on the soil in which they are.

14617. Do most of the crofters in Breasclete grow some oats, as you do?—Yes, most of them do.

DONALD MARTIN, Crofter and Mason, Tolsta (61)—examined.

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14618. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14619. How many people were present when you were elected?—A good many of the inhabitants were present.

14620. Will you make a statement on behalf of the people of Tolsta?—I do not inteud to say much. The substance of what I have to say on behalf of the people is, that there is plenty of land under sheep and deer, which might make them comfortable. I have seen the people reduced to such poverty that they were obliged to feed themselves upon dulse from the shore, and a drink of hot milk after it, which if they had not of their own they got from their neighbours. I do not refer to this present year as yet, but I have seen that in years not long back. I see them now reduced to such a hard condition that I can compare them to nothing but the lepers at the gate of Samaria,—death before them and death behind them. I see no prospect of improvement of their condition. If one tack is set free, another tacksman comes into it, to confront the people as the Philistines did who came out to battle with the people of Israel. It astonishes me to see that the proprietor takes any pleasure in the condition of the hornless sheep compared with that of men; and I see nothing for it now but that the sheep and the deer should be sent away, or the people be sent away out of the kingdom. The old people cannot be sent away without the young people. It is only the young people who can go, and it is only they who support the old people. If the young people go, the old people will die; and it is hard for them to see the sheep and the deer enjoying the price of their fathers' blood. I have not much more to say.

14621. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If the land which is now under tack were given to the crofters here, would they be able to take over the tacksman's stock?—They certainly could not.

14622. What would you propose to be done with the tacksmans' stock?—Sell it to the drovers.

14623. And how do you propose that the people are to stock these lands?—If they got good land on which they could work to advantage, the produce of their land would enable them to purchase stock.

14624. Do you think that the kind of stock which the crofters keep is as profitable as the kind of stock the tacksmen keep?—It is not, and cannot be. One of the sheep of the tacksmen is worth three of our sheep.

14625. Then, if you cannot keep a stock so profitable as the tacksman's stock, can you pay a rent at all to be compared with what the tacksmen pay?—If we got their land, our stock would be better.

14626. If you could not take the tacksmen's stock over, what kind of stock would you put on the ground?—The stock that we have would improve when it got the chance.

14627. Would the sheep become hornless sheep in time?—Yes, when they got hornless rams, they would become cross in time.

14628. If you got these lands, would you be able to build houses on them yourselves?—We could. Last spring I began to waken up stones to erect a new house, but my son said he was going to the States, which put a stop to my proceedings.

14629. Are you employed to build houses by the crofters?—I did at one time, but they have become too poor now. I used to go working throughout the Lewis and Harris, and also to the east coast fishing, but I have ceased to do so now. Since I married I have spent £350 on meal.

14630. What do you charge for building a house?—I had such a mind that it was not the same price I charged everybody. The Scripture says, 'Rob not the poor man because he is poor,' and I endeavoured to act upon that.

14631. What do you charge a man who is not too poor and not too rich?—For the gable and the dwelling part of the house, 12 feet in length, I charge £2, and I feed myself.

14632. Do you or the people gather the stones?—Themselves.

14633. What would it cost a poor man to build a house, besides the £2 he pays to the mason?—It would cost according as the stones were convenient or not.

14634. Do you know the township of Kirkibost?—Yes.

14635. The houses there built of late years, do you know what they cost the people on an average?—I do not know what they cost. I built only one house there. To build a house of 60 feet in length would cost, including the quarrying of the stones, not less than £10.

14636. Does that 60 feet include the barn and byre?—It is the whole walls of the house.

14637. Can you tell me what is the cost of the roof, doors, and partitions?—I do not know what the wood would cost from Stornoway; but drift wood comes ashore here sometimes, which is roofing, and if it were abundant the wood would not cost nearly so much as it otherwise would.

14638. Is the wood never supplied by the proprietor?—I cannot say, but it may have been given to the people that asked for it.

14639. Don't you know what the custom of the estate is?—I do not know.

14640. What are the wages of masons in this island at the present time?—From 3s. 6d. to 5s.

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14641. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How many families have you got in the township of Tolsta?—Fifty-six, I believe.

14642. How many crofts?—Twenty-nine.

14643. So there are nearly twice the number of families that there are of crofts?—Yes.

14644. How did that state of matters come about?—It came from the multiplying of the people; and perhaps a man whose rent was £2 had the sum spread over three families.

14645. But the people multiply in other places as well, and the like of this does not occur?—I believe that if we had had English teachers instead of Gaelic teachers, which was all we used to have, probably I myself would not have been where I am, and others besides me.

14646. Have you English teachers now?—We have, but the people are not satisfied with the school.

14647. Do you expect that the influence of the English teachers now will partly at least remedy the state of matters in the future in Tolsta?—It is only up to the age of fourteen that their parents are obliged to keep them at school, and they cannot give them any more schooling after that or send them to college.

14648. Your son told you last spring that he was going away to the States. Has he got an English education?—Yes, as much at any rate as would enable him to make his way through the world.

14649. Do you agree that it was a wise step on his part to leave Tolsta and go away to the States?—He thinks so himself.

14650. But seeing how affairs are in Tolsta, and how poor the people are, don't you think it was wise in him to risk it?—I believe he would have gone before now but for his affection for his parents, whose only support he is.

14651. Perhaps he can support them quite as well from America as if he had remained in this country?—Yes, for ought I know, fortune might so far befriend him, but death might come upon him also.

14652. You stated at the outset that the land that ought to belong to the people was now under sheep and deer. That is the cry all over the place. Do you think there is plenty of land under sheep and deer to give a sufficient amount of land to all the people of this parish, so as to make them comfortable?—I know the whole of this parish. I have walked over it more than once. I do not know if it would be improper for me to say it, but as the Queen of Sheba said when she came to visit Solomon, that all she had heard was nothing to what she had seen, so would any one say who had walked over the land of this parish, and seen how much of it is under sheep and deer.

14653. Taking the ground that the people of Tolsta have just now, arable land and moorland pasture, how many families would it support?—Twenty.

14654. And there are fifty-six?—Yes.

14655. Do you think that the places that are under sheep and deer in the parish would provide room for two-thirds of the people of the parish?—Yes, and more.

14656. So you are quite satisfied in your own mind, that if the people were spread over the parish, there is land enough for them?—I am certain of it, for there were no poor in the parish thirty-five years ago. The poor were then three times as well off as they are now.

14657. If they got this land, would they be prepared to pay reasonable rent for it?—Certainly, and it would be easy to pay reasonble rent compared with the amount of money we spend on meal.

14658. You said already that not many of the people would be able to

put the necessary stock upon the land?—I said they could not buy stock.

14659. How would they be able to pay rent until their own stock would increase?—They could pay the rent by the money they make at the lobster fishing, long line fishing, and east coast fishiug.

14660. During these years they would not be able to give as much time to the lobster and east coast fishing as they do now, because they would have to work some of their own land, and how would they be able to pay the rent when they are now so poor?—I understand that quite well, but when they would get good land it would bring forth crop for them, and though they should be behind for two years, they would afterwards make up for it when it produced good crops, so that two rents could be easier then to pay than one at the beginning.

14661. You think then that the people would see that their circumstances would in a few years be improved so much that they would meanwhile work all the harder?—They could not work any harder than they are doing at present.

14662. But you think, if they got over the first two years, they could manage?—I believe they would be all right then, if a year such as this last one would not come upon them.

14663. And you think that the giving of the land to the people of the parish would remedy the coudition of the whole parish as well as the people of Tolsta?—It would, and it would do good to the whole country.

14664. And that no other remedy would be required?—I do not know anything else that would so improve the condition of the people as to give them plenty of land.

14665. *Mr Cameron.*—If they could pay the rent of the new land which you wish them to get by lobster and other fishing after two years, why cannot they now buy meal from money obtained in the same way?—It is a hardship to them, because they have no profit out of the ground at present. However little a bit of land a man may have, he must attend to it and work it just the same as it were a larger and better croft.

14666. Do you find the fishing here profitable?—Some years it is profitable, other years it is not.

14667. Do you yourself prosecute fishing here?—I sometimes fish myself.

14668. Do you fish in company with others?—I do not fish now; my son fishes.

14669. Do the people in your township fish?—Yes; some of them have gone away already to Shetland.

14670. How many boats?—There are only two boats this year belonging to the place, but some of them fish in boats belonging to Loch Carloway.

14671. Do the boats belong to themselves, or to the fish-curers?—Some of them are their own, and some of them belong to the fish-curers.

14672. Do the two boats you mentioned belong to the people themselves?—Only two boats belong exclusively to the Tolsta people.

14673. Then they have nothing to do with the fish-curers?—Yes, they have to do with the fish-curers. Most of them are employed in boats belonging to the fish-curers.

14674. Then do I understand that in Tolsta there are two sets of people, some of whom have boats of their own, and the rest fish in boats belonging to the fish-curers?—There are sixteen men who in company have these two boats of their own.

14675. How many people in Tolsta fish in boats belonging to the fish-

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curers?—These two boats belong to the fish-curers, as well as the other ones.

14676. But you said just now that they belong to the people themselves?—What I mean is that these two boats are kept at Tolsta. There are five men who own a boat of their own.

14677. Did you hear the evidence given by the last witness on the subject of fishing?—I did.

14678. Are the arrangements between the people who fish from Tolsta and the fish-curers the same as those described in the evidence given by the previous witness?—I believe so.

24679. In answer to a question, you said there was an immense quantity of land in this parish under sheep and deer. Do you know at all the proportion which is under sheep and deer, compared with that which is occupied by crofters?—I do not know what the measure of the land is respectively, but I know from walking over it—at least it is my belief—that there is more of the land under sheep and deer than under the possession of crofters.

14680. How much more, do you think?—I cannot say.

14681. Were you at the meeting yesterday which we had in Meavaig?—I did not hear the figures mentioned by the factor.

14682. Did you hear afterwards that we had it given us in evidence from the Ordnance map that there are 63,000 acres of land belonging to the crofters, and 56,000 acres under sheep and deer altogether?—I am not going to say anything against that; what has been measured nobody can contradict.

14683. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—What parish are we in just now, and what parish have you been speaking of?—Uig.

14684. You say you have travelled over the parish, and know it well; do you know that, whether the lands held by the crofters are bigger or less than those under sheep and deer, the parts held by the tacksmen are the best parts?—The land that is under sheep and deer is like food with kitchen, and the land that the crofters have is like food without kitchen.

14685. You were asked what you would do with the stocks of the large farmers in the event of the land being divided, and you said, 'Sell them 'to the drovers.' I ask you now, would it be necessary to purchase the deer? Would the crofters keep the deer?—There were deer before there was any tack in the parish.

14686. But if the crofters got the land with the deer, would they keep it as a deer forest?—The grass would keep up the deer; it is not the people that would.

14687. What stock would they put upon the land now occupied by the deer?—Sheep, and cattle in summer.

14688. They would not keep the deer, in fact?—They were kept there before.

14689. You have said something about the Gaelic, and complained that formerly they were not taught English. Is that correct?—When I was young we had only Gaelic in the school at Tolsta, but we had an English school after that from the Free Church Ladies' Association.

14690. You would not like that Gaelic should be done away with altogether, would you?—I would not by any means; but I wish that the English should be taught, and they would learn the Gaelic along with it.

14691. Where are they learning Gaelic at this time?—There is a Sabbath school in which they are taught Gaelic.

14692. Do most of the children attend that?—Yes; the church is near them.

14693. Do you approve of Gaelic being taught, so that they may read the Bible in their mother tongue?—I think so.

14694. Now, do you represent the feelings of the whole people of Tolsta in their demand to get enlarged holdings and some permanency in their possession?—I speak for the island of Lewis as well.

14695. Their minds are set upon it?—Yes. 'Love your neighbour as 'yourself.'

14696. With reference to the question, whether or not the crofters have capital to stock the land, supposing there was a widow who had a little money, and there was a man who had only his own hands, would not the man who was able to work be as able to take a larger croft?—Just as well.

DONALD MACDONALD, Crofter and Fisherman, Dun of Carloway (50)—examined.

14697. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Dun of Carloway?—Yes.

14698. Have you got a statement to make to the Commission?—Yes, a verbal statement.

14699. Will you be so good as to make it?—We, the people of Dun of Carloway, were in a township at the other end of the parish of Uig, called Mangersta. Now, a shepherd lives there. Our ancestors were there for 140 years. It was as good land as was in the whole country side, but the sea destroyed their crofts now and again. No tacksman in the country would have cows and sheep better than ours, or that would secure higher prices at market. We were thus enabled to keep ourselves going from year to year without falling into any debt whatever. In one year, in particular, our crofts were destroyed by the sea, and we asked the Rev. Mr Campbell, the Free Church minister of Uig, to speak to Sir James Matheson in order to get an exchange from Mangersta, where we were, to Dun of Carloway, where we now are. This township of Dun of Carloway was for the space of nineteen years before that under sheep. A tacksman gave up the place that year. The proprietor had brought in five parks before that time above the dwelling-houses, right across the township. There was a slated house, a barn, and a byre built there. When we went to arrange with Mr Munro, the chamberlain, about an exchange of township, this matter of the parks and the steading stood in the way of our being able to agree. We returned to Mangersta, a distance of thirty miles, on foot, without coming to terms. Then we were asked to go to Stornoway. We went to Stornoway, and agreed there; and Mr Mackay, our present chamberlain, was witness of our agreement. He gave us the township as it was held by the previous tenant, with the exception of four out of five of the parks and the steading—that is, the slated house, the byre, and the barn. We were afraid that people might come and occupy these parks, and that to our injury, and because we knew what set of people the shepherds were long before—what a bad set they were—we were afraid of them. He promised to us that these parks and that steading would not stand in our way in any way whatever, and that he would fence them round, so that what was within the fence would be within and what would be without the fence would be without. There were two men sent from Gara-na-hine, who got one of these parks to each man. The fence was never set up. It has not been put up to this day.

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These two men began to pasture their stock upon our grazings for which we paid rent. Mr Munro, the chamberlain, gave us a written agreement. When these two men from Gara-na-hine began to encroach upon us with their cattle, we went to the chamberlain. The first thing he asked us was to produce the written agreement. Well, the agreement was sent for and produced. He read the paper to us Mangersta people and the two Gara-na-hine people as well. When he read the paper, he told those two men that they had nothing to get except those two parks. The two men said that if they got nothing but that they might as well go away. Mr Munro told them that was the agreement, and if they were not pleased with it to go. He put the agreement into his pocket, and we have not seen it since.

14700. How many years is it since all this occurred?—We came eleven years ago, and this occurred about eight years ago.

14701. Does the same difficulty still exist, or have you settled it?—The end of it is, that these two men with all their stock are still a burden upon us and upon our grazings, with the authority of the proprietor. Our land pasture up to one hundred sheep in winter, and they have reduced to such an extent that no one can believe what a state of poverty we have been brought into.

14702. When you came to the farm of Dun from Mangersta you found Dun had been under a tack. What was the rent paid by the tacksman for Dun?—About £80.

14703. How much is paid now under the crofters?—If you include these two Gara-na-hine men of whom I have spoken——

14704. Excluding these two men?—The crofters pay about £75, exclusive of these two men.

14705. How much do these men pay?—They pay £9 between them. The ground officer has the rest, the house and steading, and two of the parks, but I don't know how much he pays. The ground officer has not injured us in any way.

14706. The ground officer lives in a good house, and has two good parks?—Yes.

14707. How many parks had these two men?—A park each.

14708. About how much is each park?—About six acres.

14709. What class of men are these two men? Are they just crofters like yourselves?—They are the same, except that they have money.

14710. What stock do these two men keep?—One of them has over forty sheep, and the other has nearly forty sheep. They have each one horse, and each have six or seven heads of cattle.

14711. And your complaint is that these two men are allowed to run their cattle and their sheep upon the common pasture, which ought to be reserved for the crofters alone?—That is our complaint.

14712. But do you complain that they are allowed to run any cattle or any sheep, or is the complaint that they run too many of both kinds?—Our complaint is twofold. We consider they have no right to put any stock there, and at any rate they have too much stock there. We think our own stock could overstock it.

14713. How many crofters are there now paying rent outside of those two?—Twenty-one are on the rent roll.

14714. How many complete crofts are there?—There is one upon which there are four families, and there are two subdivided—under twenty-one families.

14715. Have you a full croft or half a croft?—A full croft.

14716. About what extent of arable ground have you?—Judging by the size of these parks which are said to contain six acres, my croft would be about three years.

14717. What stock do you keep?—I have no sheep at all. I have one cow and two young ones; I have no horse.

14718. Is that your summing, or is it what you actually possess?—The summing would be three milk cows, three stirks, and fifteen sheep.

14719. Do any of the crofters possess that amount of stock?—Yes, but there is some of them who pay £6 of rent.

14720. How much is the rent for the summing of three cows, three stirks, and fifteen sheep?—£3 of bare rent is my own croft, for which that is the summing.

14721. Why have you got no sheep?—The excellent sheep which I had in Mangersta, nineteen in number, I brought there, and they all died on that ground. I have not been able to buy any since that time.

14722. Have you represented to the factor your claim that these two men should not put any stock on the pasture?—We have twice sent a petition to Stornoway.

14723. What answer does the factor give?—I could not exactly say what answer we got, but we did not get the pasture.

14724. Is this question of the pasture your only complaint, or have you any other complaint?—This is the only complaint for which I was sent here.

14725. *The Chairman.*—Have you anything else to state?—I have to say that there are very many people upon our places. There are twenty-seven crofters there to-day. I don't see how they can live at all. It is sufficiently plain that they cannot live by the fishing, and that they cannot live by the amount of land they have.

14726. How many families are there altogether upon your township?—Twenty-six or twenty-seven.

14727. Including the two men who have parks?—Yes, but excluding the ground officer.

14728. Are there any cottars or dependants?—There are not any without more or less of land, but there are some on the land not on the rent roll.

14729. When you came to Dun from Mangersta did the proprietor assist to build your new houses?—Not a penny.

14730. Did you bring the wood for the roofs with you?—Yes, and it was a difficult task.

14731. Has the proprietor done any improvements in building dykes or anything else?—Nothing whatever since we came there. He built fences round the parks of the ground officer, but none round us.

14732. Were those fences put up during the tack, or during the crofters time?—The dykes were built before we came.

14733. Have any of the people availed themselves of the regulations of the estate with the respect to building better houses?—We built houses as well as we could. We know the regulations of the estate on that matter, and we built the houses as well as we were able.

14734. But have any of them since availed themselves of the printed regulations in regard to building better houses or improving houses?—These regulations were read to us four years ago, and since that time we have improved our dwelling-houses to some extent.

MURDO MACDONALD, Crofter and Fisherman, Tobson, Berneray (49)—examined.

14735. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected delegate?—Yes.

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Meurdo Madonald.

14736. How many people were present at your election?—About half as many as the place could hold.

14737. Will you make a statement to the Commissioners?—I have to tell about the poverty of the township of Tobson, and the causes that have led to it. In the time of our fathers there were eight tenants at Tobson, and they had Bosta besides and hill pasture also. That was in the time of the fathers of those who are there now, more than sixty years ago, but some of those who were cultivating the land are there still.

14738. At Tobson?—Yes.

The rent they paid was £8 altogether for the eight tenants. They had then cattle, horses, and sheep. Then commenced the depopulation of the island and the putting in of sheep and shepherds on the top of the people.

14739. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long since?—I cannot give the date, but it is a good while since.

14740. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was it in Sir James Matheson's time?—I think it was before Sir James's time. The island was then filled with people coming from other places. The people of Kirkibost and Hacleit were sent in upon us. There are now twenty-five crofters in the township, and twenty without land at all. The rent of the township is £89, 10s., without Bosta. There was some hill pasture, but the half was taken away. A dyke was erected between us and the land of Bosta which our fathers had.

14741. *The Chairman.*—What is Bosta now?—It is part of the tack of Mr Mackenzie of Linsbader and that wall separates us from our old burying-place. There is no gate there for us to carry our dead through, and we have to carry them over the wall, were the snow ever so deep. There was a fishing harbour formerly at Bosta, which is now useless—cut away from the people who used it before—and there are no people to make use of it.

14742. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand you to say that you are cut off because it is within the dyke?—Yes.

14743. *The Chairman.*—Can you not make use of the harbour?—It is too far away from us to make any use of it. We have a small anchorage at Tobson, but not so good as the old one. The half of the whole pasture our fathers had was taken from us. That was done in my father's time,—I cannot give the date. Mr Smith was the ground officer at the time. After a few years we were not allowed to go to that hill pasture at all, or make any use of it.

14744. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you deprived of hill pasture altogether now?—It was given back to us again. I do not know how, but we were allowed to resume the use of that hill pasture. After that, when we got it back again, we were obliged to erect a dyke between ourselves and the deer forest. Then another piece of hill pasture was offered to us in exchange for our former one, and we had to build seven miles of dyke round it. The shepherds got hold of our sheep whenever they strayed and pointed them, and then sent them to Stornoway, and sold them. We used to follow our sheep to Stornoway, and bring them back home, and then the shepherds took from us one after another of the sheep that we retained. I have myself seen the fire of a man put out at Bosta, and he sent away to Shawbost, who was not a penny in arrears. The man himself never did any good afterwards.

14745. Was this after the people were removed from Bosta?—It was before they were removed by Mr Mackenzie.

14746. Before the tenants were removed from Bosta, how many families were there in Tobson and Bosta?—I think there were nine families in Bosta. I cannot remember how many there were in Tobson.

14747. I suppose there were about the same number in Tobson that there are to-day?—About the same number.

14748. Was it to Kirkibost that the Tobson people were sent?—Yes.

14749. Did Mr Mackenzie of Linshader exchange Kirkibost for Bosta?—Yes.

14750. And the nine families from Bosta were rather bettered in circumstances by coming to Kirkibost?—It gave them more room than they had in Bosta.

14751. Did the people of Tobson hope to get the land of Bosta for themselves when the Bosta people were removed from it?—We were desirous of getting it.

14752. They had no promise of it?—No.

14753. Did they ask for it?—We sent a petition to the chamberlain and to her Ladyship, but we got no answer. *

14754. Then the removal of the Bosta people has been good for them, but prejudicial to the Tobson people?—Yes. It was injurious to the people of Tobson, because the cows of the Bosta people trespassed upon our lands back and forward.

14755. If this dyke were not between Tobson and Bosta, would the people use the port at Bosta still?—We would make use of it still in very wild nights, when it was desirable to get to the nearest landing place, but as there are no houses there we prefer to get to the nearest point to our homes.

14756. Then, if there was a gate to the burial-ground, your objection to the dyke would be pretty well removed?—There would need to be a dyke between us and the shepherds, at any rate, so long as there are shepherds there.

14757. Is the hill pasture which you have got now in exchange for what you gave up as good as what you gave up?—Not at all.

14758. Who has got the old hill pasture?—It is in the deer forest.

14759. How long is it since this was added to the deer forest?—I think about eleven years. †

14760. How long did it take to put this wall of seven miles around your new pasture?—We raised it in the course of the winter and the spring of the first year, because until we raised it we could not put any beasts upon the hill; we were not allowed. Nobody was allowed to go out with his boat to fish at all till that dyke was finished. We ourselves made that regulation that nobody should go out to fish, or send his wife anywhere, till that dyke was finished. ‡

14761. What rent do these twenty-five crofters now pay?—£89, 10s.

14762. Is that equally spread over them all?—No. Some of them are paying a little above £1; the highest rent, so far as I know, is £6.

14763. What is your own rent?—£4, besides taxes.

14764. What stock do you keep?—I have two cows, one stirk, and seven sheep.

14765. Is the £4 your own rent, or the rent of yourself and your brother?—That is between myself and my brother.

14766. Has your brother the same stock as you have?—Yes, he keeps the same stock.

14767. Do you send your cows to the mainland pasture in the summer time to the sheilings?—Yes, we would have none if we did not do so.

14767.* When do you send your cows to the sheiling?—We send our sheep ashore the first week of summer, and we send our cattle ashore at the end of the first month of summer; that is, about the end of this week.

14768. How long do they remain there?—Till the end of summer.

* See Appendix A, XLI, p. 158. † *Ibid*, p. 158. ‡ *Ibid* p. 159.

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14769. Both cattle and sheep?—The sheep remain till the end of autumn.

14770. Have you a herd for the sheep?—Yes.

14771. Do the women go with the cattle to the sheilings?—Yes.

14772. Do they stop there through the summer?—Yes.

14773. Without going home?—The whole time.

14774. How do they spend their time there?—We bring food to them by boat.

14775. Do they make butter and cheese?—Those that can make butter and cheese; those that cannot must do without.

14776. If the cows do not give milk, what is the use of the women going there?—It is hoped they will have milk yet, if they have not now.

14777. Do they bring the milk home, and take food with them?—We go for it, and bring it.

14778. Are they all in one sheiling?—Sometimes two crofters have one sheiling between them, and sometimes one has the whole sheiling to himself.

14779. Are the cattle housed there, or only the women?—The cattle are out at night.

14780. Are you a fisherman?—Yes.

14781. Have you a boat of your own?—No.

14782. Do you fish for hire?—I fish as one of the crew of a boat belonging to a curer.

14783. What pay do you get for it?—Some years eightpence and some years ninepence, one shilling at the most, for ling; and sometimes they will not take the cod from us at all; they don't think it worth having, but if we take it to them they will give fourpence for it.

14784. Are the cod not of good quality here?—They are good in the winter.

14785. Are the ling good all the year?—Yes.

14786. When do you get payment from the curer?—We often have to get it before we earn it.

14787. That is to say, you get advances from the curer?—Our accounts are made up at Halloween, but we get payment beforehand from him in meal.

14788. Have you drawn much meal this year?—Yes. I have purchased eighteen bolls this season, between what I bought and what I got.

14789. What did you pay for what you bought?—The curer charges twenty-four shillings a boll.

14790. Is it from the curer that you got what you bought?—I did not buy it all from him.

14791. What did you pay when you bought it elsewhere?—Nineteen shillings, and the best £1.

14792. Is the curer's meal this year twenty-four shillings?—I do not know what it will be this year.

14793. When will you know what it will be this year?—About Halloween, when we make up accounts.

14794. Will you not know the prices of the ling till then?—I do not know the least what prices we will get this year.

14795. What curer have you been fishing to lately?—Hector Mathieson, in Valtos.

14796. Have you been long fishing for him?—Yes, four or five years.

14797. Has he settled with you every year at Halloween?—Yes.

14798. Are you told each year at that time how you stand with him?—Yes.

14799. Have you ever had money to get from him?—I had money to get from him the last year at any rate.

14800. And when you did not have money to get from him, did you feel bound to fish for him the next season?—He does not bind himself, but I consider myself under obligation, if I am in debt to him, to fish for him.

14801. Although the price of the fish is not fixed, and the prices of the advances of meal is not fixed?—I do not see it to be my duty, though poverty compels me to do so.

14802. Do you know of any case here where people have made as much money by the fishing as would enable them to buy boats for themselves?—I do not think I know of any, but they did clear off or made money enough to pay for boats that the curers had given them.

14803. Are these people now fishing with their own boats?—The only one in our place that I knew who did so is not able to make use of the boat now. He has nobody to assist him with his land.

14804. Would it not be worth his while to hire labour to assist him with his land?—I don't know.

14805. What extent of land has that man got?—His rent is about £4.

14806. Has he enough to make him comfortable without fishing?—He is one of the best off in the place whatever, but he has only a small family.

14807. Do you think that the fishing might be so prosecuted by some of them that it might be for their advantage to give up the land, and thus leave more land for the others?—Of late years fishing has fallen back. It is far away from the land. We can have no living without the land, and plenty of the land which our fathers had in view of us,—twenty townships in possession of one bed-ridden man, and hundreds of us without as much as we can say that we have a right to.

14808. But if you had the whole of the land that your fathers had, there are four families now for one there was in your father's time. How are all the others to be provided for?—We think, if the land were given us, that we would work the land,—that we would borrow money for a few years, and after we had the land sufficiently stocked that we could then repay the money.

14809. But you think that a man holding £4 of land is too much occupied to devote himself at all to fishing?—When there are two able men in a family, they could both work the land and also the fishing. I have another thing that I must say—about the sportsmen. Some of us walking upon our own pasture have been threatened by them that if we did so, they would put lead into our bodies. That was done within the last four years.

14810. Who was it that said so?—That was said to Malcolm Macdonald of Tobson by the sportsman who was then living at Scaliscro.

14811. *The Chairman.*—What is the sportsman's name?—Mr Williamson.

14812. Did Malcolm Macdonald complain to the factor that he was threatened by the sportsman?—No. The gamekeeper said he wondered he did not fire at him.

14813. Did the man really believe that the sportsman would have fired at him, or did he only think he was angry?—He told me he was very much frightened by it.

14814. Have you any other complaint to make of the sportsmen?—Yes. I could not think of going to get heather to make ropes for thatching our houses, except during the week we are permitted to do so by the factor.

14815. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where?—On our pasture.

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14816. When is that week?—A week about Lammas time.

14817. *The Chairman.*—When the man was threatened by the sportsman, was he on his own hill pasture, or was he on the Scaliscro ground, belonging to the shooting tenant?—I could not be sure which side of the dyke he was on.

14818. Do you think generally that the shooting tenants are unkind to the people?—We got no kindness from them better than that.

14819. Do you know whether the shooting tenants here have sent considerable subscriptions this year for the relief of the poor in their present distress?—I am not aware of that.

14820. I will let you know by-and-by how much they have sent. Now I wish to ask you some questions about the fishing. Do the fishermen generally think that the curers are harsh and unjust, or do they think that the curers treat them with justice?—We know that the curers are hard upon us.

14821. Are the fishermen very anxious to be independent of the fish-curers, and have boats of their own?—That is a thing they greatly desire.

14822. If the proprietor or Government would supply them with boats would they endeavour to pay for these—to pay interest and repay the capital?—I should think they would.

14823. You mentioned two dykes in the course of your evidence; one dyke was built between Tobson and the tack of Bosta?—The first dyke mentioned between Bosta and Tobson was erected by Sir James, but there were other two dykes we made ourselves.

14824. What sort of dyke was erected hy the landlord?—A stone dyke.

4825. Was that useful to the people of Tobson; did it do them any service?—It kept our cattle from going to the other side, and cattle on the other side from coming to us.

14826. Then what was the second dyke you built yourselves—not the dyke against the deer?—The first dyke was erected on the west side of the deer forest, to shut us out from the deer forest.

14827. What sort of dyke was it?—A turf dyke; there was no stone to be got.

14828. Was it made entirely by the crofters?—Yes, every bit of it.

14829. The proprietor gave them no help?—No.

14830. Was the object of that dyke to prevent their stock straying upon the deer forest?—Yes. If any part of the dyke fell, anybody who had his cattle there at the shieling was obliged to remove away.

14831. I mean, that dyke was erected not for tbe sake of the crofters, but for the sake of the deer forest?—It was on account of the deer and not of the cattle.

14832. And yet the crofters paid for the whole of it?—We did it all notwitbstanding.

14833. Aud they never had any compensation?—Nothing.

14834. How many days' work of the community did it take to make this dyke?—We spent a day in going there, and we spent a week there before we came home.

14835. Then we come to the third dyke—that was the dyke seven miles long?—That is the third dyke.

14836. Was that put np for the sake of the deer forest and not for the sake of the crofters?—That was also erected for the sake of the deer.

14837. Was it entirely put up by the crofters, and did they never receive any compensation?—Without any compensation.

14838. How long did the dyke take them to make?—My brother and I and our servant spent ten weeks working at it.

14839. Did they never receive any reward or consideration for it in any form?—Not the worth of one halfpenny. The only promise I heard made was that if we made the dyke in the course of a year, a cope or paling would be erected on the top of the wall for additional protection, which was never done.

14840. Was that wire?—Yes, a wire fence. When any part of the dyke gives way now, we have to go and repair it, or pay somebody for doing so.

14841. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is Berneray a populous island?—I don't know the population, but there are a considerable number.

14842. Is a considerable part of the island under tacksmen?—Yes, two good farms are in the hands of tacksmen.

14843. Can you give us any idea of the comparative division of the island between those two tacks and the small crofters? Have those two tacks the half of the island?—It is not the half of the island.

14844. Nearly the half?—Yes, the crofters have three farms, and the sheep farmers have two.

14845. How many out of the whole population are living on those two farms?—There is nobody living on Mackenzie's farm.

14846. How many may be upon the other?—There is one family living on the other.

14847. What are the names of those two farms?—Bosta and Croir.

14848. If the people got these two towns would it very much benefit them in their circumstances and position?—It would be a great help to them, and still more if they got besides Little Berneray, which the people had before.

14849. With regard to the dyke which prevents you getting into the burial ground, why was there not a gate left in it through which you could carry the bodies?—When the dyke was being made I was working at it, and we made a gate for the purpose of access to the churchyard, and it was shut up and filled with stones, and notice was sent to us by the farmer of Linshader that we must fill it up.

14850. Did you make any remonstrance to the authorities at Stornoway?—I don't think so.

14851. Are you aware that it is not lawful by the law of Scotland to shut up a road to a burial ground?—I did think so.

14852. Then why did you not apply to the authorities?—Because the local government was stronger than we.

14853. In consequence of the shutting up of the wall, are you, in point of fact, to this day, obliged to lift the bier over the wall when you come to it?—Yes, we are obliged at this time to lift the coffin up on to the wall, and men to stand there, with others on the other side.

14854. Do you know whether the proprietor or those in authority were aware of that fact?—I don't know.

14855. In regard to the rent, which was originally £8, and which is now increased to £89, with great deductions taken from you, are you aware when the last rise took place?—When the ground was lotted by Mr Cameron.

14856. Was the rent added to considerably at that time?—The chief rise was before Mr Cameron's time, but it was added to in his time also, and the present rent was then fixed.

14857. What is the name of the place where you have got your present hill pasture?—Our first hill pasture was Bein-na-chuillein, and our present pasture is at Earshader.

14858. Is your present pasture good grazing, and of considerable

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extent?—It is spoiled by the number of cattle that are put upon it. The people of Kirkibost and Croir have a right to pasture as well as us.

14859. *Are the shielings of the different townships close to each other?*—There are so many people who have a right to have them there that they must be near each other.

14860. Have you any idea how many women and children will go there this year?—There will be thirty from our own township, ten or eleven from Hacleit, twenty from Kirkibost, and six or seven from Breasclete.

14861. How do the women spend the day?—Knitting stockings, making shirts, caps and frocks, and such like work, and looking after the cows.

14862. Do they keep up the old custom of meeting, when the evening falls, and having singing?—The young people undoubtedly like that.

14863. Have they any music except singing?—No.

14864. In your younger days did there use to be pipe music, or anything of that sort?—No. There were pipes in my father's time.

14865. *We have read in a book that when they set out for the shielings,* they had some particular song. Was that the case here?—No. I have heard of such a thing, but I cannot say anything definite about it. There are old people who might be able to tell.

14866. In regard to the limitation upon pulling the heather for thatch, is that heather in the forest?—We are afraid to gather heather except on the inside of our pasture. I repeat what I said before. We are not allowed to gather heather on our own hill pasture, except during one week.

14867. Why?—It is one of the orders of the estate, for the sake of sport and not disturbing the deer.

14868. Is that restriction in the articles of lease or regulations of the estate?—I think that is in the regulations.

14869. Is it intended for the benefit of the sportsmen or for the benefit of the pasture?—*I cannot say why it is done.*

14870. Is there to you any sense in the regulation?—We obey it, at any rate. It is trying to us.

14871. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is this the regulation to which you refer—rule 14—'No tenants shall pull heather, or cut rushes, or bent, or carry 'away the same, except on such days as shall be appointed by the ground-'officer or gamekeeper of the district, and at such place as he shall point 'out'?—Yes.

14872. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You told us about a man whose fire was extinguished. What was his name?—Malcolm Macdonald, Bosta.

14873. How long ago was this?—A few years before Bosta was depopulated.

14874. Was it in consequence of the hardships he endured at that time that he was unable to do anything more for himself?—*I don't know* he was personally injured in any way by the removal, but he was heart-broken by it—his children left him—and he never did much afterwards.

14875. You spoke about a man who was threatened to be fired at. Is that man present here?—He is at sea. There are some here who heard the threat.

14876. Did the people in your township receive any of the money that was collected by charitable people?—Yes, we did.

14877. Were you satisfied with the way in which it was distributed?—Some were and some were not, but I was pleased, and I was in need of it, and am thankful to those who gave it for seed and food. But for the gentle-folks who did it, we would not have been alive.

14878. *The Chairman.*—I think it right to tell you that the shooting tenants in this part of the Lewis have sent £160 to the relief fund, and you will find the details in this paper which I now hand to you?—The

one thing we want is justice from the Queen and from her wise counsellors whom she authorizes.

JOHN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Callernish (60)—examined.

John Mackenzie.

14879. *The Chairman.*—You have a written statement?—Yes. 'The 'Callernish Crofters complain of being deprived of two points of their 'ground, namely, Orosay and Aird, since a long time, and still paying rent 'for it, as also muir and pasture in common given it to Carloway people. 'Twenty-eight crofts taken from us and others put on them, some from 'Garrynahine, and some from Uig, and still the rent rising. Nothing but 'dykes on every side of us. The crofters must keep the half of them 'up, or else the factor will take money from them at rent time for it. This 'township's former rent was £60; now its £118. A few years ago, paid 'for liberty of collecting whelks, and sending them to market south, £15 'rent. We are living yet at Callernish that can testify on oath with clear 'conscience that our eyes saw this taken from us, if we are wanted to do 'this.'

14880. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do they gather whelks at Callernish yet?—Yes, they gather all they can. They think them little enough.

14881. Does anybody ask them rent for that right now?—I have not been asked to pay rent myself, but I have heard others say they have, and I think some of them are perhaps here.

14882. How many families are there in Callernish?—About sixty.

14883. Have they any other means of livelihood except this land for which they are paying £118?—We have nothing else to live upon here, except the help that some of our young people give that go fishing.

14884. How long is it since they lost the land which is spoken of here as taken from them?—I barely remember when Aird was taken from them.

14885. It will be fifty years ago?—Yes.

14886. And the rest of it was taken before that?—Yes. Orosay was taken from us some little time before that.

14887. When were these Gara-na-hine and Uig people put upon your crofts?—Twenty-one years ago.

14888. Why were they taken from Gara-na-hine and Uig?—I don't know.

14889. Who got the land round Gara-na-hine and Uig?—It is now a part of the land of the innkeeper, and another part of it is a park occupied by the doctor.

14890. How long has your rent stood at £118?—For a long time.

14891. And what you want is more land at a reasonable rent I suppose?—Yes. We have no pasture at all, only the ground that we till. Our cow must go three miles before she can bend her head to grass.

14892. Who has the grass above Callernish?—It is in the hands of Mr Macrae. I have to say further that there was no reduction of our rent when the Aird was taken from us.

14893. Then the £118 has stood since that time?—There was no reduction of our rent when the Reef people was sent in upon us and the Aird was taken from us. There are some of us, of whom I am one, who have within the last thirty years, when we got these new lands, taken in and reclaimed new ground, which we have done our best to make productive, but we have no grass.

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George Smith.

GEORGE SMITH, Crofter, Callernish (70)—examined.

14894. *The Chairman.*—It is stated in the memorial submitted to us from Callernish that a few years ago a charge was made for collecting whelks upon the shore, and that a sum of £15 was paid as rent for doing so. Have you any knowledge of that?—Donald M'Iver, who wrote the paper we have given in, has himself told me that he paid money, and that the sum charged for the liberty of collecting whelks was £15.

14895. How long ago was that?—I cannot say exactly—a dozen years at any rate.

14896. Was it since Sir James Matheson became proprietor of the island?—Yes.

14897. Did you yourself ever pay?—No. I used to collect whelks, but I paid nothing for the liberty of doing so. I sold them to M'Iver before mentioned, and he was charged that tax as a licence for taking them.

14898. Then the people who collected them on the shore were never made to pay?—We had nothing to pay.

14899. Were you and the other crofters allowed to sell the whelks to anybody you pleased, or were you obliged to sell them to M'Iver?—We were allowed to sell them only to the men who paid the duty for the privilege.

14900. Were you at liberty to take them and consume them yourself, without paying anything?—Yes.

14901. Does that system still continue, or is it all done away with?—It is still maintained.

14902. Who at the present time is the tacksman to whom you sell the whelks?—There is another man this year buying the whelks; a man named Neil Mackay used to buy them.

14903. When the Gara-na-hine people were brought to Callernish, were they settled on arable ground of other crofters or upon hill pasture?—Not upon the arable ground, but upon grass. Their lots were cut out of our grass.

14904. Were the lots prepared and trenched for them by the proprietor?—No, they did it themselves.

14905. Was no preparation made for them by the proprietor?—Nothing. Some lots were cut out where we had our peat ground, and we were obliged to go elsewhere for our peats, and our peats are now nearly exhausted.

14906. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has any money been laid out by the proprietor for this township of Callernish during the last twenty years?—I never knew that he spent a penny upon it. Our grazing was taken from us and we were then obliged to build a dyke between ourselves and the pasture that we have. A cow must go three miles before she can bend her head.

14907. In those circumstances I presume a cow that has to travel six miles will not give very much milk?—No. We complained once or twice to the factor to restore the grass that was our own, and I believe he was minded at one time to do so, but the thing fell out that it was joined to another bit of land, which was the best of the place, and made into a small tack occupied by Mr Macrae.

14908. *The Chairman.*—What is the rent of that tack?—I don't know. When the grazing was taken from us, we were asked to value it before the chamberlain. He told us that we would either get the grazing or a reduction according to the value of it from our rent, which we valued at £10, but we have not got either.

14909. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you give £10 to get it back?—We would indeed be very glad to do so. I had ten hoggs this year, and I lost them all for want of grass.

MURDO MACLEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Borrowston (31)—examined.

Murdo Macleod.

14910. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—This is the statement you have to make before the Commission:—'At a meeting of the crofters of Borrowston 'on the 21st May last, it was agreed that the following statement of their 'grievances and demands be presented through their delegates to the Royal 'Commission. Our first grievance is the smallness of our holdings. 'Fifty-five years ago there were only five crofters in Borrowston, paying 'an aggregate rent of £42. At present there are fifteen crofters paying 'a rental of £61* We hold on an average about three acres of cultivable 'land. Our common or outrun is about ¾ mile long and ½ mile wide. 'The population of our township is ninety-two souls. We cultivate 'minutely from year to year the whole of our lots, and in consequence 'of this perpetual tillage the soil of our crofts is gradually deteriorating. 'The quantity of grain which we raise off our crofts does not suffice any 'year to support our families. We require to buy of meal in ordinary 'years about £12 worth on an average over and above what we raise off 'our own lots. We require to buy about £23 worth of meal on an average 'this year, there being only three families in our township that require less 'than £20, while there are others that need £40 worth of meal. Our people 'are strong, active and industrious, and thoroughly capable to earn a respect-'able and independent livelihood for themselves and the families they repre-'sent, provided only they had plenty of land to work upon. Bordering on 'our township is a promontory called Leimshadder, which would be a good 'and convenient supplement to our present small holdings. Leimshadder, 'the place referred to, was at one time inhabited by eight crofters, but 'these were removed and the place given to a tacksman. About twenty-'seven years ago we offered a rental of £50 for Leimshadder, promising 'to pay the rent before entering into possession, but our offer was refused, 'though the place was afterwards given to a tacksman for a rental con-'siderably less than what we offered. Four or five years ago it was let to 'its present holder, who has large possessions of land elsewhere in the 'island. We are still willing to take Leimshadder at a reasonable rent. 'Another serious grievance which we wish to state is the extreme difficulty 'and hardship we experience in connection with our peats. The peat 'moss connected with our own township was exhausted upwards of twenty 'years ago. The estate then gave us permission to cut peats on conveni-'ent ground belonging to another township, but on the authority of the 'ground-officer this peat ground was taken from us two years ago. We 'were then driven out to the moor outside the township of Carloway. 'Our peat banks are now 3 miles distant from our homes. For half this 'distance there is no road, though we have to carry all our peats on our 'back. We have further to cross a river which, being without a bridge, 'is, after heavy rains, often dangerous and impassable. Our peats being 'so far away from us, and to relieve ourselves somewhat of the hardship 'of carrying them the whole way on our backs, we sometimes have recourse 'to the expedient of floating them on the river for a certain distance, but 'as the river is let by the estate for fishing purposes, we are not allowed 'to float our peats on it till the beginning of January. We could get a 'supply of peats for twenty years or more in Leimshadder within a short 'distance of our homes.—MURDO M'LEOD.'

† See Appendix A, XLI.

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Murdo Macleod

14911. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where is Borrowston?—About four miles from this.

14912. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any statement to make in addition to what has been put in?—I have to say that we cannot live with so little land as we have, and that we are much inconvenienced by the distance we are from our peats. About the tack of Linshader, which bounds with us, I have to say there is no resident tenant there, and that the herd from there goes through our township with his cattle, back and forward.

14913. Who has that place?—Mr Mackenzie.

14914. Anything more?—Our weak sheep are harrassed by his passing back and forward.

14915. The shepherd and his dog?—He is a herd, and drives both cattle and sheep through our ground. We are not allowed to cross the dyke between us and his farm, if we want to go for sea-ware or anything.

14916. Are you allowed to gather sea-ware on the shores of Linshader?—No.

14917. Do you buy it there?—We cannot get any more than about a dozen creels every year on the shore of our own land.

14918. Do you take drift weed from the shores of Linshader when you can get it?—No, we must not cross the dyke.

14919. Would Linshader be convenient for you for sea-ware if you could get it?—It would.

NORMAN M'ARTHUR, Crofter and Fisherman, Borrowston (32)—examined.

Norman M'Arthur.

14920. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you anything to say in addition to what has been said?—I have to speak of the trouble we have in respect of the mill. We are more than six miles from the mill here. We have to give the miller every year the one-sixteenth part of our grain, besides our trouble, and if we have only three pecks, we have that same trouble to undergo—twelve miles to travel. We had old mills of our own, which we used formerly; and we think it a hardship that we should be obliged to keep up this mill, while we are also obliged to buy meal for our support elsewhere.

14921. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you allowed to grind meal in your own mills?—The old mills are forbidden entirely. That is under article 30 of regulations. We think if we were allowed to resume the use of our own old mills, as we did before, it would be a relief to us.

NORMAN MACPHAIL, Crofter, Upper Carloway (64)—examined.

Norman Macphail.

14922. *The Chairman.*—This is the statement on the part of the people of Upper Carloway:—'At a meeting of the crofters of Carloway on 'the 21st ult., it was agreed to lay the following statement of their 'grievances before the Royal Commission. Our principal grievance is 'overcrowding and curtailment of holdings, without corresponding reduction 'of rent. Thirty-one years ago, there were only twenty-four crofters in 'our township paying an aggregate rental of £80. There are to-day sixty 'families, exclusive of paupers. Since the year 1852, or thereabout, our 'holdings have been considerably curtailed by the gradual formation of new 'lots out of our common or outrun. At present the number of such new 'lots amounts to 18, paying a rental of £40. Though so many new lots 'have been formed out of our common, and the cattle of the holders of these 'new lots allowed to graze on our pasture land, no reduction whatever has

Norman Macphail.

'been made on our rent. The holders of these new lots came for the most part 'from districts that were cleared in order to make room for sheep farms. 'Our pasture land is very much damaged by another township cutting peats 'on it. The estate compelled us to work 180 days at making a road, to 'enable the people of the township referred to to reach their own peat 'ground, and after all they are allowed to cut their peats on our pasture 'land. For the last thirty years we have been compelled by the estate 'to send all our grain to be ground at Breasclete mill, six miles distant. 'We had two mills of our own at Carloway, but the estate ordered them 'to be destroyed. We, in common with the people of the surrounding 'townships of Borrowston, Knock and Garinin, who also send their grain 'to Breasclete mill, are thus deprived of about the eighth part of our grain, 'between mill dues and our own trouble and expense in going to Breasclete. 'The extent of our holdings, including cultivable land and pasture land, 'is scarcely two miles long and one mile wide. In 1871 the population 'of our township was 340. On account of the small size of our lots, we crop 'the whole of them every year, though we are well aware that such perpetual 'cropping is calculated to render the soil less productive. The yield of 'grain from our crofts is not sufficient to supply our families with food. 'Generally we require to buy on an average ten bolls of meal, while this 'year we need about eighteen bolls on an average. Our comforts and 'chances of livelihood as crofters could easily and conveniently be secured 'by annexing Dalmore to our present small boldings. Dalmore was at 'one time inhabited by fourteen families, all of whom were removed, and 'the place given to a tacksman. As Dalmore is contiguous to our town-'ship, we would be prepared any time to give for it the same rent that 'the present tenant gives for it.—NORMAN M'PHAIL.'

14923. Is Dallmore held by a single tacksman, or is it united to a large tack?—It is joined to Dallbeg under one tacksman—John Sinclair.

14924. Are you obliged to carry your grain to be ground at the mill?—Yes.

14925. Could you have it ground at any other mill if you pleased?—No. Querns are still used in some of our houses. If we did not do so, we could not live.

14926. Have you anything further to state that is not mentioned in the paper?—Nothing more.

14927. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the meal equally well done in the old mills as in the new one?—The old mills ground our meal as well and much better than the new one.

NORMAN MORRISON, Crofter, Knock, Carloway (54)—examined.

Norman Morrison.

14928. *The Chairman.*—This is your statement:—'At a meeting of the 'crofters of Knock, Carloway, on the 21st May last, it was agreed to sub-'mit through their delegates the following statement of their grievances 'to the Royal Commission. Our chief grievance is the curtailment of our 'holdings by the withdrawal and formation into new crofts of a portion of 'our common or pasture land, without corresponding reduction in our rent. 'In 1850 there were only sixteen crofters in our township, paying a rental 'of £50; whereas there are at present twenty-nine crofters, paying a 'rental of about £68. There are besides seven families that have no 'lands. Since 1850 nine new crofts paying a rent of £12 have been 'formed out of our common. Other two pieces of good ground belonging 'to us, of the value of £7, have been annexed to the townships on each side

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'of us. Our pasture land has been thus considerably reduced. Our rent, 'however, has not been reduced in the least on account of these consider- 'able curtailments. Our township is about 1½ mile long and ½ mile wide. 'Of this area scarcely one fourth part is cultivable land. Our lots being 'so small, we require to crop the whole of them every year, and in con- 'sequence of this incessant cropping, the soil of our crofts is rapidly 'deteriorating. The yield of grain from our crofts is always inadequate 'to support our families. In ordinary years we buy on an average about '£10 worth of meal. This year we shall require to buy not less than '£20 worth of meal on an average.—NORMAN MORRISON.'

14929. Have you anything further to say?—Nothing.

14930. Where have the crofters come from to make up the number from sixteen to twenty-nine?—Some of them came from other places, but the most of them have grown up in the township.

14931. What rent do you pay?—£3, 15s.

14932. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, two young beasts, and a horse.

14933. Have you any sheep?—About ten.

14934. Are there any other of the people there that have horses?—Four or five in the township have horses.

14935. What are the townships on each side of you to which ground was given that was taken from you?—Carloway and Kirvig. That was done in Sir James Matheson's time, but I cannot give the date.

14936. Do you remember when the nine new crofts were made?—I was not there then.

ANGUS PATERSON, Crofter, Kirvig (58)—examined.

Angus Paterson.

14937. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—I was a fisherman, but not now.

14938. You have a statement to submit to the Commission?—Yes. '*Memorial from the Tenants of Kirvig, Carloway*:—We, as crofters of the 'township or village of Kirvig beg to request the old boundaries of our 'village and parish be restored or changed to its former place. We also beg 'to state that at the time when Sir James Matheson became proprietor of 'Lewis, our village was divided into seven (7) crofts, and that at that time 'those seven crofts were made into ten (10), thereby rendering the crofts 'quite inadequate for the subsistence of the families living on them, and 'that those crofts have been further divided into fifteen (15), and that there 'are in the village five (5) "squatters," or families without land, who are a 'burden on their parents and on the rest of the crofters in the village, 'besides a lot which is let in the pasturage of the village.* There are in the 'village a large number of young men, married and single, all of them fisher- 'men and naval reserve men, who are compelled to be a burden on their 'parents, because they cannot obtain land to cultivate, or even a site for 'a house. There is, for instance, one married man, who built a miserable 'bothy on his father's lot, and he had no sooner done so than his father was 'intimated by the factor, that if his son remained on his lot he (the father) 'would be forthwith evicted. This is but one instance out of very many, 'and this is all caused by the factor hemming in the people on all sides, to 'make room for sheep farms, as, for example, there is in our vicinity an 'aged bed-ridden bachelor, who rents a sheep farm which would hold com- 'fortably from 200 to 300 crofters.'

14939. Is the increase of families upon the township to be accounted

* See Appendix A, XLI.

for by the natural increase, or have strangers been brought into it?—They all grew up in the place.

14940. Have the crofts been divided with the consent of the factor, or against his consent?—It was against the rules of the estate.

14941. Then your demand is that you should obtain more land?—That the land should be given to the sons of men which was owned by their fathers, and for which their ancestors shed their blood.

14942. Are there tacks adjacent to them?—We are close to the boundary between Uig and Carloway.

14943. You want a piece of ground. Is there a tack contiguous to our township?—No, there is no tack near us. We want the boundaries to be restored as they were in the times of our fathers and grandfathers, which were altered under the factorship of Mr Mackenzie.

14944. When the boundaries were altered was the area of the whole diminished?—Yes.

14945. To whom was the land given that was taken away from you?—It was formerly part of the tack of Mr Kenneth Smith, and when people were removed from Mangersta, it was given to them.

[ADJOURNED.]

BARVAS, LEWIS, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XXXVI. and XLI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

WILLIAM MACKAY, Chamberlain on the Lewis estates—re-examined.

14946. *The Chairman.*—You wish, I believe, to make a statement to us?—Yes, I do so, in the way of accounting for the small number of what I call squatters or cottars that appear in the statement I have to make. I am speaking of 1881. In opening a new rent ledger, I entered the names of squatters and cottars who had been about ten or fifteen or twenty years as such paying rent, not directly to the landlord, but to the crofter, though perhaps both of them would appear at the rent collection day. That led to trouble and sometimes confusion. I entered the whole of them in our ledger. The number now in the rent-roll in the parish of Barvas is 812.

14947. Paying directly to the landlord?—Yes.

14948. *Mr Cameron.*—And they were cottars before?—They were squatters.

14949. *The Chairman.*—About how many were admitted at that time?—Probably about one-third of 812. Since 1881 up to this date I find there are eighty-seven squatters or sub-tenants.

14950. *Mr Cameron.*—These are not entered in the rent-roll?—No.

14951. *The Chairman.*—Have they all built their houses since 1881?—Yes, so far as known to me. The rental of the 812 crofters is £2330, 4s. 6d., or an average of £2, 17s. 4d. per crofter.

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William Mackay.

14952. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you included in the list all under £30 of rent?—£30 and under. I may explain, that in comparing the rent of the present day with that of 1844, there is a considerable increase of rent in this parish, on account of land reclaimed by the landlord. That land was let to a number of the people in this district and towards Ness at a rent of 2s. 6d. per acre for the first five years; 5s. for the second five years; and 7s. 6d. for the third five years, with interest on the outlay for improvements. The first and second rises were charged, but not the third.

14953. So it remains at 5s.?—Yes, with interest on improvements. It was the belief that by this outlay we could make arable land or crofts for crofters, by which they could live independent of the moor pasture. The lots were originally given out, perhaps, six or seven acres in extent, but they are now of course by subdivision reduced to much less than that.

14954. *Mr Cameron.*—At what date were the improvements made?—From 1849 to 1852 inclusive.

14955. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were the leases to be for fifteen years?—For fifteen years. There have been so many changes by the reclaiming of this land, which is attached to the former townships, that I cannot compare one township to-day with the township in 1844 as to the rent, to show the increase.

14956. *The Chairman.*—You can only show the gross increase on the whole parish?—Yes. The area of the parish of Barvas, in which we now are, is 85,043 acres. That is exclusive of water. I deduct glebes, manses, manse sites, and churches, which amount to 940 acres. The only farm in this parish is Galston, 7290 acres; lands attached to the mill at Dell, 160 acres; leaving 76,653 acres under crofters paying £30 and under, divided among 812 crofters paying rent. They pay a rent of £2330, 4s. 6d., or at the rate of 7¼d. per acre, arable and hill pasture. Galston farm, containing 7290 acres, at a rental of £315, 9s. 6d. gives 10¼d. per acre. The 160 acres attached to the mill at Dell is rented at £88. The crofters stock in 1882 consisted of 3421 head of cattle, 13,795 head of sheep, 580 horses, and 285 pigs. The tacksman's stock for the same period was 71 head of cattle, 1643 sheep, 6 horses, and 2 pigs. I give the stock of 1881, because it is somewhat larger. Crofters: 3591 head of cattle, 14,238 head of sheep, 549 horses, 300 pigs. Tacksman, 47 head of cattle, 1716 head of sheep, 4 horses, and 4 pigs.

14957. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do these include young and old?—Yes.

14958. At what time was the enumeration?—About the end of September or 1st of October. It is taken annually.

14959. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any idea of the number of acres that were reclaimed by Sir James Matheson in those three years you have referred to?—No, but I can get the information.

14960. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And the sum expended?—Possibly I may.

14961. *The Chairman.*—Would you describe the nature of the reclamation?—Trenching and draining.

14962. Were there main drains made to evacuate the general water?—Yes.

14963. And then were there underground drains cut, or were there merely surface drains all over the surface?—I cannot speak definitely just now, for I was not seeing it at the time. My object to-day is merely to simplify matters—to show that there are new townships, and that there is only one tacksman and the miller.

14964. *Mr Cameron.*—What became of the eighty-seven squatters? Are they entered on the rental?—Not the eighty-seven.

14965. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think they were overlooked by you?—They might be overlooked, and they have increased since then. There were two families perhaps that have gone out and built a separate house since I made the entries.

14966. *The Chairman.*—As regards the area of this improvement by Sir James, was it taken from the common pasture of pre-existing townships?—It was attached to pre-existing townships, but both the old and new townships were lotted and rented in 1850 and 1851, and valued according to what they were worth then with these crofters upon them.

14967. When these new lots were formed and improved by Sir James, were the new crofters placed there admitted to the privileges of hill pasture formerly enjoyed by the others?—Yes.

14968. Was that very extensive?—In some parts of the parish it was very extensive, but not at the extreme Butt, towards the point of Ness.

14969. Has the rental of 5s. per acre on the inproved ground been easily and punctually paid?—No, there is a considerable amount of arrears in this parish.

14970. Did the improvement turn out well? As regards the improvement of the soil did it answer expectation or fall short of expectation?—I believe it was a mistake; I don't think it is possible to have an arable farm in the Lewis that will pay. Even the proprietor cannot make his manor farm pay as an arable farm.

14971. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But that is no test; no home farm ever pays?—No, but there is not an arable farm, properly speaking, in the Lewis, except one or two near Stornoway, and their great stay is dairy produce for the town.

14972. *The Chairman.*—But these improved farms were not solely arable farms, because they had rights of hill pasture also?—Yes.

14973. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any idea what the rent per acre came to, including the interest and the 5s.?—There were some of them up to £5 and £6 for the croft altogether.

14974. But can you tell us what was the rent of the improved croft per acre?—I believe some of the land would be close on 20s. per acre, with the 5s. and the interest.

14975. Not more than that?—Not more than that.

14976. *Mr Cameron.*—What rate of interest was charged?—I am not certain as to that.

14977. *The Chairman.*—Has the capital expended been all reimbursed?—It has, but all this was not done by Government drainage.

14978. No, but still the capital expended has been reimbursed?—Yes.

14979. Then was it understood that when the capital was reimbursed, the rental was to be correspondingly reduced, or was it to continue at the increased rate?—Well, I cannot say as to what arraugement was made, but it has been continued on the forms when the leases were out—principally upon the large arable farms about Stornoway and Galston.

14980. But with reference to these improved crofters' lands?—There was no change made.

14981. That is to say; they continued to pay as rent the 5s. per acre, plus the whole of the charge for interest and reimbursement of capital?—They continue to pay the same reut as in 1853 or 1854, when the improvements were completed.

14982. *Mr Cameron.*—Can you say whether the rate of interest charged was 6½ per cent.?—I am not sure of that.

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Malcolm M'Phail.

MALCOLM M'PHAIL, Crofter, South Shawbost (65)—examined.

14983. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

14984. Will you make a statement to us on behalf of the people who elected you?—I have to say, in the first place, that we were crowded together by people being thrown in upon us and that that spoiled our township in comparison with what it was in the time of our fathers. Again, there are about twice as many paying rent to-day as there were when I first began to pay rent as a young man. In connection with that I have another statement to make. The people of the township have no land worth calling land. It is stony ground, that cannot be worked by horses. I introduced a horse and plough, and I had to give them up. They were of no service to me. Then another cause of our discomfort is that we have no high road—no road to the shore—so that we cannot take the sea-ware from the shore, except upon our backs. The second cause of the poverty of the people is that we were deprived of the portion of the ground upon which our cattle used to graze, and the rent was left as it was, though this was taken away. Not only that, but we were obliged to put a fence between us and ourselves, so that we, by our own action, were made to separate ourselves from our own pasture, for which we paid rent.

14985. Was that a fence between the arable and the pasture?—We set up a fence between ourselves and that portion that was taken from us, which was ours by right. Afterwards, instead of ourselves being made to keep up that dyke in repair, one shilling a head was laid upon each of us, and a man was engaged to keep the dyke up. The man that marches upon the other side has the use of that dyke, but still we are not aware that he pays a shilling. I have another thing to complain of, which neither myself in my younger days, nor my father, nor my grandfather, had reason to complain of. Our moorland pasture in those times was held in connection with the township. This moorland pasture, which was ours, we have now to pay a separate rent for, and I will tell you how this came about. As a young man I got land. We were paying a week's service upon roads to the proprietor, and we were told that 6s., instead of this week's service, was laid upon us as an addition to the rent—that we would have to pay road money no longer. Now, there are not very many people old enough now living to testify to it, but my father used to tell me that there was a shilling levied of hen money along with the rent, and packet money, and it was unjust to lay upon us these burdens. I did not pay any of them when I got land first. We complain very much of that. Now, there is another matter in connection with that. I myself was at the east coast fishing, and when I was there, the ground-officer came and in my absence compelled my wife to gather the cattle. I was not a shilling in arrears at the time. He took away the best head of cattle I had, for which I could get some £6. He valued it at £2, 5s., and £2 was all I got for it. Its hide would be of as much service to me.

14986. How long ago is this?—Off and on about twenty years ago; I cannot give the date. Unless they are relieved in some way, and some opportunity or advantage is given to them, I am quite unable to see how the people of our township can improve their condition, so that they will not be, as they are, virtually beggars living upon the charity of the people of the south. There are some of the people who have no stock to speak of that is worth calling stock—perhaps only one cow.

14987. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you mean by the charity of the people of the south?—I think that is easily explained. It is upon the contributions of the people of the south that they are living up till now.

14988. Do you refer to this year, which was an exceptional year, in consequence of the storms of last October, or do you refer to a period of years?—I have this year in view, for it was quite difficult for me to see how the people could live through this year, except for the relief which they received.

14989. Then the people in former years were not so badly off as they are this year?—They were not actually as ill-off, but in the matter of being able to keep their stock up they were just about as bad.

14990. What stock do the people have to sell every year on an average?—Very little.

14991. What?—Perhaps they might be able to sell a head of cattle, two sheep or thereabouts.

14992. Where do they sell their cattle?—At Stornoway, and to drovers that come.

14993. What price did they get for their cattle last year?—According to the state of the market, the best of the head of cattle that we would sell would average perhaps about £6 or £7, and the worst £2, 10s. or £3, that is for a four-year old.

14994. Do you sell anything but four-year olds?—Yes, we sell them younger.

14995. Why don't you sell them at three years old?—We have so very few to sell.

14996. But if you got rid of a beast a year sooner you would have room for another?—Some of them do that. Some of them sell them at three years old, and some at two years old.

14997. When does a beast come to its full age, when it does not do to keep it any longer?—At five or six years.

14998. But it is at its full growth before that?—It is not at its full growth till it is four or five; the pasture is so poor.

14999. So it pays a man to keep a beast till it is four years old at any rate?—We get a higher price for it.

15000. What was the price of cattle at Stornoway when you were a young man?—Just up and down, as it is to-day—some years better and some years worse.

15001. But, as a rule, are cattle not much higher than they were thirty or forty years ago?—Yes, perhaps that may be the case, but I have seen years at that time when the price was higher than it is to-day.

15002. Who got the land that was taken away from the crofters in your township?—A shepherd beside us. It is as though you just cut up the half of a seat into two, and added the other half of the seat to his share, and we shoved into a corner.

15003. Do you mean the shepherd of some big farmer?—Yes, he is virtually a tacksman. Every one who is a tacksman we call a shepherd.

15004. What was this tacksman's name?—The present tacksman is Mr Sinclair of Dalibeg. It was to his predecessor that it was first given when we lost it.

15005. What was his name?—John Mackenzie. He was ground-officer at the time.

15006. How long ago was that?—32 or 33 years ago.

15007. What amount of stock could be kept upon that portion of land that was taken away from the crofters?—It was the best part of the township for cattle, and we were of opinion that it could keep about the third part of the cattle of the township.

15008. And you say the rent was not reduced then?—No.

15009. Had Mr Mackenzie any other farm at the time to which this land was added, or did this land constitute a totally new farm for him?—

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Yes, he had Dallbeg and Dallmore before this was added to him. The best hill we had for our cattle was taken from us. It was on that very hill that we used to have the greatest portion of our cattle. Then, whenever he got it, he began to pound our cattle, if they strayed there. He used to keep them in that pound for two or three days, and then when we took the sheep out their stomachs were very empty and we had to send them away to the hill again, where we never saw anything further than their skins.

15010. Where did the people come from whom you say were crowded on the township?—From Dallbeg and Dallmore, the two farms which this man got.

15011. At the same date?—About the same time.

15012. In regard to the quality of the ground, you say that the crofts are situated in such stony ground that you cannot work them to advantage. Do you know any other ground in the neighbourhood which is not of the same quality?—There is very little of that kind of good ground on this side of the country. We must work it with spades because of the stony character of the soil.

15013. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In coming along this morning, we saw the signs of a great deal of depopulation in Dallbeg and Dallmore. Do you know how many families resided in those places?—There would be over 20 in Dallmore. In Dallbeg there were five, of whom the ground-officer, who possessed the greater portion of the place, was one.

15014. Then am I to understand that this ground-officer took the place of those 24 families?—That was the case. I myself, along with one of my own age, when we heard the place was to be cleared to Shawbost, offered to the factor to give as much rent as he would get from any other person, if he would give us the place for ourselves, and that we would associate the other people along with us, and would pay the rent twice a year. We did not ask that any one would be made responsible for the rent, except us two. We did not get it.

15015. Who was the factor at the time, who refused?—Mr Munro Mackenzie.

15016. I suppose the whole of those families did not come to Shawbost. How many of them came to Shawbost?—Five—two from Dallbeg and three from Dallmore. Our township could not contain them all.

15017. What became of the other people?—They were sent to America and to other places after they had but recently erected new buildings. Their fires were quenched. Had you seen it, you could scarcely bear the sight. Their houses were broken down and their fires were quenched.

15018. Is not Dallbeg a pretty place, with good pasture?—Yes, and Dallmore too, and a capital place for crofters.

15019. Is there not a nice bay, where boats could be pulled up and fishing carried on?—No, it is not suitable for a fishing place.

15020. Did any of the people at all fish in former times?—No, they did not require to fish at that time; they were otherwise comfortable.

15021. What was the name of the ground officer who took the beast from your wife when you were away at the fishing?—Thomas Macdonald. If I had been at home, there would have been something to say before he got it.

15022. Did you not say anything about it when you came back?—What would be the use? I would not be listened to.

15023. Can you assign any possible reason for thus lifting a man's cattle by the strong hand?—Because it was held I had more than my proper summing.

15024. Supposing that were true, was that a proper way to remedy the summing?—No, so long as the rent was properly paid, that was no business

of the landlord's. If anybody had a grievance in the matter it was my neighbours and not he.

15025. You said that in your younger days you did not pay charges for fowl money and other things. What was the name of the factor who began to put that money on you?—It was in Mr Knox's time. The practice in his time was that, if I paid more than the rent he kept it, and if I paid a sum short of the rent, he did not make much noise about it; but if he got the money he kept it to himself. That was the beginning of these continual impositions.

15026. Was he a head factor?—Yes, he was.

15027. How long was he factor?—He was factor under Seaforth; not under Sir James.

15028. You stated that you had to pay a shilling for maintaining the fence and that you were not aware the man on the other side paid a shilling; who was the man on the other side?—When this portion of land was taken from us and added to the farm of Dallbeg, we were taken bound to build half the fence between us, and the tacksman of Dallbeg was to build the other half. Our grievance is that it was then stated we were not keeping up our own half of the fence properly, and this shilling was imposed upon us to be given to a man who would do so. The same condition was not imposed upon him. He still is allowed to maintain his own half. I was not aware of the arrangement until I was made to pay it at the rent collection.

15029. What is the name of the first crofters' land on this side of Dallbeg and Dallmore?—South Shawhost, where I reside myself.

15030. Upon the right hand of the road coming in this direction, there is a good deal of land very regularly drawn out and cultivated. Who was it that took in that land?—That is land newly taken in.

15031. Was that part of the land taken in by the proprietor?—The people did the work, and they got more or less of meal for their work. We believe it was at the proprietor's expense. We got also money if it was due us, if we did not draw our wages all in meal.

15032. Do you know if there is any summing put upon large tacksmen?—I can say nothing about that.

15033. Did you ever hear of a beast being taken off a big tacksman for overstock in the way in which yours was taken?—Oh, they don't touch them. Then there is another matter. It is impossible for us to bear the amount of taxation that is imposed upon us. When I got my lot at first the rent was £3, 1s. My rent just now, taxes included, is £4, 8s. 8d. From the receipt the bare rent is £3, 7s., and the taxes are £1, 1s. 8d., but 2s. 6d. of that is shepherd money. There is 10s. 6d. for school rate, and I have no child of school age. Another matter I want to lay before you. Whereas my father and grandfather lived upon milk and butter, and flesh and meal, I live upon meal, hot water, and sugar. My father had a croft of £5, and such was the produce of it that not only did we not buy anything, but we were scarcely able to consume the produce at that time. There is another thing which I must mention which vexes my soul. In the Naval Reserve there are 1500 or 1600 Lewis young men, and not a tacksman's son is among them, so far as I am aware. Think of it now! Take, upon the one side, these tacksmen with their sheep, and, on the other side, the young men I could produce and which would be best to maintain the strength of the country?

15034. *The Chairman.*—Are any of the tacksmen's sons in the militia?—I am not aware there are any from this island. They don't require to go. They are well enough at home. They have the best portion of the island.

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15035. Are there any of the tacksmen's people in the volunteers?—I am not aware there are any.

15036. You complain that there is no road to the sea. Have you applied to the factor for a road?—Yes, I myself spoke to him about it.

15037. Is the ground such that a proper road could be made?—Yes, a road could be made.

15038. What did the factor say?—The factor told me that if the people were to say it was necessary to make a road he would not oppose it, but things remained as they were.

15039. You complain that in the time of the Seaforth people a shilling was imposed upon the crofters, called hen money. Did you ever hear that that was in place of hens that they had previously been obliged to pay?—I heard it all, and I know it well.

15040. Then when you made your complaint, I think you ought to have stated that?—I know it well, but the question was not asked at me. In my grandfather's time they used actually to go with a pair of fowls to the castle.

15041. And eggs?—I cannot say about eggs, but there was a pair of fowls.

15042. You complain that a shilling was imposed upon the crofters to keep up the fence. It was their duty to keep up half of the fence. Can you say they performed that duty regularly, or did they neglect it?—They set apart a day every year to repair it.

15043. But in the meantime there may have been a great number of holes in it?—No, not during the year; but of course some gaps might have got into it since we repaired it.

15044. Don't you think it was a better plan to have one man to look after the fence and be responsible for the whole of it?—There are gaps upon his own side of the fence as well as upon ours. The best plan would be to give us our own ground which our fathers had, and for which we still pay rent.

15045. When the people were brought from Dallbeg and Dallmore to your township, was the ground prepared for them by the proprietor?—They got portions of our own lots. The ground did not need to be prepared.

15046. Was there no ground prepared by the proprietor?—No, nothing. He gave them the ground of those who fell into arrears and lost their places.

15047. When were these people brought from Dallbeg and Dallmore?—thirty or thirty-two or thirty-three years ago.

15048. Was it under Sir James Matheson?—Yes, I think so.

15049. Was it so, or was it not?—It was during Sir James Matheson's time, when Mackenzie was ground officer.

15050. Who was factor?—It was Mackenzie also.

15051. Is the ground officer who took away your beast still alive?—I cannot say.

15052. What is the stock which you yourself keep?—I have four cows, two stirks, about fifteen sheep, and a horse.

15053. How much is the rent?—£3, 7s.

15054. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofters are there at South Shawbost?—About 52.

15055. Were there any more crowded upon you besides the five from Dallmore and Dallbeg?—I am not aware there were any.

15056. You say there are twice as many people in the township now as there were when you were young. Are they are all the natural increase of the township except these five?—Yes, it is the natural increase of the place, except the five I have named.

15057. Was there much additional land improved in Sir James Matheson's time?—Not any at all in our place, but one park; I cannot say how many acres.

15058. In your father's time did the potatoes grow better than they do now?—Yes.

15059. Was that due to land being better then, or is it that the potato crop has generally been a failure of late years?—I am quite certain that the land was better when I was a young man. The old land that was cultivated by our fathers has got exhausted.

15060. Are Dallmore and Dallbeg in the parish of Barvas?—No, our township is not in this parish at all. We belong to the parish of Lochs.

15061. What would you propose to do to remedy the great poverty in South Shawbost of which you have spoken?—My remedy is the remedy that every serious man would propose if he would only speak out—that is, to give the land to the people at a reasonable rent—the land that is now waste. It was ours by right. God gave it to the children of men, and our right is better than the tackman's.

15062. Is there any other land than Dallmore and Dallbog?—Yes; there is another place called Lamishader, which is joined to the tack of Linshader. There were a few crofters comfortable there once.

15063. Is that on this side of Carloway?—On the north side of Loch Carloway, between the township and the sea.

15064. These are the only tacksmen's lands in this part of the country?—Yes, in our district.

JOHN NICOLSON, Crofter, New Shawbost (69)—examined.

15065. *The Chairman*—Were you freely elected a delegate by the people of New Shawbost?—Yes.

15066. Have you a statement to make on behalf of the people who elected you?—I am going to speak of the place which the previous witness spoke of.

15067. Did you hear what the previous witness said?—Yes. and I agree with it.

15068. Then you will have the goodness to speak of New Shawbost?—We were formerly in the old one. There were thirty-one families of us. Now, upon a certain day, from twenty to thirty families came to us from Uig.

15069. Was that to Old Shawbost?—To both Old and New Shawbost. Instead of the thirty-one families, there are now ninety-three.

15070. In the two places?—Yes. We count it as one township. Now, the rent of it when the thirty-one had it was £140, each man paying from £5 to £7. The produce of the crofts maintained the families continuously from year to year. They had each from five to eight milk cows. Now we can scarcely be said to have any stock at all. The place we have to rear cattle and sheep for us will not do so any longer. In Munro Mackenzie's time he laid out a piece of about seven acres of the arable ground which was reserved for pasture. One of our own people went to ask for this piece of land as a croft for himself, but we opposed it, and Mr Mackenzie agreed with us and did not give it to him. In Mr Munro's time another went to seek for this piece of land, but our local constable objected to this arrangement, and we again prevailed. Subsequently the present ground officer, Mr M'Arthur, placed three men on it

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without consulting us. We went and prepared a written statement to be sent to the chamberlain, and he appeared next day after we prepared this statement and threatened us. He told us we dared not do such a thing. Then again, each one of us, however small his rent may be, pays 5s. or 6s. for this moorland pasture. The same sum is paid by the small-rented crofter as by the one who pays his £5 croft. The ground does not yield such crops now as it used to do in my earliest recollection; but it is manifest to all men that those who have the large lots are better off than those who have the very small ones, and if they get a proper amount of land just now, it would maintain the half of its present population. They are being crowded in upon us from all parts of the country, and we ourselves want to get the land, but it is subdivided for the benefit of these. One poor man was sent upon us this year, probably not for his own advantage, from Sgeir-na-loch. The process goes on. Two were sent in upon us last year, squatted upon our pasture ground. The house of one of these is built. The other is not yet built, and our leave is not asked in the matter. There was a man died in my place during my absence, and he asked that the third portion of his croft should be given to his son, who was married, and one of his barns. He had two barns, one on each side of the house. The son opened a door into this barn upon the outside wall, so that he could enter it without going through his mother's house at the same time. The man went off to the fishing. The ground officer entered the house in the man's absence, and the mother was there with her six months' old child. She was from home getting the child vaccinated, and when she returned she found her fire quenched. She had nothing for it but to weep and wail by the wayside. She was there till others took her in. She got unwell, was bed-ridden, and her mother went to attend upon her. She was still going to sleep in the house, and they were keeping up a fire in it now and then. In about a month afterwards—I do not know the exact time, for I was not at home—the ground officer went with three constables and pulled down a portion of the house, and she herself and the child have not yet recovered from the exposure. She is still unwell. The widow said that in the process they broke a spinning wheel that was in the house. There is another grievance among the many we have. We were in the habit of placing a herd to look after our sheep, and we paid him at the rate of 2d. per head. This year and last year at rent collection we are to pay 3d. per head, and between the chamberlain and the ground officer we do not know what it means. If we, the people of Shawbost, are not oppressed, I do not know any in Lewis that have got the same measure dealt out to them. We do not know any relief we can get unless we get land.

15071. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What rent do you pay?—32s. or 33s.

15072. What stock are you able to keep?—A cow, a three-year-old, a stirk, five sheep, no horse. There are thirteen families in New Shawbost where I live that have only one cow, and some without a cow at all.

15073. Was your father a crofter in Shawbost before you?—Yes, and my forefathers,—in Old Shawbost.

15074. *The Chairman.*—Are you in New Shawbost?—Yes.

15075. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is the house you are in the one in which you were born?—Yes.

15076. What became of the house your father had?—It was a brother of mine who succeeded to my father's lot.

15077. Is he also in Shawbost?—Yes.

15078. *The Chairman.*—You said there were ninety-three families in New and Old Shawbost altogether. How many of these ninety-three have been brought and put in from other places, and how many are the natural

increase of the township?—There are over forty families that did not belong to the place, but were brought in. In addition to the ninety-three families paying rent, there are some other families in the town as well.

15079. But there are only forty who were outsiders?—Yes.

15080. And they occupied the lands which were improved by Sir James Matheson?—Some have portions of that land, and others not.

15081 Have you got a portion of that land?—Yes, all my croft consists of that land.

15082. Do you remenber when those improvements were made?—Yes, quite well.

15083. Who were the people that were employed to do it?—They were paid for it partly by Sir James Matheson and partly by Government money, and all the people of the place would get work at it, and were paid for it. Others came from other places to work at it. They trenched it.

15084. Did those who got new land receive assistance to build their houses?—The assistance given during the time they were building the houses depended upon the amount of family they had. For example, a man who had three of a family got one stone of meal per week during the time they were building the house, and if the family was larger a larger amount of meal in proportion was allowed.

15085. Who collected the stones to build the houses?—The people themselves.

15086. Were they paid for that branch of the work?—Nothing whatever.

15087. Who provided the wood for the roofs?—The people bought it, for they had it not. It was provided by themselves.

15088. Were the drains well made?—Some of them were well done, and some of them otherwise.

15089. Do the drains still work after the lapse of those years?—They are of no service now. They are choked up. We were obliged to open up afresh the upper portion of the ground of late years, in order to allow the water to run off, because these drains were useless.

15090. Have the drains ever been re-opened, or do they remain as they were before?—They have not been re-opened, but they never worked well. They never drained the ground so well as by the process we use ourselves—that is, gathering the soil together, and allowing channels to run between the various patches.

15091. Has the soil become less productive now?—It is not so productive as formerly. There is as much straw, but less grain.

15092. When the new families were brought in and placed upon the new ground, was the rent of the previons occupants reduced?—Not a penny. So far as I can judge just now, the township yields about £240. It is certainly over £220. It was £140 when it was among the thirty-one people.

15093. I want to understand exactly about the case of the poor woman, part of whose house was pulled down. There was a man who died, and he expressed a desire that one-third of his croft should be given to a married son. Was the widow to remain in possession of the other two-thirds?—Yes, the widow was to have the two-thirds.

15094. Did the man who had it before ask the factor before his death to make that arrangement?—No, it was the custom of the place, and he did not speak to the factor.

15095. And the factor did not give his consent?—No, but it was the common practice of the place that a man would be allowed to subdivide his croft among his sons.

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15096. Under the regulations of the estate, is it allowable to subdivide without the consent of the factor, or has the consent of the factor to be asked?—We do not get permission. It was that that separated my brother and myself, because we were not allowed to subdivide the croft any further. It is against the regulations of the estate to subdivide without the consent of the factor, but as matter of fact we do subdivide without his consent.

15097. Well, there was the house and the two barns, where did the son who was to get one-third intend to live?—He lived in his mother's house before he went to the fishing, and then he went and lived in the barn, and it was in this barn that the fire was quenched.

15098. Is it consistent with the regulations of the estate to turn a barn into a dwelling-house, and live there without the consent of the factor?—Some of them do it.

15099. Do you yourself think it right that everybody of his own will should go and make a new dwelling-house wherever he likes without the consent of the factor?—I don't think it is right at all that that should be the case, but there were other people in our township that were doing such things, and they were not found fault with.

15100. Do you know whether the factor or ground officer found fault with the married son for taking up his residence in the barn? Did they give him any warning?—They were not pleased at his doing so. That was the reason they pulled it down.

15101. Did they pull down the whole barn?—No, only a part of it. He added a bit to one end of it, and I believe that was the portion they pulled down.

15102. Where are the man and his wife living now?—In the same place. He has now got a half of that lot. There is no one now except his mother and a daughter.

15103. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With regard to the families who came from Uig, what part of Uig did they come from?—The greater number of them came from Valtos. One came from Berneray, some from Pabbay, some from Reef. We are not a year without somebody being forced upon us. There have been thirty-three families sent in upon us altogether, and it would appear that the practice is not to cease. We have no less than three this year.

15104. Do you know Loch Carloway?—Very well.

15105. On the north side of Loch Carloway, going towards the point, do you think there were any people turned out there?—I don't remember.

15106. When did you last sell anything off your farm?—I don't remember—not ever since I got it. I never shall sell any. It never kept me for three months of the year in any one year.

15107. What are you obliged generally to buy for food for yourself and your family?—£12 or £14 worth.

15108. Have you to buy anything for the cow?—Yes, I had to buy £2 worth this year for the three head of cattle I had. This year was exceptional. I usually buy about £1 worth for cattle.

15109. Have the people of the two Shawbosts ever brought the state of the township by overcrowding formally before the chamberlain with a view to redress?—Some were complaining, but what is the use of complaining when others are sent in? We had the idea among ourselves that this overcrowding in upon us was through spite. Is that not natural enough to suppose when there were over twenty thrown in upon this township and not one thrown in upon a township to the right or to the left? There was not a better township upon this side of the country than ours before it was overcrowded as it is, and it would be good yet if the

pressure of population were relieved. I was alive at the time when there were four small stills in the place and they were smuggling, and in addition to maintaining our families by the produce of our crofts we were able to send to those small stills more or less of barley every year, when they used to make whisky, and sell it for 2s. 6d. a pint of three bottles. When I began to go to the east coast fishing I was among the first who went, and then we used to have money through our hands. That would procure necessary supplies, all taken from the produce of our crofts.

15110. I hope you mention this matter of the distillation merely to show the productiveness of Shawbost at the time, and not that you approve of their proceedings in setting up the stills?—It was productive at that time; there is no question of that.

15111. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you could not sell any produce off your croft; do you never sell any cattle?—I only meant food. I sell cattle. I both buy and sell cattle. What I meant was that we never sold anything in the way of provisions at all.

DONALD MCLEOD, Crofter and Estate Constable, North Shawbost (62)—examined.

15112. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who appoints you as constable?—The ground officer.

15113. What are your duties as constable?—To keep the affairs of the township in order.

15114. Your duties are not those of an ordinary policeman?—No.

15115. Then what otherwise do you do to keep things in order?—When people quarrel or disagree they require to be looked after, and that is part of my work. If they differ about marches or anything of that sort, it falls within my duty.

15116. Are you left to dispose of those matters yourself, or do you act under authority from the ground officer?—If we are able to settle the matter among ourselves, well and good; if not, we must go to the ground officer to have it settled.

15117. And if anybody is not satisfied with the law which you administer among them, to whom do they appeal?—To the ground officer, if the matter affects land or anything of that kind.

15118. And if they are not satisfied with the ground officer's judgment, what do they do then?—They go to the factor.

15119. Do they often appeal from you to the ground officer?—Yes, they do.

15120. And from the ground officer to the factor?—I believe they do sometime appeal to the factor also.

15121. Do they ever get your judgments reversed, or those of the ground officer?—Sometimes. My decision is now and again reversed by the ground officer, but, so far as I have been able to gather, the practice of the factor, when an appeal is made to him against the ground officer, is to remit it back to him for further consideration.

15122. I believe the people think the ground officer is really the most important man for them to have to do with. Is that so?—They consider the factor the superior man.

15123. But I suppose, if a man had the judgment of the ground officer against him, he would not have much hope of getting it changed by the factor?—I doubt whether he would.

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15124. You are a crofter as well as a constable?—Yes.

15125. Is that what you get for your services as constable?—I don't get the croft for my services.

15126. Are you not paid for your services?—Very little.

15127. Is it in money or is it only the honour of the thing you get?—To tell the truth, I used to hear that when a local constable paid his rent he got back 5s., but I never got anything.

15128. Is there a constable in every township the same as you are at Shawbost?—Yes.

15129. All over the island?—Yes.

15130. You were chosen by the people of North Shawbost to represent them here to-day?—Yes.

15131. Did they tell you to say anything particular on behalf of them here?—The previous witness has brought forward the affairs of both the towns, North and South.

15132. Have you no different complaints in North Shawbost from what they have in South Shawbost?—I do not say that the grievances of the two towns are exactly the same, but there is one special matter which affects the whole town that has not been brought forward. I am not sure the practice prevailed in the other portion of the township, but it prevailed in ours, that a certain amount of money was accepted from a man when he was being settled in a croft of new. He paid £5 before he got it.

15133. Was that separate from rent?—Yes.

15134. Do you know any case in which that has been done?—I know two men who paid it. They told us in public before all the inhabitants that they did pay it.

15135. How long ago was that?—About five years ago—not when the present ground officer was in office.

15136. Will you name those two men and their residence?—Kenneth Macrae, North Shawbost, and Colin Macaulay, North Shawbost.

15137. To whom did they pay that £5?—I don't know to whom one of them paid it, but the other man declared that he paid it to the factor. I only repeat what the man said.

15138. Where did these men come from?—They were in the place at the time. One was born there. The other man came from the parish of Uig.

15139. Where were the new crofts they got?—It was not new land they got, it is only when they enter upon possession of a croft.

15140. Was that not for a payment of arrears of rent?—I can say nothing as to that.

15141. How many families are there in your township of North Shawbost?—Ninety-three in both Shawbosts.

15142. How many of these are in North Shawbost?—Of the ninety-three, forty-eight are in what is called North Shawbost proper, and the rest in New Shawbost.

15143. What rent do you pay yourself?—About £3. I dont know what the township pays.

15144. Have you any taxes besides that?—£2, 11s. is the bare rent.

15145. What stock have you?—Two cows, one stirk, twelve sheep, no horse.

15146. A good many of the other people have horses, have they not?—Yes, some of them have. There are not near the half of them that have a horse.

15147. Do you do all your tilling with the garden spade?—Yes, we have disused the crooked spade.

15148. Have all the Shawbost people done so?—There is not one in the township that uses the *cas-chrom*.

15149. What sort of soil have you?—It is stony, rocky ground; some moss, some clay.

15150. What crop do you chiefly raise?—Potatoes, barley, and oats.

15151. Do you raise enough to keep your two cows?—Yes.

15152. You have not to buy any fodder for them?—No, I never bought any fodder for them.

15153. Do you raise potatoes enough to feed yourselves during the most of the year?—Some years the potatoes keep us going; other years we have very little We had nothing to speak of this year.

15154. Have you to buy meal every year?—Yes.

15155. How many bolls have you bought already since autumn?—9½.

15156. What do you pay for it?—18s. per boll for oatmeal.

15157. Which do you use the most, oatmeal or flour?—We use both.

15158. Do you use tea in every house in Shawbost?—Very little.

15159. But do they use it in every house?—Well, there may be some houses where no tea can be found.

15160. I suppose these have milk?—Some of them may have milk; others of them have not a drop of milk.

15161. How many cottars are there in Shawbost?—There are very few without land.

15162. How many are there that have no cow?—I know only one who has not some head of cattle.

15163. I suppose there are some who have no sheep?—Yes, there are some without sheep.

15164. Where do these people get their clothes?—They buy them.

15165. How do they make the money to buy them?—Where there are families who have sons and daughters able to earn money.

15166. Do all the young men go to the fishing?—Yes, they go to the fishing.

15167. Have you any good fishing at home?—Very little. We have no proper place for landing.

15168. Would it be possible to make a good place for the boats to come in at Shawbost?—Yes.

15169. Could it be done without great expense?—I cannot say as to that. I don't think it would be very expensive. There are plenty of stones whatever. They would not require to quarry a single stone; there are plenty on the ground.

15170. Would a rough pier without any hewing or lime be of any use if it were large enough?—Yes, it might be of use; but there is no question that it would if it was well fastened and of hewn stone.

15171. Have any of your people in Shawbost big boats in which they go to the herring fishing?—No.

15172. What do they fish for chiefly?—They fish for cod and ling.

15173. Who takes the fish from them?—The curers.

15174. Do the curers provide them with boats and lines?—Yes, they buy them now from the curers, and get credit till they pay them in fish.

15175. Where are these fish cured?—In Stornoway, but there are one or two local curers.

15176. What is the cost of one of these boats and of a set of lines?—I am unable to tell.

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15177. What price do they get just now for the cod and ling?—1s. for the ling and 6d. for the cod.

15178. They are getting much better prices now I suppose than they were getting twenty years ago?—Yes.

15179. What was the price then for the ling and cod?—The ling could be had for 6d. twenty years ago.

15180. And the cod at 3d.?—Yes.

15181 *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long does it take to pay up these boats?—In the year before last they bought some old boats, and they paid them within that year.

15182. What size of boats were these?—25 feet long, with a crew of seven or eight men.

15183. Is it with long lines that they fish?—Yes.

15184. What bait do they use?—Eels and herring when they get them.

15185. Where do they get the eels?—On the lines.

15186. Are they plentiful?—Yes, they are pretty plentiful.

15187. Have they a quay at Shawbost?—No.

15188. Had they ever a quay there?—There was once a sort of quay, but the sea washed it away.

15189. Would they be the better of a similar quay?—It was not much worth, and it was in a bad place. If a new quay was built, it would be built in a different place.

15190. Is there need of a quay at all, or is there a good enough harbour without it?—Yes, there is great need of it, and it would be of great service. There is certainly no good safe place for boats.

15191. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With regard to the reclaimed land in your township, did the people who got that reclaimed land pay for the expense and the reclamation ultimately, over and above paying their rent?—I cannot tell.

15192. Have you ever heard that they did?—I hear things, but I cannot say what they are unless I am certain.

15193. Did you hear that the total expense of the reclamation that was made was paid by the tenants ultimately over and above what they paid in regular rent?—I never heard that. The reclaimed land is of two classes. The greater portion of it was done either at the expense of the proprietor or the Government. There are others again here who have reclaimed a bit of land at their own expense.

15194. You have not got any of the new land?—No, except what I may have reclaimed myself.

15195. Did some of the people in Shawbost get Government meal when they were building houses?—I heard of some that got meal and some that did not. It was the proprietor who gave the meal, so far as I am aware—at all events, it came through his hands.

15196. Was that meal repaid?—It was very little they got. I am not aware that they paid it back.

15197. Did you hear it was paid back?—No. I know that the little I got myself when I was building my house I never paid back.

15198. About the £5 which you say you heard was paid by two men, did they get any equivalent for the £5?—One of them told me he never got a penny.

15199. Did he not receive buildings, or did he pay anything to the outgoing man for the timber or otherwise?—One of the men is my own next door neighbour. He came in upon the place of a man who had run into arrears. He built a new house himself upon that place, and the former tenant is there still, sitting in the old house on the same property. I don't know whether he had made any arrangement with that tenant.

15200. To whom was it that the man gave the money?—To the factor.

15201. What factor?—He told me it was to the factor. The thing occurred five years ago

15202. Is the man here?—I don't think he is.

15203. What is his name?—Kenneth Macrae.

15204. Was there a rumour through Shawbost that some time ago the former ground officer was in the habit of exacting those sums on his own account without the knowledge of his superiors?—It was the ground officer that actually imposed this sum of money upon that man, but he himself says it was for the factor. [Question repeated.] I used to hear a rumour of that kind, but I cannot say for certain that there was any foundation for it.

JOHN MATHESON, Crofter, Upper Barvas (68)—examined.

15205. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely chosen a delegate?—Yes. This is the memorial of the people of Upper Barvas:—'Changes. '—Before 1833 the crofter tenants were only twelve in number, and 'paying rent to the minister. About 1833 they and their land were 'separated from the minister, and their land divided into fourteen lots, at '£46 rent. A double glebe was left to the minister by law, because of 'the inferiority of the soil, the same containing 30 acres of the crofters' 'former land. The crofters' fourteen lots consisted of land much more 'inferior. A small piece of land was promised to them from off Lower 'Barvas for £5 additional rent; but it was never given, though the £5 'are yearly paid by them, and also £5 by the Lower Barvas people. 'Now there are 24 crofter tenants in Upper Barvas, paying £58, 7s. (a sum 'made up of rent proper, and what was for some time kept separate, as 5s. 'road money and 1s. Kain or hen money). School rates, poor rates, and 'road money are also paid. These different items may be seen in their 'receipts. Holdings.—Small, and inferior in soil, also rocky, and cannot 'be worked by horses; best land and pasture in hands of a select few. 'Some parts left uncultivated, because unprofitable. Stock. Sheep and 'cattle more in number than can be rightly kept from the people's 'anxiety to have, through their sale and the reservemen's and fishermen's 'earnings, the sum of money needed for rent and rates. The rent never 'reduced. The people cannot keep out of debt. The paupers are a 'burden on the crofters; but they delight in supplying them with the 'necessaries of life, besides paying poor rates. Remedy.—Land-holdings 'of such size and kind, arable and pasture, and on such conditions as 'may, with industry and thrift, afford proper and sufficient maintenance. '—JOHN MATHESON, DONALD M'DONALD.'

15206. How many people were there present at your election?—A great many.

15207. How many poeple are there in Upper Barvas paying rent directly?—Twenty-four.

15208. How many are there not paying rent directly?—One.

15209. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does that include the paupers of which this paper speaks?—There is no pauper staying in Upper Barvas except one girl, and perhaps also a young child.

15210. *The Chairman.*—It says—'The paupers are a burden on the 'crofters.' Does that mean those two people?—It is the paupers of the whole parish.

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15211. Do you mean the poor people, or the people receiving parochial assistance?—Paupers.

15212. Of the whole parish?—The whole parish.

15213. There are twenty-four families paying rent, and there were formerly twelve families before 1833. How has that increase taken place? Have they been brought from other places, or are they the natural increase of the people of the soil?—The people belonged to the place. Few if any outsiders were placed among us. In 1833 in addition to the twelve who were paying rent, there were two who did not pay rent at that time, and who were allowed crofts afterwards.

15214. Have you got a croft?—Yes, a whole croft.

15215. What stock do you keep?—I have too many for my croft this year. I have three cows, three young beasts, about twenty head of sheep, and one horse.

15216. What is your rent?—£3, 6s., not including taxes.

15217. You said you have more stock than you should have. What is your summing?—When I said I was overstocked this year, I meant that I had more stock than the croft can properly feed. I have no summing. That has gone out of fashion, and we are none the better for that.

15218. Are you obliged to buy fodder for your stock in winter?—We would require to buy a great deal this year if we could only get it, but it was so scarce that we could hardly get it. We always buy more or less.

15219. How much do you buy on an average?—In a good year we do not buy anything to speak of, but we get a good deal of their provender out of the shore—sea-ware.

15220. In an unsatisfactory year, how much do you buy?—I would probably almost have to pay about £1 in order to maintain my present stock properly in an average year.

15221. You said you gave sea-ware to your animals. To which do you give the sea-ware?—To the whole of them.

15222. Do the sheep eat sea-ware?—No, not the sheep,—the cattle.

15223. Does the horse eat sea-ware?—Yes.

15224. Do the cows and the horse thrive on the sea-ware, and what particular description of weed do they get?—It is very good for them when they have other provender along with it. It is tangle.

15225. Do you dry the sea-weed before giving it, or do you just give it to the beasts off the shore?—Right off the shore, and they go away down to the sea themselves to eat it. Of course, the people bring it up for them too.

15226. We were told in another place that if the cattle got sea-weed they swooned. Have you observed anything of the kind here?—Yes, and it sometimes kills them; but that is only at a certain time of the year. In the spring of the year we require to be particularly careful when they get this sea-ware lest it may kill them. I saw sixteen killed by the sea-ware one day; but it is only for a very short period of the year that there is that great danger, and we are very careful at that time.

15227. What do you think is the reason of its being poisonous at one time and useful at another?—The cows are at all times very fond of this sea-ware, and when they get down to the shore and get an abundant supply they take too much; but when the people bring it home to them they regulate the supply to a moderate quantity. At the beginning of spring they are weaker, being worse fed and in worse condition than at any other time, and it is worse for them when they get a gorge of it.

15228. Is it good for cows in the way of making milk?—Yes, it is very good, especially at this time of the year.

15229. What is the best food along with it?—Straw. Potatoes, for example, are not so good along with it as straw is.

15230. Have you plenty of sea-weed?—Yes, generally there is plenty, but sometimes we complain. There are some places better than others.

15231. Are you allowed to gather it freely on your own shore?—Yes.

15232. Is any payment taken for it?—No.

15233. Can you gather it on the shore of the tacksmen, if there are any tacksmen?—The only tacksman in our neighbourhood is the minister of the parish, Mr Strachan, and he and we are upon very good terms, and we are quite free to go upon his foreshore and he upon ours to take sea-ware.

15234. You say that a small piece of land was promised to you from Lower Barvas for £5 additional rent. Why was that additional piece of land never given to you?—In the days of John Munro Mackenzie there was a march between Lower and Upper Barvas, and he stated that Upper Barvas got more than its fair proportion of land. Our arable land was equal, but he assigned a certain portion of pasture land to Upper Barvas. This portion of pasture land we never got. He said that the rent of the property would require to be increased by £5 because of this additional bit of pasture land. That was done. The £5 was placed upon us, but the bit of land we did not get. It remained with Lower Barvas, which had it originally.

15235. Then, perhaps the people of Lower Barvas would not like to part with the ground?—No, certainly not. They got no abatement of rent either.

15236. Would you like to take away ground from your neighbours who do not want to part with it?—No; they never wanted to get any of our ground.

15237. Then what you ask for is increased holdings?—We do not know where we can get more land. We leave that to people wiser in respect to such matters than we are.

15238. You can remember fifty years ago quite well. Do you think the people of Upper Barvas are poorer and worse off than they used to be fifty years ago?—They are not so well off now. It cannot be, with the number of people there.

15239. Are they worse dressed than they were then?—I cannot very well answer the question. I remember that fifty years ago we were clothed with the wool and home-made cloth of our district. Instead of that they have to-day senseless rags that they buy here and there in other places.

15240. But I see the people all around me are well dressed and decently dressed?—Yes, it is quite true, but they are clothed in their best to-day. After all, what is it worth beside a jacket or a coat of home-made cloth, or a pair of trousers of home-made cloth, which I saw in my time?

15241. Are the houses worse than they were in your time, or are they better?—The houses are considerably better. I have myself built a poor house in many ways, but I have built two houses in my time, and it is superior to the house my father had. If my father's house had been better than it was, probably mine would be better than it is.

15242. What about your food?—The food is not half so good. I heard one of the previous delegates speak to the same fact on that matter to-day.

15243. I have heard there are no public houses or places for the sale of liquor in the country except in Stornoway. Do you approve of that?—I quite approve of that regulation. When there were licensed premises nearer me, I was tired enough of them.

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15244. But you did not go there yourself?—Yes, there was such a day when I used to frequent them, but even I gave it up entirely.

15245. Are there many temperance people now?—I do not know. I never took the pledge myself, and I am not very sure that I ever regarded that mode of promoting temperance too high. If one who is satisfied in his own mind that it is a proper thing to do so, that is my idea of temperance.

15246. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Are you able to sell anything off your croft?—Nothing.

15247. Do you not sell a beast?—Yes, we sell a stirk.

15248. What did you last sell, and when?—Last October I sold two two-year-olds, and I am rather ashamed to tell the condition in which they were in the presence of gentlemen. I only got £5 for the pair of them.

15249. When do you expect to sell another one?—Very soon. I must sell. Supposing there were only two, necessity would compel me to sell one of them.

15250. Do you sell any sheep?—I sell a few sheep now and again.

15251. What do you get for the sheep?—Where there is no good pasture there can be no good mutton. We sell our two or three-year-old wedders from 12s. to 20s. I have seen 20s. got for them, but that is rare.

15252. Are these the only things that you can sell off the produce of the croft?—I sell nothing else. In a very good year I once sold four barrels of potatoes, but it was an exceptionally good year.

15253. How much are you obliged to spend in a year in the purchase of meal and other necessaries for supporting your family?—My family is now very small; they are scattered here and there; but when they were gathered together I would consider £20 a very moderate allowance for what I had to purchase.

15254. Is there a scarcity of milk much more so than prevailed in former times?—Yes, and of butter. We have lost the butter entirely of late in comparison with the day I have seen.

15255. Are you obliged to give your children tea now to make up to some extent for the loss of milk?—Yes. I was the father of a family myself before I could distinguish between tea and coffee. The children now can distinguish between the two articles before they are four years of age. They are not at all so innocent in that respect as I was.

15256. Is your rent altered in any way since 1833?—It was raised. To begin with, there was that £5 of which I have already spoken, and then there was 6s. in the time of Munro imposed upon every crofter.

15257. For what purpose?—For road money and hen money.

15258. It appears that the hens at first used to be delivered in the time of the Seaforths, but do you know how long it was dropped; how long was there between the time they gave in the fowls and the time the money was paid?—I cannot very well tell. I remember the time myself when the hens were being delivered, and the practice of payment commenced in Munro's time.

15259. Had the giving of the hens ceased so long that when the money was exacted it came upon the people as a new tax or new rent altogether?—They looked upon it no doubt when it was first imposed upon them as a new imposition, but, although I myself was without any hen at the time, I remember when the old people used to say that they would prefer to pay the shilling rather than deliver the fowl.

15260. Do they still go to the sheilings?—Yes, regularly.

15261. How many go?—Probably there will be two heads of cattle on

an average going to the summer pasture from each house, and a female always accompanies them, but sometimes two neighbours may entrust the care of their cattle to one person.

15262. When do they send them?—About this time.

15263. How long do they keep them there?—Six weeks.

15264. Do the women stay all that time in the sheilings?—Yes.

15265. Is the milk sent home, or do they make butter and cheese?—The milk comes home every day.

15266. Is somebody sent for it?—The milkman comes home every morning with the milk.

15267. How far is it?—From four to six miles distant from the homestead.

15268. Do the women sleep in bothies?—They sleep outside in the sheilings.

15269. Did your ever hear of an old custom of the people of the place to meet and go in a sort of procession singing a sort of chant when they went to the sheilings?—I have heard something of that practice, but I am not able to give any correct opinion about it. I believe it must have been long ago.

15270. What is the tradition you have heard about it?—They used to sing, but it was not psalms; it was not the Psalms of David, whatever. They had some metrical composition.

15271. Do you think it was so long ago as to date from the times before they were Christians?—I cannot say.

15272. Is there anybody in the place who has any recollection of such a *thing*?—No.

15273. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember a factor called Knox?—Very well indeed. Everybody would know him. There was nobody in the whole island like him.

15274. Do you mean he was so good or so bad?—I mean his personal appearance. He was a great, big, fat man.

15275. Did that factor exact a shilling for hen money?—I remember perfectly well of the hens being delivered in his time, and I am inclined to believe that the practice continued during the whole time of his factorship.

15276. Did he exact a week's work from the people, and failing that, 5s. instead?—Yes, the service was rendered in his time. I cannot remember the men who paid the 5s., but the service was pretty punctually rendered.

15277. Did you ever hear it said that pottery used to be made by the people in Barvas?—Yes, I both heard and saw vessels of clay being made.

15278. What sort of vessels were they?—All sorts. We have them here yet—a good number of them. There is one person here that makes them yet.

15279. Do they make jars and dishes for milk and butter?—No. She could not make jars with narrow necks, but she would make crocks for butter.

15280. Were they painted, or had they patterns upon them?—I am not aware, but, as to the woman I speak of, some of her work was sent to Edinburgh, and gentlemen who came to the place used to hunt her up and get some of the work she did.

15281. Was this an art which they learned abroad, or was it an old traditional art in the place?—Yes, in the days of my grandfather and great-grandfather these clay vessels were in most common use. I cannot accurately say, but my own belief is that this art was of native growth.

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Rev. JAMES STRACHAN, Minister of the Parish of Barvas (56)—examined.

15282. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been minister of this parish?—Within a month of twenty-five years.

15283. Were you a native of this country?—No.

15284. Did you come here at the time you were appointed to this parish?—I came to the Lewis first of all in 1845.

15285. Between the period of your first coming thirty-eight years ago and the period you were nominated minister here, what was your engagement or occupation?—For the first two years I was private tutor in the family of the minister of Stornoway; for three years thereafter teacher of a parish school; and then for an interval of eight years I was not residing in the Lewis, but I came regularly every year to see my friends on the island.

15286. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In what part of Lewis did you teach a school?—In the parish of Lochs, on the other side.

15287. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make any statement here on behalf of the crofters?—I should not object to make a statement, but whether it shall prove to be on behalf of the crofters I leave the Commissioners to judge. I should regret very much to say anything either for or against them. I should like to make my statement with the utmost impartiality according to my knowledge.

15288. We leave that to your discretion and judgment. Of course, we wish to hear your unbiassed opinion?—Well I cannot say, of course, how far the statements made to-day by crofters are inconsistent with the truth, but I have no reason to doubt that on the whole they are so—that the truth has been told. I cannot vouch for the facts stated, but I have no reason to doubt the truthfulness of the witnesses who have come forward. I would say that, in my opinion, the crofts held by the people are generally too small for their support. The average rent of a croft in this parish is £3, and I calculate that although 500 per cent. of the rent was realised in the shape of profit by each tenant, it would not be sufficient to maintain his family in comfort. It would leave him only £12 per annum to live upon. Therefore, it is perfectly obvious that the lots are too small for the number occupying them. At the same time, it is my present opinion that the rent charged is by no means too large. The rent charged I consider to be very moderate indeed for the advantages enjoyed. Still that does not do away with the fact that the lots are on too small a scale; in fact, I may state here what I have often said before in private, that though the lands were enjoyed without rent at all, they would not be sufficient to support the number in occupation of them. That is my general statement with regard to the complaint of the tenants. How this state of matters arose it is not for me to say, because I cannot go far enough back in the history of this island. I have not been able to form anything even approaching to an opinion upon that point. Whether they were better off centuries ago than they are now I cannot say, but I may say that there are certain things done by the tenants themselves which I think have been operating for long very much to their disadvantage. It is consistent with my knowledge that the rules of the whole estate of the Lewis have been always against the practice of subdividing the lands, and I am not quite prepared to deny that the smallness of the tenures now occupied by the people must be traced to their own wilful and determined breach of the rules to which I have referred. Of that I am perfectly satisfied, and had there been no subdivision such as unfortunately has taken place to the extent that I think has already been told here, there would not have been such grounds of complaint. It is, I

think, altogether unreasonable that out of 1100 households living in this parish, there should be only about 800 that are actually rent-payers. The other 300 or thereabouts are living virtually at the expense of the 800. I should also state, that whatever is charged as a rent,—I will now make a remark in favour of the people and, apparently at least, against the management on the part of the proprietor,—whatever is charged in the shape of rent, ought to be in my opinion *bona fide* rent as well as nominal, and I think it is a hardship that the five shillings in this parish and six shillings in one or two others, charged for road money, and supposed to be done away with as road money when the Roads and Bridge of Lewis District Act came into force, should still be continued and charged along with the ordinary rent when the people are taxed for roads, as I am myself, at so much per pound by Act of Parliament; and my humble opinion is, that since this tax came to be uplifted, the rate charged for roads, whether in the shape of money or labour, ought to have ceased. That is my distinct impression, and I sympathise with the people in mentioning that as one of their grievances. I have also to state that, in my opinion, both the school rates and the poor rates in this parish are not only excessive, not only exorbitant, but I would venture to use a very strong adjective—monstrous. The poor rates, I think, might be reduced very materially, if we had an inspector residing within the bounds of the parish, if possible in the centre of it; and I consider that the Parochial Board have fallen into a great mistake in years past in employing as inspector a gentleman who does not reside within the bounds, and who not only resides at a distance from the parish, but has assumed to himself the burden of acting as inspector for another parish besides this one. The consequence is that those already on the roll are not properly attended to, and the new applications are not faithfully and properly considered. They cannot possibly be. As for the school rates, I am sorry to say that for the current year they are as high as 3s. 8d. Last year they were still higher,—I forget what they were,—but the year before that they were actually 6s. 8d. per pound—a most preposterous tax,—and yet I must say further in connection with this, that I have to blame the people themselves, I will not say merely in a great measure, but almost altogether, for the excessive rate they have to pay for the maintenance of the schools. They will not help their children in regular attendance. Were they to do so it is a matter of easy calculation to show that an assessment of something like one shilling per pound would be quite sufficient. The misfortune is that they have not been awakened to the moral obligation lying upon them to furnish their children with what every man around this table must consider to be as necessary for their moral good as food and raiment are for their physical good. They are not alive to that, and the consequence is that the rates are enormous, and when the School Board attempts to put the Education Act in force it is consistent with my knowledge that they incur a great deal of odium from the people, and are threatened with ejection on the occasion of next election. These are briefly the statements I would make, and I conclude upon the whole with the expression of my opinion that the holdings of the tenants of this parish are too confined, and that the smallness of them is traceable much, if not entirely, to the unfortunate subdivision that has taken place.

15289. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you made any distinct calculation from which you draw the conclusion that the school rate might be reduced to one shilling per pound?—Yes, I have made a calculation very carefully. I take into the calculation not only the ordinary grants given by Government for passes, but also that most splendid grant

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commonly known in this part of Scotland as Lochiel's Clause,—the 7s. 6d. grant. It is always called Lochiel's Clause, and it seems to me to have been the very thing to suit a parish not able to maintain its own educational staff—the very thing to supplement the poverty of any parish. It is so framed as to meet the necessities of any case, however poor.

15290. Dont you draw the Lochiel grant at present?—I am not a member of the Board now; but they ought to draw a considerable amount from the 7s. 6d grant, and they would draw a considerably larger amount if the schools were properly attended.

15291. What is that clause?—It is to this effect—that there is a grant of 7s 6d. made for every scholar in average attendance, less the amount produced by a 3d. rate.

15292. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It is limited to certain counties?—Yes, the county of Ross is one to which the benefit is extended. There are 800 school-going children in round numbers in the parish, and were they to attend regularly I calculate they would realise something like 16s. per head by the ordinary grants, and if you add the 7s. 6d. grant to that, it is easy to see that there would be a sufficient amount of money supplied to keep the staff going, along with one shilling in the pound, which would amount to £150 additional.

15293. I suppose that the heaviness of the rates in Barvas is accounted for by this, that there are fewer large farm rents and fewer large shooting rents?—Yes; a lower rent in general.

15294. And a larger population?—A larger population. It is a singular fact that in proportion to the population, we have in this parish about the smallest if not the very smallest number of paupers in all the parishes of Scotland, and yet we pay about the highest rate.

15295. Do you think a resident inspector would be able to still further reduce the number of paupers?—I should think so.

15296. Although it is the smallest number that you know in proportion to its population?—The number might not only be reduced, but the whole management of the thing might be more economically conducted.

15297. With regard to the sizes of the holdings, do you see any way to increase the size of the holdings here?—No, I am sorry to say I do not.

15298. You have no remedy to suggest for the present state of things?—Not so long as the remedy is supposed to lie in the parish itself. I cannot suggest anything.

15299. But your remark points at some other remedy that suggests itself to you?—Yes, I should just apply the remedy that is applied in every other case, with an extension of ground if possible. Let the super-abundant population find employment elsewbere as they do in other parts. When my own family increases on my hands I do not keep them at home. I send them to Australia or New Zealand or any place where I can find a proper opening for them. I never think of over-crowding my own house with a super-abundant family.

15300. Have you observed, during the twenty-five years you have been resident in the parish, signs of increasing poverty among the people, keeping out this last year?—I am not prepared to say I have observed that their habits are different from what they used to be, but they are fonder now of buying things not produced at home than they used to be twenty-five years ago.

15301. But have they the power to produce these things at home?—I cannot say I have observed any difference in that. I have often been

advising them to use to a greater extent than they do their own home produce and not to be sending it to market, where they get perhaps very inferior and useless materials instead of the wholesome fish, milk, fowls, eggs, &c., which they can still produce at home.

15302. Are they in the habit of selling eggs and fish?—Yes.

15303. Dont they keep enough for their own home consumption?—Not so much as I think they ought to do, and not so much as they would require.

15304. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you think that in former times the people used to live more upon the meal they produced at home than they do now? Did they always buy meal?—They always bought more or less. I do not remember the time when, year after year, they were able to live on the produce of their own holdings.

15305. Do you think they grow less meal than they used to do?—I am not prepared to give an answer.

15306. Where do the people in this parish earn money to enable them to buy articles from the south?—In one district there is an extensive cod and ling fishing carried on; and a number of men also leave the country to go to the east coast herring fishing, and they realise more or less money from both sources.

15307. Do you think they realise more money from these sources than they did in former times?—Yes, they do.

15308. Do you think they realise more money from the sale of sheep and cattle than they did in former times?—Markets are very fluctuating. At the present time I believe the prices for cattle and wool and sheep are very much larger than they were twenty years ago. Even though the price of wool has fallen for the last three or four years it is still larger than it was before.

15309. I suppose the people sold very little wool?—I dont think they sold much wool then.

15310. Would you say that the people are better off now than they were in the few years immediately following the great potato famine?—No. I think not. This of course is an exceptional time. I think they were rather better off then than they are now. I mean, taking that as an exceptional time and this as an exceptional time, I think the destitution is more severe now than it was in 1847 and following years in consequence of the failure of the potatoes, because at that time there was no failure of the fishing as there was last year, and there was no destruction of crops.

15311. I was not speaking so much of one year as of the last few years. I would like you to compare the last few years with the period succeeding the great potato famine?—I should say they were better off within the last few years.

15312. What date would you fix as that at which the people enjoyed most material comfort and prosperity?—Well, I should say, for the last fifteen years markets have risen, and they have got better prices for their cattle and wool than they used to get.

15313. Have you any suggestion to make on the subject of the fishings in this neighbourhood, and the relations which subsist between the fishermen and the fish-curers?—So far as I have been able to ascertain the fish-curers pay the fishermen well and in my opinion the fishermen ought to be content with the prices they get for the fish caught.

15314. Do you know if they are paid in money or in kind?—To a very great extent in kind.

15315. Is the value of the meal property estimated and the value of the fish caught propely estimated, so as to be just and fair towards the fisher-

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men?—Well, there is a complaint on the part of the fishermen that they buy dear meal and dear goods at the hands of the curers.

15316. Do they complain also that they sell cheap fish?—No, I have not heard any complaint of that.

15317. The curers allow them sufficient for the fish but do not give them meal cheap enough?—Yes; that they lose by the transaction of being paid in kind.

15318. Have they ever made any representation to the curers to alter the system?—I am not aware they have.

15319. Do you think the curers would be willing to come to some arrangement by which they would pay them in money?—What I have heard fish-curers allege is that people were so deeply in their debt that they could scarcely afford to deal with them on any other terms than the truck or payment in kind system.

15320. Do you believe that statement to be correct?—I am bound to believe it when men are unanimous in making the statement.

15321. Have you ever heard anything to the contrary from the fishermen?—No, I have not heard anything to the contrary.

15322. But as a rule the fishermen complain of the system. They would prefer getting the money, and dealing with the fish-curer as with any other tradesman in the way of supplying them with meal?—I fancy so. There would be an open market for them to go where they chose with their money.

15323. You are a member of the Parochial Board?—Yes.

15324. Have you ever made any attempt to remedy the state of things you complain of?—Yes, I was in a minority of the board contending for a resident inspector instead of one living at Stornoway.

15325. Are the representatives of the crofters fairly distributed amongst the different townships of the parish in the parochial board?—They are.

15326. Do you ever have any contested elections?—No.

15327. I suppose it is generally the most respected and well-to-do crofter who represents the crofter class?—Yes; I have never known any contest take place with regard to them. They elect one from the south end, another from the northwards of that, a third from the northwards of that again, and a fourth from the north end of the parish.

15328. Have you found these crofter representatives endeavour to reduce the cost of working in the Parochial Board?—Well, I am sorry to say that though I occupy the position of being chairman of that board and have been so for years back, I do not find them disposed to support my views of economy, especially in regard to the inspector, I find in fact that the Parochial Board, perhaps are more inclined to side with the chamberlain than with me; I mean that the crofter members of the board are always more inclined to side with the chamberlain than with me.

15329. Do you find that they are inclined to be more extravagant than the others?—They are by no means inclined to be extravagant.

15330. You do not find them to be anxious to burden the rates with paupers who may be relatives?—Very rarely. Attempts of that kind have been made, but very rarely. The tendency is rather to keep down the rates

15331. *The Chairman.*—Who is the inspector?—Mr Hector Macleod Ross, residing at Stornoway.

15332. He is inspector for this parish?—Yes, and also for the parish of Lochs.

15333. Is he in the habit of coming here frequently?—Not frequently. I question if he comes oftener than he is obliged to do by statute.

15334. You mention that there were a very great number of children who did not come to school, but whose presence would conduce to relieve the rates; are many of those children kept away by distance?—No; they have no reason to be kept away by distance.

15335. Are they almost all within three miles of a public elementary school?—They are.

15336. Do you think that any of them are kept away for want of decent clothing?—Yes. In some cases I am sorry to say they are kept away on that account.

15337. You have borne testimony to the fact that the holdings are too small in area. You have also probably heard it alleged here or elsewhere that the productive capacities of the soil are much diminished by constant over-cropping?—Is that consistent with your experience and observation?—I cannot say it is so far as I can judge. I have not seen any signs of that. I may make an exception to that in connection with potatoes. The potato failure last year has been a sort of unexplained mystery, and I have heard it attributed to the exhaustion of the soil, I do not concur, however, in that opinion. It may be so, but I cannot understand it. The other crops were sufficiently good.

15338. Would it be possible to extend the small holdings of the crofters in any degree at the expense of the large farmers either in the parish or on the border of the parish? Do you think the congestion of people might be relieved in that way?—Unquestionably, and when I said that I saw no local remedy, I meant so long as the tacksmen have leases of their farms.

15339. In fact so long as there are tacksmen?—So long as there are tacksmen.

15340. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With reference to this matter about the inspector of poor, is there any person within this parish who is competent to fill that office?—Yes, more than one.

15341. There is no difficulty on that score?—None whatever in my opinion.

15342. May I ask then what influence is it that prevents the people of Barvas from having an inspector of their own within their own parish?—The people of Barvas in their inner hearts and in their expression of opinion to me were dead against having a stranger to be inspector, but unfortunately ten or twelve years ago it was recommended by the Board of Supervision to the Parochial Board here to make the inspector of Barvas the inspector the Lochs and Uig. This recommendation was made by the Board of Supervision under the belief that the management of the three parishes would be more economical to each—that they would have to pay one inspector instead of three, and that the whole thing would be the better of being concentrated under the management of one man. But, instead of its having proved an economical arrangement, it has been the reverse. The inspector of Barvas, instead of deriving an income of £25 from the parish of Barvas, had it increased till it was £50. The same increase was made in Lochs and Uig. The poor came to be neglected; new applications for relief were hurriedly and slovenly looked at, and the rates increased from the day the inspectors took the management of another parish besides this. I for one remonstrated with the Board of Supervision for having made such a recommendation, and when a vacancy took place two or three years ago, I repeated my remonstrance to the Board of Supervision and hoped they would not encourage what the people had so much reason to complain of. Of the candidates for the office I supported one belonging to the parish. The only other person nominated was Mr Ross, and he got the appointment by a majority of votes, though it was well

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known at the time that he was also inspector of the parish of Lochs. I dissented and protested to the Board of Supervision and the Board gave me the answer that they had no power to interfere, and the matter has remained in that state.

15343. How many members were present at the time this vote was taken?—There were four elected members. The number of elected members in this parish is limited to four. Besides these, were five others, non-elected, present at that meeting.

15344. How did the vote go?—I had two supporters.

15345. Did all the crofter interest go with the chamberlain?—Yes, with the exception of one; I got one vote from a crofter.

15346. Then we may take it that the chamberlain's interest was thrown in in favour of Mr Ross?—Entirely.

15347. It was not in your time that the additional glebe was given?—No. But it can scarcely be called an additional glebe. The minister of Barvas never had a properly designed glebe previous to the designation of what is now in possession of the minister.

15348. What is the extent of the glebe?—I suppose it will be about 200 acres.

15349. Do you know who possessed that ground before it became a glebe?—The minister possessed it as a tacksman, with sub-tenants.

15350. Some of the Barvas crofters complain that thirty acres were taken from them. Do you know whether that was so or not?—There were sub-tenants under the minister on the ground now belonging to the glebe, and when the glebe was designed they were necessarily removed.

15351. And you have no knowledge whether they received any allowance or not for what was taken from them at the time?—No.

15352. In regard to the attendance at the school, if there is a good attendance it has a tendency to diminish the rate in a populous place?—The amount of the rate, in fact, may be said to depend altogether on the attendance.

15353. And the large population in your parish, if properly regulated, should make the rate very low?—It should make our rate very low.

15354. You have been a long time in the Lews and know it very well. Don't you think there is enough of land on the island for all the people now in Lews if they got increased holdings? There are said to be 450,000 acres and 25,000 people?—I am not prepared to give an answer to that question, inasmuch as I am not a professional in the matter. I should be prepared to doubt whether there is enough, looking at the general quality of the land.

15355. How much of your own land is arable; how much do you cultivate?—I cultivate nothing but potatoes, and also a few turnips.

15356. Is there not a good deal of it susceptible of being turned over and cropped year by year?—Yes, there is a good deal of it so. I may mention that I do not cultivate the glebe myself. It is occupied by a tenant, and he rather goes in for sheep farming than cropping, and he raises no crop but turnips for sheep.

15357. In point of fact, is there not a good deal of what was once arable land within the parish, but now uncultivated?—Yes. There is a good deal,—superior ground as ground goes here.

15358. You have stated that to the best of your belief the circumstances of the people have not deteriorated very much of late years, except this last year. Now if they are all very anxious to get land, do you think several ofthem would be able to stock increased holdings?—Yes; those of them who are better off than the rest. A number of them are much better off than the rest. Some of them keep more stock than the strict

summing which the crofts allow, and a number of them would be able to stock much larger holdings than they at present possess.

15359. You have, no doubt, in travelling about, been in the habit of seeing the kind of stock that the crofters and small people have. If they really had more grass and better feeding, would their stock be a very fair stock. Their cattle especially?—Their cattle turn out very well; I find it so.

15360. And from your own knowledge dont you think they have a very fair breed?—The breed is very fine as to quality, but small as to size

15361. Do you think a crofter who got a larger holding and was industrious could raise in a smaller degree stock that might even compare with some of the hig farmers in the market?—Yes, in proportion to the size.

15362. There is nothing to prevent them doing so?—I think not.

15363. With reference to the matter about roads, was the labour or payment of five shillings exclusively for roads or for other works as part of the rent?—It always went under tbe name of road money. I never knew it to be for any other purpose.

15364. Of course in old times there was such a thing as statute labour, and a man was bound to work or pay a certain sum?—Yes.

15365. Now you are under an Act of Parliament, and an assessment is levied for roads?—Yes.

15366. And what you complain of is that this old converted statute labour money is still kept up in the name of rent, while a rate is levied per pound for the roads under the Act?—I have no title to mention it under the name of complaint, because it does not affect me, but I mention it as a matter I do not exactly approve of, in consequence of its not being fairly and squarely rent from the first.

15367. Do you find the people altogether in your parish a peaceable, well-behaved class?—Remarkably so.

15368. And under very trying circumstances particularly this last year?—Under very trying circumstances,—peaceable, temperate, and, in fact, singularly free from all the more open vices.

15369. *The Chairman.*—Do you find the people humane and charitable to each other in circumstances of distress?—Very much so indeed.

15370. And no offences against property?—No, nothing to speak of. Of course there have been instances in which the police have had to interfere and report to the fiscal, but they are comparatively few considering the population.

15371. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you find any strong objection on the part of the people here to any proposal that they should relieve the overcrowding hy voluntary emigration?—I have known individuals object to it, and I have known individuals highly approve of it and avail themselves of the opportunity of emigrating, especially wben they got assisted passages. I am not prepared to say that there is a general feeling against emigration

15372. Do you think there has been any influence used from outside to persuade them not to think of emigrating until this great land question is settled?—I am quite aware they have been advised to that effect.

15373. Recently?—Recently.

15374. Do you think that if they were left to themselves they would have no deep-rooted objection such as has been expressed to us in one or two places?—I have not found the objection to be so stubborn if the people were convinced they had good prospects on arriving at their destination, and provided also that a number went together, especially if

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it could be contrived that families and not individuals should be selected for assisted passages.

15375. There was emigration in Sir James Matheson's time?—Yes.

15376. Were the results satisfactory?—So far as I have heard, they were generally satisfactory.

DUNCAN MACLEOD, Crofter, Bragar (64)—examined.

Duncan Macleod.

15377. *The Chairman.*—You desire to make a statement to the commission?—Yes. '*North and South Bragar, Parish of Barvas.*—'Gentlemen, the following is a statement drawn up by the crofters of 'the townships of North and South Bragar to be laid before your 'Honourable Royal Commissioners. Many complain that before they got 'possession of their crofts, they had to promise to pay old debts contracted 'by the former tenants. Notably among the complaints is Donald 'M Donald, Feevie. Several years ago, alleged overstock was forcibly 'taken from those said to have it, and nothing like the value given to the 'crofters as the price of what was forced from them. The crofters, most 'of whom are fishermen, would like a quay built. At present there are 'thirteen boats there. The houses should be much improved, so that the 'cattle and family would be under different roofs, and not in the same 'apartment as they are at present. There is no road, or a passable foot-'path for the children, especially in wet weather, going to school from the 'public road to the houses, which are much needed. Roads to the sea-shore 'and to the peat moss are also much required. At present the peats have 'to be carried from one and a half to two miles by the people in creels. We 'have not the same liberty of putting the cattle to the moor as in former 'times, owing to the game being watched for shooting tenants and sports-'men, and we have often got lead in sheep after having killed them. A 'case has been known where a horse was found dead on the moor with 'lead in its body. There are twenty crofters in Bragar, and owing to 'poverty, each has only one cow. There are twice as many people in 'the place as the township can properly support. Besides legal taxes, 7s. 'or 8s. were added to every crofter's rent by Mr Munro, when chamberlain. 'A piece of land for which the township of North Bragar paid £6 was 'taken from them, and divided into six crofts, but no rent was taken off 'the township. We would like the proprietrix to give us work. The 'Commissioners can have no idea of the kind of land in Bragar, unless 'they visit the place. Every croft is honey-combed with stones, and 'impossible to be wrought by horses.'

15378. Have you any further statement to make?—Nothing, except the general statement that over-population would injure any place.

15379. There is a complaint here that before the crofters got possession of their crofts they were obliged to pay old debts or arrears of rent contracted by the former tenants. Is it the custom of the people here, that the incoming tenant should pay the arrears of rent due by the out-going tenant?—Yes. There are some held down in that way, who have not received a receipt for rent from the chamberlain, until the arrears of the former tenant were paid up.

15380. Is that really the arrears of the former tenant or the value of the house which the former tenant left behind him?—It is the arrears of rent, not the value of houses.

15380*. They complain of the want of roads to the peat moss and to

the sea-shore. Have they represented that want to the factor?—I spoke to the ground-officer myself this year to see if he would send pick-axes and wheel-barrows so that the people themselves might make a road three miles long to the peat moss in return for the meal that was being distributed.

15381. Did he send them?—No.

15382. Has he promised to send them?—There was some material sent to Shawhost in order to make a road from the far end of the village to the school, and he told us that when that was done the material which was being used on that road would be sent to our place. I told him it would be excessively inconvenient to send them then, because by that time the comparatively idle time of the people was over and they would have to go and earn their wages elsewhere.

15383. The memorial says they wish the proprietrix to give them work. What sort of work could the proprietrix give them in the present season with advantage?—I heard it reported that Sir James Matheson laid apart a large sum of money for the benefit of the tenants on the estate. I have only to state that nothing of that sort has been done for the tenants of our township. Our great want is a road to the peat moss and a road to the shore; and that must be done by the proprietor.

15384. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long is it since any man paid his predecessor's arrears, and what was his name?—The name of one of the men is in the paper. The matter happened fifteen years ago. The individual promised to be here to-day, and he is not.

15385. Was that the last time it occurred?—It was about that time that they were entering upon their lots.

15386. *The Chairman.*—Is this system still kept up?—Yes.

15387. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Can you give us a later instance of it?—Yes, they pay it yearly. Another man named Colin Macleod, Bragar, has paid it.

15388. Do you mean that they have paid it with their rent?—It so happens it is a certain amount paid yearly, and these two men have been paying little sums as they could every year.

15389. In fact you mean that they entered at an increased rent over the preceding tenant?—Yes; these arrears make it an increased rent.

15390. Does there ever come a time when the rent will drop to the old thing?—Not if the years continue as bad as they are.

15391. What is Colin Macleod's rent?—I cannot give the exact penny.

15392. Do you know the amount of arrears he has to pay up?—About £20.

15393. How much of that has he paid this year?—£1.

15394. What is about his rent?—Off and on, about £2, 10s.

15395. In fact he is paying £3, 10s. of rent?—Yes; every year that he can pay it.

15396. In what form is this entered in the receipt?—They get no receipt even for their own rent until this sum is all paid up.

15397. Do you know this of your own knowledge?—Yes, I know it of my own knowledge.

15398. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who was the person whose arrears to the extent of £20 this man was paying up?—His mother-in-law, Mrs Mary M'Ivor. Macleod was a young man without land; and here was a widow woman who had the land, and this man could not get his own name entered in the rent roll without undertaking to pay the arrears of rent of his mother-in-law.

15399. I suppose he succeeded to his mother-in-law's stock too?—No, he did not. *Mr Mackay.*—This man is labouring under a mistake. Colin

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Macleod succeeded his mother-in-law and got her effects and all that belonged to her house and croft. He wished to succeed her. He did so, and undertook to pay the arrears that were upon her croft at £1 a year. He got all the effects and the crop, whereas, if he had not got the crop he would not have had to pay anything. What means she had went to the credit of her arrears, but he got all her effects.

15400. Did he get any stock?—Live stock and house.

15401. You are well advised that he got the live stock?—He got whatever stock she had.

15402. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was the stock valued?—No, he took possession of it.

15403. Does he get a receipt for his rent?—Of course, when he pays his rent.

15404. The statement made here was that he got no receipt until that debt was paid?—I cannot say as to that. A receipt is not given till the rent is paid in full.

15405. So that for all the rent he paid for the last fifteen years he has no vouchers, and he might be called upon to pay it over again?—I cannot say that.

15406. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You do not give a receipt for partial payments?—No.

15407. *The Chairman.*—But the payment is credited in your books?—Yes.

15408. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is this looked upon as debt and not rent?—It is debt arrears.

15409. Why then is a receipt not given for the rent?—The rent and the arrears go together.

15410. So that, as a matter of fact, he has no proof that he has paid a penny of rent these years?—Probably he has not a receipt unless he has been clear since he entered.

15411. *The Chairman.*—Are you able to state in general terms that an incoming tenant on the estate is never asked to pay the arrears of the out-going tenant?—Never so far as I have had to do with the estate.

15412. *Mr Cameron.*—Except in the case of a relation?—When a relation gets the effects of the party.

15413. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But the effects of the party are not valued?—No; he offers to take them and pay the arrears.

15414. Whether they are a fourth or a half,—or whatever is the amount of the debt?—Whatever it is.

15415. *The Chairman.*—But that practice is never used except in the case of relations?—Yes, relations who have got the estates. A stranger would never be asked to pay.

15416. If a stranger would offer to take the croft and take the effects too would such a rule be allowed?—He would get the effects at what they were worth.

15417. But would he be allowed to enter in with the effects of the previous tenants and with the debts too?—No. I would not take the debts from him. I would not accept that arrangement from a stranger. I would take the value of the stock and allow him for it.

15418. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the tenants who do not get receipts from you until they are paid off entitled at all times to access to your books to verify their payments?—Yes, if they like to ask it. They never dispute the correctness. Sometimes there are from five to ten payments in the year. We take any amount that comes in.

15419. You consider yourself bound at all times to exhibit the books?—Yes, if it is asked.

15420. *The Chairman.*—What is the reason why receipts are not given for partial payments?—It has just been a custom on the estate, and there would be so many of them. Our office is open for payments every day of the year.

NORMAN CAMPBELL, Crofter, Arnol (67)—examined.

15421. *The Chairman.*—You were freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

15422. You have a statement to make to us?—Yes. 'To Her Majesty's 'Royal Commissioners for Highlands and Islands. *Statement made 'by the People in the District of Arnol, Parish of Barvas.*—Gentle- 'men, during the last fourteen years 13s. has been added to our rent. 'Formerly there were only nineteen families in this township, now 'there are forty-five who pay rent, and ten who have no land. The 'best of our cattle were taken from us some years ago, and very little 'value given us in return. We pay £5 for the right of fishing in 'Arnol River. That right was taken from us, but the £5 is still upon 'the township. Three crofters say that they had to pay £4 as a 'bonus before the got their lots."

15423. You say there were formerly nineteen families and now there are forty-five. Where did the increase come from? Is it the natural increase of the families, or have people been sent in from without?—It is the natural increase of the people. There were only one or two families from outside.

15424. You say that the best of their cattle were taken away and very little value given in return. Why were the cattle taken away?—They were taken away from us at different times in the time of the ground-officer Macdonald. There was no special reason for it. It was not rent time.

15425. How long is it since any cattle were taken in that manner?—About twenty years ago.

15426. And they have not got that complaint now?—No.

15427. You say they paid £5 for the right of fishing in the river, and that that right was taken away but the £5 is still paid. What sort of fishing was it?—The matter was this way. Nobody remembers now when this £5 was charged against the township for the right of fishing in the river. It was a matter of so long ago that the people came to believe that the right was theirs to fish in the river, so that the nets they used had to be carried away not during the day but during the night.

15428. Was it fishing for salmon?—Yes.

15429. Is that salmon fishing now let or is it in the hands of the proprietor?—It is let now, and to tell the truth we were deprived of the right fifty-four years ago.

15430. I am afraid it is too old a business for us to inquire into?—It is true all the same.

15431. You state that three crofters say they had to pay £4 as bonus on entering their crofts. Was this paid for value obtained in houses, or was it paid for the arrears of the rent of the previous tenants?—It is for houses. There were no arrears of rent upon the crofts that these men entered into. One of the lots was occupied by a bed-ridden man, 100 years of age, whose son was fifty or sixty at the time. He was not a penny in arrears except the rent of the current year. It so happened that he was not present on the rent collection day, but he turned up a month thereafter. When this man went with his rent to Stornoway,—it was in

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Mr Monro's time—and offered his rent a month after the rent collection day, the rent had been already paid by the new entrant. The new entrant built a house right in front of the old man's door so that he could scarcely enter it with a creel of peats on his back. In the case of the other man there were no arrears of rent, and he paid the £4 in addition to the rent. In these cases there were no houses, and he only paid the £4 for the privilege of being entered in the rent roll of the proprietor.

15432. To whom was the £4 paid?—I cannot tell, but I believe the ground officer handled the money first.

15433. Have you ever heard a report that there was a ground officer who was suspected of taking these things for himself?—Certainly, I did.

ANGUS CAMPBELL, Crofter, North Bragar (57)—examined.

15434. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make to the Commission?—That the poverty of the people was caused by over-crowding.

15435. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many crofters are there on North Bragar?—Forty-three.

15436. How many were there when you first recollect?—Twenty-eight crofts. In my father's time there were twenty lots.

15437. How many families?—Twenty. In my recollection there were twenty-eight crofts, but probably abont thirty-three families.

15438. How did the increase to forty arise?—The greater number of them belonged to the place. A few were sent in upon us from Galston.

15439. How many people came from Galston?—Two.

15440. How long is it since that clearance took place?—About twenty years ago.

15441. Who has got the land?—I do not remember who got it twenty years ago, but at present it is vacant so far as I know. The old tenant has not yet been succeeded.

15442. Is it a big place?—About four miles broad.

15443. How many families would it keep comfortably?—It would keep sixty families comfortably.

15444. Without any hill ground except itself?—With its own hill pasture just as it is. There are four townships.

15445. What became of the people in these townships?—The greater number of them went to America. Others of them were scattered here and there.

15446. Does this crowding deteriorate the soil?—Yes; we are quite convinced of that. I believe just now the two Bragars are only two miles broad, and there are over 600 souls on them.

15447. Is the pasture very much over-eaten?—The pasture is necessarily injured by over-eating, and it is necessarily exhausted.

15448. Do you think your stock bas deteriorated in quality in your lifetime?—Yes; it is very nearly worse than if it did not exist at all.

15449. Do you really think that the stock is worse than it used to be; is it poorer in quality?—Yes; it is of worse quality than when I was young.

15450. Is that due to any extent to the fact that you use bad bulls?—That accounts for it partly, and the inferior pasture accounts for it too. The best of the pasture land we had was settled upon six crofts. Then there was an additional 6s. added on from 1841 to 1843. It has not been

put on the last two additions to the township, which were made during Mr Mackay's time. Everything contributes to over-stocking. As the rent is increased, over-stocking follows of necessity.

15451. And what you want is that a certain number of families in this township should be removed to other places?—My croft is only twenty-nine yards broad, and is about one mile long.

15452. But what I want to know is whether you think a certain number of the crofters at North Bragar should be sent to another township or another place?—That is the only way in which those who remain can be made comfortable.

15453. Would you like to be one of those who would go for the good of their neighbours, or would you rather stay and get ground?—My opinion is that if we had to face such a contingency we would cast lots and deal fairly.

15454. But you wish to have such a contingency to face?—Yes, we do.

The following statements were given in by delegates, time not permitting them to be read:—

'*Lower Barvas.*—Grievances.—Holdings are inadequate for maintenance. Cannot properly be worked with horses very inferior in soil. Meal needed in addition to yield of croft in good and bad years. Removals and Changes.—Some evicted from Galston and Uig were settled among us to their and our discomfort and loss. A new channel was made for the river, by which a burying-ground was opened up, and a piece of our land cut off, and no compensation or abatement of rent made. About eighty years ago the land now occupied by ninty-six families was occupied by only about thirty-two. About thirty acres have been taken from us for a farm for the inn occupied by the ground officer; and we had to build a stone dyke around this piece of land, and to keep the same in repair or pay an equivalent in rent account, unless our wives could do the work in our absence at the fishing. Anything the factor may wish us to do we must do or pay for it. Shootings and fishing are let over all our land to a sportsman. A gamekeeper is settled among us with a house and piece of land. We cannot have dogs, and a child must not cast a stone into the river. Stock.—Horses are few, because the land is unworkable by them. Sheep and cattle more than can be rightly kept, because of the people's anxiety to have, through their sale and the fishermen's and reserve men's earnings, wherewith to pay rent and rates. Sixty head of cattle were at one time forcibly taken away from us, and not accounted for. There are factor-constables in every district. We cannot keep cattle but such as can be fed by sea-weed (besides grass, &c.). Rent unabated, irrespective of changes in land, &c. Blue book regulations summed up into one, viz., that the factor is final judge (no appeal). Rates.—Crofters furnish the principal means of support to the paupers allowance from Parochial Board often not equal to expenses in tea and sugar; whatever may go to officials and incidental expenses. In short, the people must fall into debt or starve. They are grateful for public help, particularly when distributed to the most necessitous cases. Remedy.—Land holdings fit and adequate for proper and sufficient maintenance, and on conditions which will ensure the safety and security of the crofters' interests. For this they confidently look to Parliament.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, Lower Barvas; DONALD MURRAY, Lower Barvas; DONALD MACLEOD, Lower Barvas.'

'*Upper Shader.*—The complaints of the township of Upper Shader

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'per Roderick Macleod, delegate.—This township at first had only 'twenty families about fifty years ago. Their rent then was about '£100. This included lots and hill pasturage. Then they complained 'of the rental being high. Now we have a greater reason for complaining, 'since the number is fifty-seven families, and that in the year 1849 a great 'lot of the hill pasture was taken from us, and was occupied by other 'families who were evicted from another township (Galston), to make 'room for sheep. These ate up our hill pasturage; and though the 'pasture was taken from us, yet there was no decrease made on our rental. 'The sum of their rentals now amounts to about £50. The young folk 'of the families since then had no other lots to go to. Then we had to 'divide our lots into halves. In this way the lots were made smaller, and 'reached the number we just stated. If it would happen that a young 'man would get a chance of getting a bit of land, he would require to 'pay as high as £7 before entering. In the year 1868 our rents were 'raised when Mr Munro was factor. Before that time we had to pay 5s. 'of road money, and a shilling for hen money. This was put to our rents. 'At this time a change was made in getting road money. The above sum 'was added to our rents, and then we had to pay sixpence per pound 'Between this tax and other taxes rising from year to year, we cannot 'rightly say what our rent is. Since so many people were added to our 'township, they ate up our pasture, so that we can keep but very little 'stock. We have no other way for earning money to pay our rent, and 'other things that are with it. There is no fishing station here like other 'places in the island, unless we go to other coasts to fish a few weeks on 'hire. At times this suits us, other times it does not. In this way we are 'kept in such a state, that we cannot properly put clothes on our 'children to allow them to go to school, as we are made to do by the act, 'or go to church, and that strangers put this up to us; but we cannot 'help it. By looking into these things in the way that the Royal 'Commissioners would think right, we do need reform. The next 'delegate William Matheson will explain about the evictions referred to 'above from Galston. He was one of those. We have more grievances 'that I am able to tell personally, that is not stated in the above.— 'RODERICK M'LEOD.'

'*Lower Shader.*—The complaints of the township of Lower Shader. 'Fifty years ago there was only about twenty-two families, who paid the 'rent of £90. Now there are forty-three families, eighteen of these 'extra ones were *people who were put out of Galston for sheep and put* 'into our township, and the rental was not made less. In the year 1868 'the five shillings we used to pay for the roads were added to the rents, 'and extra put on us for road money (sixpence per pound). In 1871 'another five shillings was put on us for Galston. Besides these, we have 'to do twenty-four yards of a double dyke, and also to pay from a shilling 'to eighteenpence every year. We think this too hard on us, for the farm 'is three miles away from us, so that our cattle hardly reaches the dyke. 'We would like, therefore, to get free of this. We complain of small 'lots and would like to get more land; for on some lots there are three 'families, and plenty of land under sheep in the island. I am one of those 'who were evicted from Galston since about thirty-four years.—ANGUS 'GRAHAM.'

'*Borve.*—The following statement was unanimously agreed to at a meeting of the crofters of Borve, held 29th May 1882.—One of our 'hardships is the smallness of our crofts. In our township there are 'now fifty-three families, but about thirty-two years ago it was only 'occupied by nineteen. All the crofts are subdivided except five. There

'were other crofters put among us where we were cutting the peats, but 'without reduction of rent. Another hardship is, our rents have been 'raised three times during the last thiry-two years. In 1851 the rental 'of our township was £105. We now pay £138. The hens' money, as 'it is called, is included in that rent. We are paying two shillings in 'the pound for hill pasture, between Murnag and Galston, which our 'forefathers held as common grazing between themselves. Our cattle 'are chased by shepherds, our women have been assaulted by gamekeepers, 'our men have been fined by factors and ground officers, with no better 'justification than the law of superior force.—MURDO GRAHAME.'

'*Shawbost.*—To Her Majesty's Royal Commission for Highlands and 'Islands. The fishing community of Shawbost desire to bring before your 'gracious consideration the importance of increasing the facilities possessed 'by the Lewis fishermen for prosecuting their calling. They believe that 'the welfare of the community would be very largely improved by 'assistance being provided them to build harbours at suitable points 'round the coast, and they would respectfully urge upon the Royal 'Commissioners, that representations should be made to Her Majesty's 'Government or the Fishing Board with a view to monetary assistance 'being provided in erecting harbours, and thus helping to meet in a 'satisfactory way the present grievances of the crofters and fishermen. 'They believe that Shawbost is a very suitable place for erecting a 'harbour, and accordingly they urge its claims for the following among 'many reasons:—(1) Although the people cannot help with money, all our 'able-bodied men are willing to give work to help in building a harbour '(2) The population of Shawbost district is 900 souls, congested 'within a radius of 1½ square miles. (3) All the able-bodied men of 'the place are fishermen, and their work would represent a considerable 'sum of money. (4) At one time there were fourteeen or fifteen boats 'fishing at Shawbost, but owing to the small fishing annually made on 'account of the difficulty of getting to sea, the curers now will not trust 'their boats or money at Shawbost. (5) There are this year only five ling-'fishing boats at Shawbost, all nominally belonging to the crews, but 'if they had a refuge for their boats, twenty crews could be raised among 'the Shawbost people alone. (6) This year they have had already to haul 'their boats three times, and have wasted many weeks seeking for bait, 'but all the boats have only been able to go to sea this week for the first 'time. (7) Taking 1000 lings a boat as a moderate estimate of the 'probable number of lings caught per boat at Carloway—where there is a 'good natural harbour—this year before a single ling was landed at 'Shawbost, it represents a direct loss to this poor place in money alone of '£250, besides the amount of fish—other than ling—which would have 'been during that time sustaining their families, and in lieu of which 'they have had to beg or borrow meal. (8) There is every likelihood 'that an extensive herring-fishing has been begun on the west of Lewis, 'and no place is more convenient to the fishing ground than Shawbost. '(9) Carloway is at present the safest harbour on the west, but the 'harbour is several miles from the ocean. At Shawbost the harbour, if 'erected, would be right on the ocean, and thus much time would be 'saved in reaching the deep sea fishing ground.—JOHN M'LEAN, delegate, 'fisherman.'

[ADJOURNED.]

NESS, LEWIS, THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1883.

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(See Appendix A, XXXVI. and XLI.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

MALCOLM M'LEAN, Crofter, Swainbost (64)—examined.

Malcolm M'Lean.

15455. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

15456. Have you got a witness memorial on the part of the people of Swainbost?—No.

15457. Then will you make a statement on their behalf?—I was born in Uig, and I was upon two occasions deprived of some of my possessions in the parish of Uig. In the first place, we were deprived of hill pasture which was given to the neighbouring tack, and then our stock was taken from us.

15458. In what year were you deprived of the hill pasture?—Over fifty years ago.

15459. What tack was it given to?—It was added to the tack of Mr Macrae, Huishnish. Then we were obliged to subsist as best we could upon the crofts and a little of hill pasture behind to graze our stock upon. Subsequently we were summoned out of the parish altogether, and then we were deprived of everything we possessed—cattle, sheep, and every thing else. The people asked the chamberlain at the time what he was then going to do with them when they had no homes, and he pointed to the sea, and told them their home was there. The people had to part with their sheep, having no place to keep them in, and they sold them to the tacksmen at 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. each. We were then sent to Ness, where we are. Our township was then occupied by a tacksman who fell into debt, and so the place was lotted out for us.

15460. In what year did you go to Ness?—In 1839 or thereabouts. I am now going to speak of the recent management of the estate, and I see the chamberlain before me, and the ground officers upon the other side of me, and though there is a good deal of truthful statements that are welling up within me, I am in a difficulty, and it is the goodwill and favour of the factor that I should prefer to his wrath. [*Mr Mackay,* in Gaelic, assured the witness that he was at full liberty to make his statement.] I am exceedingly obliged to you; I can now speak the truth with courage. We got that township at a rent of £80—the township of Swainbost. We had it at that rent for about eleven years. Sir James then came after purchasing the estate. A kind-hearted gentleman he was, and after looking over the estate he saw a good deal of waste land that he was anxious to bring under cultivation. Between himself and the Government—I don't know which—he sent men who trenched and brought under cultivation a good deal of land. Now, because of these improvements that were made and the rent of the money that was expended upon them through the Government and the proprietor,—it was in Mr Munro Mackenzie's factorship that this occurred,—the rent was increased. The

whole work was carried on under the inspectorship I suppose of a Government inspector; at all events, he was in the service, so far as I understood, of the Government and Sir James Matheson. At that time Mr Munro Mackenzie cut off and formed into a park the inward portion of our township. We were deprived of this portion. Upon the other side of us again there were crofters settled upon land that was taken in, so that in a way we are enclosed in a fauk. Then Mr Munro came, and my firm conviction is that his policy from the first day of his factorship to the last was to extirpate the Lewis people so far as he could. If I did not appear upon the rent collecting day at White House during Mr Munro's factorship, supposing I went back a week afterwards and prevented it, he would fine me for not having been there upon the appointed day. He then appointed a ground officer of the name of John Hunter, the like of whom never appeared in the Lewis in my day. He was a very bad ground officer—the worst ground officer I ever saw. They seemed very much pleased to work together, and it is within the truth to say that from one end of Lewis to the other such was the dread of the people for them that they groaned even in their beds for fear of the two men. Then the people of my native country quarrelled with the factor, and things came to a head, and I don't believe that Sir James knew of matters ever during that time. I believe it was a special dispensation of Providence, but the end of it was that factor, his ground officer, and everbody else were turned about their business. But now we have got a factor and a ground officer appointed for us, under whom we can rest in peace, as if it were out of the heel of necessity. When they saw the condition in which this township of ours was, they made a slight abatement for every crofter within it.

15461. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families are there in the township you represent?—Over forty.

15462. Have they increased much since you came forty years ago?—By about eleven or twelve.

15463. Were any people put in upon them from other localities?—Yes, there were many additions made from the various townships within this parish—none from outside the parish.

15464. Were there any places cleared within the parish in your recollection?—Yes, Galston.

15465. How many people were taken out of Galston?—*John Macdonald*, a delegate—About seventy-eight families.

15466. Can you give us the names of any of the townships upon Galston that were cleared?—*Witness.* There were two Galstons, South and North, and there was Melbost as well. That is all I can recollect.

15467. What became of the people who were removed from these places?—Some of them came to Ness, and some were crowded in upon other townships on the west side.

15468. Did any emigrate?—Yes, several went to America.

15469. Was this done at one time?—Yes.

15470. How long is it since these towns were finally cleared?—I cannot say—probably the last were sent away about twenty years ago.

15471. Were you acquainted with some of the people who were there?—Yes.

15472. What state were they in? Were they partly fairly off?—Yes, Melbost in particular. The people were about as comfortable, so far as stock and other things were concerned, as any people on the west side.

15473. Did they use to produce meal in abundance?—Yes, in that township. They were well off.

15474. Did their circumstances improve by being shifted,—those of

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them who remained in this country?—I cannot answer that question. Those who came to this parish are not better off anyhow.

15475. What is your experience as to the condition of the people in your younger days as compared with what it is now? Do you consider they are falling off in their condition?—I speak of the time before we were deprived of that moorland pasture, and the people then were comfortable for the condition of crofters—much better and more comfortably off than the people in my neighbourhood now.

15476. There appears to be a very large population in the neighbourhood on this side of Galston. Have the numbers very much increased within your memory?—Yes, they are increasing.

15477. Considerably?—Yes.

15478. Does that arise very much from the natural increase of the people themselves, or because they have come of late from any other locality?—The natural increase of the place. Until they get land they have no suitable means of subsistence.

15479. Do you yourself purchase for the support of your family?—Yes, I do. Upon my side of the township, Hunter the ground officer took three yards in breadth from end to end off each croft. Before that time I was not in arrear. Since that time I am in arrears. I have not got over it, and I have had to purchase for my own family ever since.

15480. When was it that the three yards breadth was taken off all the township?—About fifteen years ago.

15481. Who got it?—A man who came from Caithness to whom he gave a lot.

15482. And who has it now?—His widow and son. When he took these three yards of breadth from us he added 10s. to the rent.

15483. Who did that?—Mr Munro and Hunter. Mr M'Farquhar explained this matter to the succeeding ground officer, who explained it to the present factor, and he took 4s. off—he considered it so outrageous.

15484. *Mr Cameron.*—You said Sir James Matheson sent men to trench and cultivate the land. Did he send men from a distance or did he employ the people in the locality?—There were some from a distance, but there were the people of the place also.

15485. Were they chiefly the people of the place?—Yes, the greater number. There were a few Skyemen.

15486. You say the rent was increased upon them after the land was improved; was that not interest charged upon the improvements which were effected at the expense of the proprietor?—It was necessary to make an addition then. There was a shilling in the pound put on for the expense incurred, and each five years in addition the rent was being raised.

15487. You state that the people have increased considerably, owing to the subdivision of crofts. Did Mr Munro ever try to put a stop to that practice?—He was very anxious to prevent the subdivision of crofts, and to scatter the people over the face of the earth.

15488. But he did not prevent them as matter of fact?—No, he could not prevail upon the proprietor in spite of that. If he could he would.

15489. And if he wished to extirpate the people, his mode of procedure was not a successful one?—He would do as much mischief as he could. He fined me £3, 4s. quite unjustly, because I had overstock.

15490. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the great thing which the people of Swainbost complain of and have sent you here to tell?—Their complaint is my own. They wish to get more land, to make their livelihood out of it.

15491. Are not most of them fishermen?—Yes, but the fishing went

against them, and of late it rather increased their debt and made them poorer.

15492. What rent do they generally pay?—From £2 to £6.

15493. What is your own rent?—£3, 14s.

15494. What stock have you?—Two cows, a quey, stirk, and nine sheep.

15495. How long does the corn that you raise support your family, and how long do your potatoes last?—The potatoes in an average year would last till the first month of spring, and my own meal never lasted altogether till summer, and it would not come near that except that I used to purchase some.

15496. How much land would you like to have to make you comfortable?—If I had as much again as I have I think I could make things meet.

15497. Are all the people of Swainbost in the same condition?—Yes, they are just in the same condition.

15498. Then is there any place where they could get out of it?—There are twenty-three townships in the parish in which I was born where the people sent their own produce to the mill.

15499. Would you propose that the people of Shawbost and the people of all the other townships in Barvas should be dispersed and have new houses built for them?—I think that would be a happy day for the people if that was done.

15500. Do you think there is land enough in the parish of Barvas to do that for all the population?—I cannot speak for the parish of Barvas. There was not so much clearing in Barvas as in the other parishes.

15501. But supposing all the Ness crofters got good big crofts sufficient to keep them, what would happen when their sons grew up and had families? Would they want land too?—I cannot speak of the future. I can speak of the present, and if the large tacks in this parish were apportioned among the people, I know that the people in this parish could be put into a comfortable position.

FINLAY MACKENZIE, Crofter, Tahost (53)—examined.

15502. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

15503. How many people were there at your election?—There were a good many. Most of the fishers were at sea.

15504. Will you be so good as make a statement on behalf of the people?—The chief complaint of the Tabost people is the scarcity of land. Most of the land has been subdivided, and is now occupied by two families where there was one before. In 1850 I believe the number of families on the rent roll was twenty-two, and now there are at least forty-six. That came about, in the first place, by the new division of lots made, when Sir James Matheson came into the property. He made ten new lots, and the old lots were subdivided among the existing families. I have nothing more to say.

15505. You say there are now forty-six families, and there were formerly twenty-two. Have any of these been brought in since the lots were made from other places?—One or two came from other townships in the neighbourhood.

15506. Then the remainder are the natural increase of the families?—Yes.

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15507. Have many of the people in Tabost availed themselves of the regulations of the estate to make improved houses?—Yes, some have.

15508. Are there many houses in the township in which the families and the cattle live in the same room without any partition between them?—Some are so; others not.

15509. In other places we have generally found there is a stone partition between the cattle and the dwelling place. Was it the old fashion in Lewis not to have a partition?—So far as I remember that was the old fashion. Any improvement that has been made in that respect is recent.

15510. Do you think it a bad thing that there should be no partition between the cattle and the family?—I do.

15511. Would it be a good thing if there was a regulation to oblige them always to have a partition between the two?—I believe it would be good for the people to do so, and in respect of that belief I have done it myself.

15512. What stock do you keep?—Three cows, three stirks, about thirty sheep, and two horses.

15513. What is your rent?—£7 besides taxes.

15514. Have you a larger amount of stock than most of the people, or is that the usual summing of a croft?—I have more stock and more land than most of the poeple. I pay the highest rent in the place.

15515. Since you have been there has any one been evicted from the township except for non-payment of rent?—No.

15516. Has any hill pasture been taken away since you have been there?—None except what was give to the new lots.

15517. Where were the people brought from who have got the new lots?—From the families of Tabost itself.

15518. There have been no introductions from other places?—There were one or two from neighbouring townships.

15519. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Besides being a crofter I understand you are a merchant and have a small shop?—Yes.

15520. What do you deal in?—General goods—tea, groceries, and clothing.

15521. Are you a fish-curer too?—Yes.

15522. What are the circumstances of the people just now as compared with what you remember them? Are they better off or poorer?—Surely they are poorer in their circumstances.

15523. You know that from dealing with them?—Yes.

15524. Do you know that the produce of the crofts is falling off from overcrowding and otherwise?—I consider that on my own croft.

15525. And I suppose you give your croft full justice in the way of manure?—Yes, so far as I can.

15526. You can tell us something about the fish traffic in this neighbourhood. Do you think that the new quay here will be of great value to the place?—Well, I expect so.

15527. There are not many herring brought in here?—There are no herring at all.

15528. Whatever herring are caught go on to Stornoway?—Yes.

15529. But there is no reason, if there was a landing place, why they should not come here?—If there was a safe landing place for boats they would come here.

15530. How far out does the fishing extend?—I cannot say, but they are going out of sight from here.

15531. Are you a native of the place?—Yes.

15532. Have you got on in the world?—No, I am complaining.

15533. But everybody complains?—Yes.

15534. In regard to the fish-curing, what price are you giving to the fishermen for cod and ling?—I don't buy cod—only ling. I give them a shilling for ling.

15535. Have the fishermen with whom you deal boats of their own?—Only one of them has.

15536. Have you a share in the boat yourself?—No, I have not a share in a boat. I am keeping the boats for the fishermen at so much for the season.

15537. What do you give to the fishermen who are employed for the season? Do you give them any wages except the shilling for the ling?—Nothing.

15538. Do you provide the boat and everything else?—Yes, I provide the boat.

15539. And the nets?—They buy the lines themselves. It is only lines they use, there are no nets.

15540. I suppose you are obliged to make advances to them?—Yes, a good deal sometimes.

15541. And if they have anything to get from you do you pay them in money?—Yes.

15542. How often do you settle with them?—Once a year—in November.

15543. You know yourself by that time what price you will get for the ling?—Yes, for the past season.

15544. What is the present price for meal to the people per boll?—About 22s. here at present.

15545. You have to pay all the carriage?—Yes.

15546. What else besides meal do you give to the fishermen?—Every fishing material, and oil-skins, and the like of that.

15547. Are they complaining at all that you are charging them too much?—Of course.

15548. I suppose, in the same way, when you buy in the south, you think you will be paying too much to the wholesale men?—Yes.

15549. You have told us that the only way to put the people right in your opinion is to give them more land. Is there anything else you think would benefit the people here?—I am thinking that they would require to get a remedy by the sea—to assist them with boats and nets to carry on the herring fishing, as the ling fishing now is a great failure.

15550. You think that by getting assistance in the way of superior boats and nets the herring fishing could be carried on to a great advantage?—They are thinking so.

15551. Would the proposed harbour works here be sufficient in the meantime to accommodate a considerable number of herring boats?—We are thinking it would keep 100 boats or so—may be more.

15552. It is not proposed at present to make it a deep-water harbour, but only a tidal harbour?—Yes.

15553. What fall is there in the tide?—They cannot come into the harbour at ebb tide.

15554. *Mr Cameron.*—Why do you not buy cod as well as ling?—They are not catching cod here.

15555. If they did catch cod could you dispose of cod as well as ling?—They are not engaged for the cod.

15556. But if they did catch cod is there any difficulty in salting cod?—No, they could be sold.

15557. You could dispose of cod as well as ling if you got them?—Yes.

LEWIS.
NESS.
Finlay Mackenzie.

15558. Do you think the seasons have been worse for agricultural labour within the last few years?—Yes, a great deal worse.

15559. Do you think that has anything to do with the land not being so productive as well as the exhaustion of the land?—No, I don't think so.

15560. But do not bad seasons generally affect agriculture?—Well, I cannot say anything about that. I would leave it fully to Providence.

15561. What sort of common pasture have the people here? Is the pasture good—No.

15562. Is it chiefly moorland?—Yes.

15563. Bog and peat?—Yes.

15564. Is any of it in the neighbourhood of Tabost susceptible of improvement so as to be brought into cultivation?—I cannot tell that.

15565. Is any of the land in the neighbourhood of Tabost susceptible of improvement in the same way as land was improved by Sir James Matheson?—I dont see any in Tabost that could be improved.

15566. Or in the neighbourhood?—No.

15567. Is none of it capable of improvement?—I don't think it.

15568. Is it all too boggy?—Yes, too boggy.

15569. Are you married?—Yes.

15570. Have you children?—Yes.

15571. Do they go to school?—Yes.

15572. Are you satisfied with things as regards the school?—Yes; I cannot say anything about the school, only I would like to get a Gaelic speaking teacher. All the people wish to get that.

15573. Are you a member of the School Board?—No.

15574. Who are the members of the School Board here?—Mr Mackay, the factor; Mr M'Arthur, the ground officer; Mr Helme, Galston; Mr Macbeth, Free Church minister; Mr M'Farquhar, Free Church minister, Barvas; another Mr M'Farquhar, and Mr John M'Leod, merchant.

15575. Have the people ever represented to the board that they would like a Gaelic-speaking teacher?—No.

15576. Is this the reason they wish a Gaelic-speaking teacher, that he could teach Gaelic, or that he would be able to teach the children the ordinary branches of education better?—I think they would be able to learn better if they were taught in Gaelic.

15577. *The Chairman.*—Is there any person of the crofter class upon the School Board?—No.

15578. Was there ever previously any person of that class on the School Board?—No.

15579. Did you ever hear the people say they would like a representative of the crofter class?—No.

15580. What is the time you settle with the fishermen?—In the mouth of November.

15581. At last settlement in November what was the price that was charged for meal per boll?—Last year they were charged at 23s. for oatmeal.

15582. Any other kind of meal?—Bere meal, 20s. to 22s.

15583. Do they buy any wheat flour?—No.

15584. Where do you buy it wholesale?—I buy it in Glasgow and Stornoway.

15585. What was the wholesale price you paid for the oatmeal for which you charged 23s.?—I am paying from 19s. to 20s. sometimes, and the freight from Stornoway to Ness.

15586. Last year you charged 23s. for meal in November; what was the wholesale price you paid for that in Glasgow?—I did not buy the

meal in Glasgow. I only buy clothing there. I buy the meal in Stornoway.

15587. What was the price you paid at Stornoway?—About 20s. on an average.

15588. I did not ask you about the average. I asked you if you could remember what was the price you paid that year for the meal for which you charged 23s.?—I was not paying the same price all the time.

15589. About how much was it?—About 20s.

15590. It was not more than 20s.?—No.

15591. Was 20s. the highest?—There was some of it higher than 20s.

15592. Are the people frequently in debt to you a long time, or do you always settle with them once a year?—I just settle with them for the fishing once a year.

15593. Of late years have you found the people less able to pay, and more disposed to run into debt, or are they just about the same as they formerly were?—I dont mind that.

15594. I want to understand whether the people are in more difficult circumstances—whether their poverty is increasing or not—so I ask you whether you find they pay with more difficulty, or whether they pay as easily as they did formerly?—It was easier to pay in former years.

15595. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say you settle with the fishermen every November?—Yes.

15596. That is to say, you square accounts; but I suppose you do not get full payment from them?—No, but if any person has to get money I square the account up and pay the money.

15597. If there is any balance due to the men, you pay it in money?—Yes.

15598. But I am afraid, from what we can learn, that does not often happen?—Not these years.

15599. But within the time you have been doing business has it frequently occurred that you paid them a balance?—Yes.

15600. Frequently?—Yes.

MURDO MACKAY, Crofter and Weaver, Lionel (57)—examined.

15601. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely chosen a delegate?—Yes.

15602. Have you got a statement to make?—Thirty-four or thirty-five years ago there were twenty families in Lionel. There are now sixty-six; but there is a piece of it that belongs to the Port of Ness, and a part to the hill of Adbroc, and some to Eoradale. There were three pieces taken away. Chamberlain Mackenzie took away the piece given to the Port, and factor Munro took away the piece given to Eoradale and Adbrochill. There are crofters in each of these places. Lionel has now no hill pasture except about 200 yards in breadth from the boundary of Adbroc to the boundary of Habost, and it is almost wholly cut up with dykes. The Lionel people have also to complain that there has been a great increase of rent for the last twenty years; as the receipts I produce will indicate. My year's rent paid in October 1858 was £2, 13s. 6d., of which 5s. was for road money, and 1s. for kain. In October 1880 the rent was £3, 6s.; poor rates, 6s. 4d.; road assessment, 1s. 8d.; school rate, 11s.; black dyke, 6d.; total, £4, 5s. 6d. In 1882 the total was £4, 0s. 1d., the rent being the same as in 1880, and the poor rate and school rate being reduced.

LEWIS.
NESS.
Murdo Mackay.

15603. Then the rental has risen from £2, 8s. 6d. to £3, 5s. How did that increase occur?—I cannot tell perfectly, but this I can say, that Hunter was ground officer, and Munro chamberlain.

15604. But is any part of this increased rental of 18s. the interest of money which was laid out in improving the ground?—Not at all. The boundaries are the same as before.

15605. What does the black dyke mean?—Twelve or thirteen years ago we were obliged to erect a dyke between our moor and Galston. I had five continuous days to work at it myself. I worked another day afterwards in autumn—that is six days—and I never worked so hard in the Highlands or Lowlands, or working at the light-house here, as I did those six days, all at my own cost.* When the dyke was finished and passed by the chamberlain, the stewart of Galston, and the constable, there was a tax of 6d. laid upon us to keep up that dyke. In saying so I do not say anything against Sir James Matheson or against his lady. He was a kind gentleman and she was a kind lady; nor do I say anything against the present chamberlain or ground officer, who received everything as it is now.

15606. Did the crofters do all the work and pay all the expense of the black dyke, or did the tacksman pay the half?—The crofters did the whole work, and we did not get as much as one potato.

15607. Did not the tacksman contribute to make the dyke at all?—Not a halfpenny.

15608. Does the tacksman contribute to keep it in repair?—I don't know that he contributes anything to the keeping up of the dyke.

15609. Is the dyke of any use to you?—Not the least.

15610. Does it prevent the tacksman's sheep and cattle going on to your ground?—He has the advantage that from the lie of the ground, and the slope of the dyke, they can easily jump over to our side, but ours cannot do the same to his.

15611. But cannot you put a paling or wire on the top of it?—We are not rich enough even to put wire fences round our own corn stacks.

15612. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you ever asked the factor to help you to make a better fence against the tacksman?—We have said nothing about it to the present factor. We were too terrified to say a word about it to the former factor and ground officer, because if we had made any such request the immediate reply would have been that our land would be taken from us.

15613. Is the 6d. for the dyke upon each croft, or upon every head of family?—Upon each family on the rent roll.

15614. Then if there is any tax put upon the tacksman he will only have to pay one 6d.?—I know nothing about that. It is not the present tenant who put this trouble upon us. It was a former tenant named Smith.

15615. You are a weaver as well as a crofter. Have you a considerable business in that line?—I am not constantly occupied—about seventeen weeks in the year. When the women get something of ease from the working of the land, they then get the wool in order.

15616. What sort of material do you weave?—Blankets, and kealt, and coverlets.

15617. Does the wool that is sent to you belong to the people themselves or is it bought?—Those who have sheep of their own send their own wool. Those who have not perhaps get wool from the fish-curers who employ them.

15618. You stated there were three pieces of land taken from you, and you accounted for two of them, but I don't think you accounted for the third. Are they all in possession of crofters?—Yes.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

15619. Did you get any reduction of rent?—On the contrary, our rent was raised.

15620. Do you complain at the present moment of being over rented?—Certainly.

15621. As well as of being crowded?—Yes, that the back hill pasture was taken from us, and that our land is too little.

15622. Are the people now rather fallen back in their circumstances from what you remember them in former days?—Decidedly so.

15623. Were you at one time pretty well occupied as a weaver all the year round?—There is not so much difference in one respect, because the population has increased compared with what it was formerly, and there are not so many people practising the weaving art as there were when I was young, but a person who could formerly give me fifteen yards to make has perhaps not more than five now.

15624. Is there a greater scarcity of milk now-a-days than there was in your former days?—Most assuredly. Formerly when a person did a clever thing it was said of him that the black blood had gone into his bones, meaniug he was well nourished upon milk and meat once a week at least; and now we have become so low in condition that those whom I have seen with ten cows, three or four cows yielding milk, cannot now keep up two cows, because of the scarcity of land, and they can never have any meat. Another thing I observed, when I was working as a servant before I married. As the Lord gave the commandment to Moses concerning the land, that it should have rest every seventh year, and that the land was bringing forth its fruit, I have seen with my own eyes when I was a young man labouring with crofters that they used to leave an acre of their land fallow in rotation every third or fourth year, and when they had completed this rotation they would begin again at the portion that had been left fallow. That ground would yield crop without any manure, but now as the land is so scarce they cannot do so any more.

15625. *The Chairman.*—When you were labouring for crofters as a young man, what wages did you get?—It was a small wage, but better than a big wage to-day.

15626. How much was it?—30s., 35s., or £2 in the half year.

15627. How much does a person now get in the half year?—Some of them will now get £3 or £4 in the half year. Women do not get so much.

MURDO MORRISON, Crofter and Constable, Lionel (72½)—examined.

15628. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people?—Yes.

15629. Do you wish to make a statement?—Well, the previous delegate is from the same township, and I have nothing to say except that I remember the time when there were only eleven families in it.

15630. There are now sixty-six?—Sixty-six, although two are not on the rent roll.

15631. Have you anything further to say?—Nothing, except that the increase which was mentioned was not done by the act of the present managers of the estate.

15632. What caused the increase of the people in the township?—Several came from various townships in this parish—none from outside the parish. Others belonged to the place.

LEWIS.
—
NESS.
—
Murdo Morrison.

15633. Was it the custom when any member of a family married that the new family should establish themselves on the croft?—Yes, there was some of that.

15634. Did any of the factors attempt to stop that?—I don't remember they did. If they tried it they did not succeed.

15635. Do you approve of that process?—What could be done with them?

15636. That is just the question I was going to ask you?—I could not know what I would do with my son or with my daughter. I would only ask for myself as I would ask for others.

15637. But supposing you were the factor and saw this process of subdivision of crofts going on, what would you do?—I don't know. But there was one thing, that when the third or fourth part of the croft was taken there was a tax imposed by the landlord for roads, and so on.

15638. Do you seriously think that for the sake of 5s. a head the landlord would see the people multiply to such an extent that he must have known there was no work for them to do, or no land for them to cultivate?—He would not do it for such a small consideration as that, but still it was allowed. There can be no question of its having been allowed.

15639. That was hardly an answer to my question. I asked what you would do if you were factor?—I would, undoubtedly, be very much against it, but still it would be a very hard thing to carry out. I would not know what to do with my son and daughter. The proprietor at one time wished to insist upon it that a married son or daughter should not be admitted to the house, but things were too hard for him. He was not able to carry carry out his wishes.

15640. Can you suggest anything to do away with the bad effect of this redundancy of population in the district?—Well, if they got an abatement of rent things would be easier for them.

15641. Would that not encourage them to subdivide their crofts still more?—I don't know what they might do, but one thing is that the rent is very high. You can see from these receipts the change which has been made on the rent within the last twenty years.

15642. Very likely the rent may be high, but what I want to find out is how you could do away with the evil resulting from the too rapid increase of the population?—I can give no answer to that question.

15643. Do you think the people might do more in the way of fishing?—I don't know that they could do more by fishing. They risk their lives as it is, and since the herring fishing commenced off the shore here they cannot very well leave out their lines; the herring nets break them.

15644. Do you think anything could be done by Government which would enable them to prosecute the fishing with greater advantage to themselves?—Well, I cannot tell, now that the herring fishermen are injuring our fishing in the way I have mentioned.

15645. Do the people ever speak of emigration to America or New Zealand, or Australia?—Not often. They don't hear such good news always from these places.

15646. Do you mean they do not hear good new from those who have already gone abroad?—Yes. Some of their relatives have a sad enough story to tell; others are better off.

15647. Do you think the people would be disposed to emigrate if they got assistance and the members of the families were not separated from each other?—I cannot tell. For my own part, I am too old to emigrate.

15648. Don't you know the opinion of your neighbours on that subject?—Well, they do occasionally speak among themselves that they

must go somewhere, but they are so poor that they cannot go unless some assistance of that kind was given.

15649. We have heard in other places that there exists a great indisposition to emigrate. In this quarter does the same aversion to going abroad exist?—There is no doubt they are strongly against emigrating, and is it not rather a hard thing that they should be made to emigrate while sheep are being fed at home.

15650. I don't say anything about making them emigrate. I wish to know whether your neighbours would be willing to emigrate, provided they got assistance and the members of the families were not separated from each other?—I believe there would be very few indeed.

15651. What do the people do in winter?—Fish every day they can. Almost all their success at the fishing now is in the winter and early spring, before the herring fishermen come. The cod and ling fishing is carried on by leaving the lines out at night, and these lines must have buoys upon them, and if you leave a line out it may be that before morning it will be in Stornoway.

15652. Are these the ordinary fishing boats we see on the coast, or steam trawlers?—The ordinary herring boats.

15653. Are there not a great many days in winter when it is impossible for any man to go out fishing on this coast?—By far the greater number.

15654. Then what do the people do at these times?—Gather sea-ware and various things. They will not at all be idle.

15655. Do they ever improve the land—take in fresh land?—Those that get that moorland pasture of ours will be taking new land; others of them will be improving it.

15656. Then do you say that many of the people in this township are in the habit of occupying their leisure time in winter in taking in fresh land?—Those who have got such work to do—that is, those who have fresh unbroken land as part of their crofts.

15657. Is that newly improved land to be seen from the high road as you come from Stornoway?—Yes.

15658. Do you know how much has been done?—Yes; there is especially a strip visible that stretches out to the moorland pasture from the high road.

15659. Was that cultivated by crofters?—Yes.

15660. Lately?—The first piece that was taken off our township, of this outside pasture, I believe was drained and done by the factor at the time himself, but the people have been going at it since.

15661. What is your rent?—£4, 18s. 6d.

15662. How many cows do you keep?—Two cows and two stirks.

15663. Any sheep?—Five or six perhaps.

15664. And a horse?—A horse.

15665. How much arable land have you got?—I cannot tell. The surveyor who measured it the other day told me it was 7½ acres, and that includes those wide ditches between every plot.

15666. Do you pay about the same amount in proportion to your arable ground and stock as the other crofters do in the township?—Yes; they all pay as high a rate and they all complain.

15667. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know anything about the families that were evicted from Galston?—I know nothing about it.

LEWIS.

NESS.

Malcolm Mackenzie.

MALCOLM MACKENZIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Sgigersta (71)—examined.

15668. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate by the people of Sgigersta?—Yes.

15669. Where is Sgigersta?—It is a small township surrounded by a fence out at the back of this place here. When I was born my father and another man occupied it between them. About sixty years ago they placed twelve families there in order to prosecute the fishiug. Then six of these and my own father were drowned forty-eight years ago. They got the whole towuship at £40 a year at that time, and now it is £80. We cannot keep but two cows each. We are surrounded by a ring fence in our township. We are seven miles from the march of Galston tack, and though none of our cattle ever went there, or ever shall, still we have had to pay 5s. 6d. a family for this fence which has been spoken of. Then they placed six other tenants upon our township within our boundary fence. This was done in Munro Mackenzie's time.

15670. How did it happen that the six men and your father were drowned?—The boat foundered in a storm off the shore here. There were two similar accidents since that time. The one was exactly similar, and the other was during a comparative calm.

15671. How long is it since the last serious accident occurred?—About twenty years ago in a great drift off the shore to Sutherlandshire and Ross-shire.

15672. Were the boats smaller and worse in those days than they are now?—Some of them are larger and more seaworthy boats, but there are others just about the same size as those.

15673. We have very often heard the people say that they prefer crofting and the cultivation of the soil, to fishing; does that depend upon the danger of the sea in any great degree?—My neighbours can make nothing of the land. Unless they take their livelihood out of the sea they cannot live at all.

15674. And are they deterred from prosecuting the trade of fishing generally from an apprehension of the danger?—No one was ever deterred in my township by fear of consequences. The crofts in my townships are so small that they cannot be subdivided. I have myself two sons, and they have not the breadth of my palm of land.

15675. Was your mother alive when your father was drowned?—Yes.

15676. Did you support her?—A younger brother than I stayed in the house then. That brother was drowned since.

15677. Have you in your township many widows of persons who were drowned at sea?—There are six alive to-day whose husbands were drowned. Of course, there were many more who are dead.

15678. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families are there in your town?—Sixteen.

15679. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How are the widows supported?—They have a little land, as we ourselves have. Two of them have only half crofts. They just live as Providence bestows upon them.

15680. Do you know of the new port that is being built?—Yes.

15681. Do you think it will be of great benefit to the whole neighbourhood here?—If it succeeds, certainly.

15682. Have you any doubt about it?—I cannot judge very well; only I know that the sea would be very violent there at times, but still skill will prevail.

15683. You have been to see the works?—No, I have not seen the works.

15684. Do the herring boats do any damage to the long lines of your people?—Yes, they injure them very much. My own son's lines were three times taken away this year.

15685. Were they lost?—He got the lines; a neighbour got them for him.

15686. But are they sometimes carried far away?—Sometimes they are lost.

15687. Dont you think it would be a good thing for your own men to turn herring fishers and give up the long line fishing?—They have no place to keep the boats.

15688. Will not the new port be a place to keep them in?—Yes.

15689. Is it convenient for Sgigersta as well as other places?—If all the expense that has been incurred on this port had been incurred in our place of Sgigersta, it would be a better advantage than ever could be made here.

15690. Will it be possible for them to prosecute the herring fishing in summer, and the long line fishing in winter and spring, after they get the new quay?—Yes, they could, but when once these fishermen appear off the shore they may drop the ling-fishing.

15691. Does it do any injury to the fish that are on the hooks when the lines are disturbed?—I believe they injure the supply of fish as well. At all events, the fishing has fallen off since my recollection.

15692. Is there any reason but the want of money why there should not be as fine a fleet going out from the port of Ness as from any other place?—Even with the quay it would not hold much of a fleet.

15693. But I suppose the men are as fit to be fishers and to compete with anybody else as those on the East coast are?—Yes, and as brave. There are no better seamen afloat.

DONALD M'IVER, Crofter and Blacksmith, Cross of Ness (50)—examined.

15694. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

15695. Have you a statement to make?—Yes. I that think that the island of Lewis would have been very much the better, and very fortunate indeed, if the present factor had been appointed when Mr Munro Mackenzie was appointed. I myself paid rents to three factors, and I have seen him do what neither of his two predecessors did,—that is, to wipe off arrears which poor people could not pay. Our people complain that they are still suffering from the oppression and high-handedness of the two former factors, Mr Mackenzie and Mr Munro. An old man of eighty in our township tells me that he saw the township occupied by seven families, and that the rent of it at that time was £42, 16s. 6d. To-day it is £76, 3s. in addition to taxes.

15696. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families?—There are thirty-five paying rent, and one not. They complain that for the last thirteen or fourteen years £100 a year of rent is imposed upon the district from Shader downwards, which ought properly to be paid by the farm of Galston. I cannot personally testify to this, but the people complain that that is the case.

15697. Will you explain it?—There is a succeeding delegate who can explain these matters better than I can. They complain of the want of land, and that the rent of what they have is high.

LEWIS.
NESS.
Donald M'Iver.

15698. There were seven families in the recollection of a very old man. When you first remember, how many families were there resident?—I believe it has been much about the same ever since I remember as it is to-day.

15699. You remember about thirty years back?—I only came to this place fifteen years ago.

15700. Where did you come from?—South Dell, in this parish.

15701. When you came here did you get a croft?—Yes.

15702. Was it a vacant croft or was there a croft made for you?—I exchanged with another man.

15703. Have you got full employment as a blacksmith?—No.

15704. Do you find your employment as a blacksmith increasing, or has it fallen off?—Work does not decrease, but blacksmiths increase, and so the amount of work which each gets is less, but there is more work going.

15705. Where is the nearest blacksmith?—At Swainbost.

15706. How far off is that?—About half a mile.

15707. Do you think the people have fewer horses now than they had when you came here?—About the same.

15708. Have they more carts now?—The carts are not fewer; probably they are more numerous.

15709. What stock do you keep in your croft?—A horse, two cows, two young animals, twenty sheep.

15710. What is your rent?—£3, 1s. in addition to taxes.

15711. Has your rent been increased since you came?—Yes, very much.

15712. In what respect?—The very year I came Mr Hunter, then ground officer, rearranged the rents. He increased the rent at that time. There was 5s. that used to be paid in labour, and this man imposed it upon us in the name of moorland pasture, as rent. Then he charged 1s. a head extra to defray the cost of the estate books in which he entered down our names in the rent roll; that is, he told us so. Then there was hen money, 1s., and my share of the rent of Galston about 1s. in the pound, I believe. But our township pays less in proportion than any other township in Ness of this Galston rent. I used to hear that other townships were charged 2s. a pound for this Galston business.

15713. How much was added altogether?—I reckoned it about 9s.

15714. But 5s. was instead of labour?—Why was it put down in the name of moorland pasture, because we were paying for the moorland pasture before.

15715. Probably part was the one and part was the other?—He did it through high-handedness.

15716. You say you have one horse, two cows, two stirks, and twenty sheep per £3, 1s. Do you think the rent is too high?—I do not complain so much of the high rent as of the small holding. If I had a third more land I would be much better off—or perhaps half as much again.

15717. Do you depend most on your trade as a blacksmith or most upon the land?—To tell the truth, I believe that the one source of industry injures the other. If I had half as much again of land I might perhaps keep a pair of horses and a servant lad, and then I could give my whole time to my own trade, but as it is, I am injured by acting as a tradesman to-day and acting as a farm-servant to-morrow.

15718. Are your own charges the same now as they were fifteen years ago?—No, they are not exactly the same. The old custom of the country was that each crofter paid a peck of corn, as blacksmith's dues, for keeping

his agricultural implements in good order, but now the people have got very poor, and they cannot pay us in grain or money, so that we tradesmen suffer in that way.

15719. Do you make the same charge for shoeing a horse that you did fifteen years ago?—The price varies, depending upon the price of coal and iron. A few years ago these were very dear, and we charged 4s. for a complete set, or 1s. per shoe. We do it just now for 3s. per set, or 9d. per shoe.

15720. Do you find iron much cheaper now than it used to be?—It is much cheaper than it was some years ago.

15721. But comparing your charge with what it was fifteen years ago?—It would be about 3s. fifteen years ago. The 4s. was a few years ago when we paid very high for iron and coal.

15722. Do you work for ready money, or do you give the people credit?—We give credit, and we are none the better of it sometimes.

15723. Do you find the people are less able to pay their debts now than they were formerly?—They are less able. They would pay if they could.

15724. Do you think that that is a proof that people are poorer than they were?—Yes. The great poverty of the place is the cause of it.

15725. What is the name of the delegate who knows about this £100 upon Galston?—John Macdonald.

15726. *The Chairman.*—Did you say that 1s. had been imposed for the expense of the estate books that were used?—That is what the ground officer himself told me.

15727. How long ago is that?—About fifteen years. Hunter did an additional act of high-handedness in our township which I had forgot. He took land from an old man who had a croft there, and he gave him a new croft, and of that croft there was only brought under cultivation at the expense of the proprietor a small bit, and the crofter himself stated that he got it at the rent of waste land. Afterwards this ground officer, John Hunter, doubled the rent and deprived him of his horse.

15728. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the crofter's name?—Allan Graham. He took from him his horse in payment of arrears. The man had a weak family, and was scarcely able to keep matters agoing.

15729. *The Chairman.*—But with reference to this question of the shilling, you say that Hunter told you it was for the expense of the books. Now Hunter has authorised a gentleman named Mr Walter Rose at Stornoway to contradict this. The same assertion was made by another witness previously; Mr Rose has been authorised to say that such a charge never was made at all?—I believe I can get plenty of witnesses to whom he said it as well as to me.

15730. Was the shilling charged only for one year, or was it made a permanent charge?—We pay it yet. It was added on as additional rent.

15731. There is probably some misunderstanding or mistake about the reason why the shilling was put on, and I will inquire into it?—I had the ground officer's own statement for it.

15732. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Could Hunter speak Gaelic?—Yes.

15733. And you have no doubt in your own mind that he so stated it?—No doubt whatever. I believe he said it to many another man as well as me.

15734. With regard to the other matter of Macdonald, who was ill-treated, where was the croft?—In our own township.

15735. What became of him?—He is in the new croft he got.

15736. Is he here?—No, I don't think he is here to-day. I asked him to come, but he did not come.

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15737. *The Chairman.*—Mr Mackay, the factor, informs me that there is no such shilling entered in the books, and he does not know what the ground officer may have said in former times?—We don't know what he may have done with it. I only repeat his own statement.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter, South Dell, (57)—examined.

John Macdonald.

15738. *The Chairman.*—Where is South Dell?—About three miles west of this.

15739. Were you freely elected by the people?—Yes.

15740. Have you got a statement to make?—Regarding their poverty. I have more than time will allow me to tell. You have heard already of the small holdings and the high rents, and I need not enter into details on that matter. They are very poor. Some are in want of food. That is their sorest cry. The land is so heavily burdened that it cannot yield crop, and just as that is the case the land that is pastured on by sheep is, as it were, crying out to be cultivated. We complain of the heavy assessments. The schools are a very great burden upon us. We were not used to that burden, and our poverty scarcely can bear it well. We prefer the schools we had before. Our objection to the present mode of education is that the rule which the Almighty has given us for our salvation is treated as a boy plays at 'skippack,'—just a slap, and be done with it.

15741. Do you mean there is not sufficient time given for religious education?—Yes, that it is merely a name. I have nothing to say against the late proprietor or against Lady Matheson, although they had bad managers under them, and just as the proprietors were badly served in our district so the Government is badly served in our district also. I must tell of a piece of impertinence where we were made a laughing stock of by the whipper-in of the children,—that is, the officer of the School Board,—just that he opened a letter that we were sending to Mr Mackay, the chamberlain. Mr Mackay himself knows about it. When there is such an amount of distress as that, these are not suitable people, as they would say in England, to administer a new colony. Our poverty would plead for patience and compassion in dealing with us. To put it in one word, the state of the place ought to be a matter of serious concern and humiliation to the people that are assembled here to-day. It is as though we were suffering from the wrath of the Almighty upon man's sin.

15742. You complain that the religious education is not sufficient. Do you think the children learn less of their religion now than they did formerly?—I am quite certain that they do. They do not understand what they are learning.

15743. Do they learn the Shorter Catechism?—A small portion at the beginning—the easy bit.

15744. Do they learn it in English or learn it in Gaelic?—Oh! what but English, that they don't understand.

15745. Do they learn to read the Bible in Gaelic?—No, not at all.

15746. Have you ever represented this complaint to the School Board?—No, we did not.

15747. Are you dissatisfied with the present School Board?—We complain of it.

15748. You know you can change the board at the next election?—I believe we have that power.

15749. You said the Government was ill-served because the officer of the School Board had behaved in an overbearing manner. Now the officer is not a servant of Government, but is a servant of the School Board, and if you change the School Board the School Board can change the officer?—I understand that quite well, but I wish to state in reply, that the officer when he did the act was quite convinced that he was backed by sufficient authority.

15750. To whom was the letter given?—To the compulsory officer to bring it to the post office.

15751. Was the letter closed and sealed?—Yes.

15752. Was it opened before it was put into the post office?—It never was put into the post office.

15753. How do you know it was opened by the compulsory officer?—Well, we went to search for that letter, and we could not get it in his house until his son would come home from school. We found it then, and we knew that it had been opened. There was an address upon it then in a different handwriting from the original one.

15754. Did you complain to Mr Mackay?—He was spoken to about it at the School Board.

15755. What did Mr Mackay do?—He said the man ought to be taken up.

15756. Was he taken up?—The fiscal would have nothing to do with it, because he was not a servant of the post office.

15757. Has the School Board discharged the man?—No.

15758. Do you think he ought to be discharged?—Well, I do not want a man to be destroyed,—killed indeed,—but I wish that evil deeds should cease.

15759. They cease when they are made public?—I wish that would come about.

15760. You complain about the school rate being so heavy. Now the minister told us yesterday that if all the children in the parish went to school the Government grant would be so large that there would scarcely be any rate at all. Have you ever been told that?—Yes, I heard that, but every person in this district is not a minister, and as such, able to shoe his children so that they can go to school.

15761. But the children all over Scotland, at least in many parts, go to school without shoes?—That is the case. There is no man here who is more anxious that children should be educated than I am, but I see clearly that cannot be done.

15762. Do you candidly think that the parents could not do a little more to send more of their children, and more regularly, to school?—I believe that the parents do not in that sense do as much as they could. I am further of opinion that if the man who introduced the Bill into Parliament had been a Ness fisherman, or a fisherman on the West side of Lewis, he would not have introduced such a measure at all.

15763. But it is very difficult to make laws which are equally applicable to all places?—That is quite the case.

15764. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the officer who opened your letter?—Donald Murray, Tarbost.

15765. Though you and your fellow-crofters know that you can change the School Board at next election, are you afraid of doing so, and thereby offending the higher powers?—Yes, poverty causes us to be afraid.

15766. How many people are now living in your township?—Forty-five.

15767. Were you born there?—No.

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15768. How long have you been there?—Fourteen years.

15769. How many were there fourteen years ago?—Forty-one.

15770. Do you know how many were there fifty years ago?—Thirty.

15771. Do you complain of being over-crowded as well as of high rent?—Yes, we are.

15772. Do you know about the people who were removed from Galston?—I ought to. I was born there, and my ancestors lived there.

15773. What was the name of the town you lived in?—North Galston.

15774. How many families were removed from that town?—There were over sixty of them. Fifty-four paid rent.

15775. Were there any more townships cleared besides North Galston?—Other three.

15776. Name them?—Balmeanach, Melbost, and South Galston. In Balmeanach there were ten families, in Melbost twenty-five, and in South Galston thirteen.

15777. Were these removed at one time, or did it run over several years?—Over several years.

15778. How long altogether?—Would it take ten years?—They were removed at intervals during a period of twelve years.

15779. How long is it since the last clearance?—Twenty years ago.

15780. Was the whole of this done in Sir James Matheson's time?—The whole of it, and without his knowledge.

15781. Was it all done under the one chamberlain?—No.

15782. Who were the two?—Mr Munro Mackenzie to begin with, and then Mr Munro.

15783. What was done with the land from which these families were cleared?—It was given to the tacksman.

15784. Was it the case that as each successive clearance took place the tack was enlarged?—Yes, that was the case.

15785. Were you well off when you were living at North Galston?—I could not ask to be better off.

15786. Was that the case with your co-crofters generally at the time?—Almost the whole of them were so at first, but at a later period the tenants of South Galston were added on to them, and then they were not so well off.

15787. There seem to have been 108 families altogether,—we shall say upwards of 100. What became of those families?—About forty of them went to America. The rest was scattered all over the country.

15788. Was it against their will that they were put out of Galston?—Yes, it was against our will, but we went away without being summoned.

15789. Was it for the benefit of the Galston people that they were turned out in this way and went some to America, and some to other places?—I don't know one who benefited by it except one family.

15790. Who was the one family?—Angus Graham, now in Shader.

15791. How did he benefit?—He got better land where he went to than the land he was put out of.

15792. Why was he favoured?—There was a reason for giving him a favour too; he built a slated house in that place.

15793. Would you like to go back to North Galston?—I would have some of my furniture there before I slept if I got it.

15794. In regard to the Gaelic, you stated that the children were not taught their religious knowledge, and especially that the want of instruction in Gaelic was against them. Is there any Sunday school in connection with any church where they teach the Bible?—There is a Sabbath school in the schoolhouse up in our place for about an hour.

15795. Who teaches that?—The schoolmaster, with some assistants.

15796. Are they taught in Gaelic there to read the Bible?—I cannot tell, I will not allow any one to go to it myself anyhow. They are making a greater amount of mischief going and coming, than they are obtaining good within it.

JOHN MACDONALD, Crofter and formerly Fisherman, Knockaird (57)—examined.

John Macdonald.

15797. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

15798. Will you make a statement?—You have already heard how the people have been losing their right over the land and how the rent has been increased. That is a very sad thing for poor people when they are unable to pay for their land, and are in danger of losing the holding they have, they being unable to pay the landlord. We can do nothing else now than lift up our voices in complaint to the rulers of the land and to the proprietor, to see if they will remove as much of that burden as they can, before we lose what we have in part of debts, and also that those rulers and the proprietor should spread the people over the face of the land where there is plenty of land and to spare, where they might be able to live in comfort. It was the people who were better off and who had most stock that were examined here to-day as delegates. There is a large proportion of the people who have no stock at all. You heard already how the rents were increased by former chamberlains, Mr Mackenzie and Mr Munro. We have no cause of complaint against the chamberlain and ground officer of to-day. Fresh land was brought under cultivation down at the Port within the borders of our township, and crofters were placed there, and because of the badness of the soil and the high rent they were not able to pay. When John Hunter found this out he relieved them of a portion of the rent so as to enable them to live, and added that to our rent which was already too high. Then about the Galston matter, of which you have heard, although we are far removed from the march, and though no creature of ours ever went there or ever shall, 6d. was placed on each of us for that fence, and 1s. 6d. per pound was added to our rents on account of muirland pasture, the effect of which was to provide land with no rent at all for the Galston tenant.

15799. The previous delegates stated that they were paying £100 which should properly fall upon the Galston farm. Is that true?—The delegate who immediately preceded me can explain that better, but there is a successor who also can explain it.

15800. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are they all fishermen at Knockaird?—Yes. Things are dark and hard by land and sea in those years.

15801. Has the fishing been unusually bad for the last two or three years?—Very much.

15802. Has the cod and ling fishing been falling off compared with what it was a few years ago?—Very much indeed.

15803. Can you give us an idea by comparison of what a boat's crew could make in former times, and what they can now make in a season?—I remember myself the boat of which I formed one of the crew landing 6400 ling in a season, and a neighbouring boat 8000, and now they can scarcely make 1000 in a season.

15804. What was the price of a ling at the time you first remember?—Sixpence.

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15805. And it is now a shilling?—Yes.

15806. Have you any idea what is the reason why the fishing has fallen off?—The fishing was better this year, but the season was very mild, and they were not prepared to take advantage of it.

15807. There is more herring fishing now about the coast of Lewis than there used to be?—Yes, and the herring fishers injure our fishing.

15808. How is that?—They should set bounds between the ling ground and the herring ground, so that the one would not injure the other as they do now. It should be so arranged that one set of fishings should occupy one portion of the sea, and the other portion the other.

15809. Are there particular banks on which the ling are chiefly found?—I believe that the ling frequents all parts, but we have particular banks for the ling fishing.

15810. The herring moves about more than the ling and cod?—Yes.

15811. Then, if there was a boundary in that way, it might sometimes prevent the herring fishers from getting anything at all?—Well, that might be.

15812. If you had the choice, would you rather take the inside sixteen miles or the outside for the ling?—If it was a good year, I would prefer the outside limit.

15813. How far is the outside limit to which they go?—I have seen them go twenty miles past the north end of the island.

15814. Do they go out of sight of land?—They can keep the high land in clear weather.

15815. Do they sometimes stay out for two or three days?—The ling fishermen stay out that way, but they are bound to stay out and watch their lines, otherwise these may be destroyed by the herring boats.

15816. What kind of boats have you at Knockaird?—Twenty feet keel. They pull them up beyond the sea-mark every night.

15817. What is a crew?—Six.

15818. Do they fish for themselves, or are they employed by a fish-curer?—Some of them fish for themselves—the few that can.

15819. Are the boats their own?—Yes, those who can buy boats wish to have them.

15820. What is the average cost of a boat of that sort with all its tackle and lines?—A boat, well found without the lines, would cost about £40.

15821. What kind of bait is used?—For the small lines they take limpets and other shell fish which they get on the shore, and with these small lines they catch haddocks, and then they bait the long lines with the haddocks. They also get eels and turbot upon their long lines.

15822. Do they use the eels for bait?—Yes.

15823. Do they use the turbot for bait?—They use all the turbot for bait.

15824. Do you know that they would get a large price for the turbot if they sent it fresh to London?—London is very far from here.

15825. Do you often get a turbot?—Yes, sometimes.

15826. What time is best?—In summer, if they can go far enough to sea and have all bait, they would have plenty of turbot.

15827. Do you think there would be a fishing of turbot that would make it worth while for a steamer to carry it to the south?—The fishing is not regular. It is only in good weather that they can go far enough out to sea where they can get it in abundance.

15828. Do they get tusk here?—Yes.

15829. In any considerable quantity?—No; that fish has got scarce.

JOHN MUNRO, Teacher, Lionel (23)—examined.

15830. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been here?—Two and a half years.

15831. What country are you a native of?—Ross-shire.

15832. Do you possess the Gaelic language?—Not sufficienty to speak it fluently. I understand it better than I can speak it.

15833. Do you possess it sufficiently to make it useful to you in teaching?—Occasionally.

15834. There was a delegate here to-day who complained that the religious instruction is inefficient, and that the children learn the Shorter Catechism in the English language which they don't understand. Have you any explanation to make upon that subject?—One explanation is that the children do not come punctually to school in the morning, and Scripture knowledge is taught from ten to a quarter before eleven, and by that time the children have not done dropping into school. If they came in proper time they would get their full allowance of religious knowledge.

15835. Is the time allowed for Scripture knowledge regulated by the School Board, or is it a Government regulation?—The Government lay down a code, in which it is provided that there must be two consecutive hours of teaching without Scripture knowledge.

15836. Do the School Board fix and regulate the hours of teaching generally?—Not that I am aware of.

15837. Is that entirely in your hands?—Yes.

15838. Would it be open to the School Board to prescribe that the Scripture knowledge should be taken in the middle of the day; for instance, at the beginning of the teaching after the recess in the middle of the day?—I am not aware of that.

15839. Is the whole of the religious instruction given in the English language?—It is.

15840. The children learn the Catechism in English?—Yes.

15841. And read the Bible in English?—Yes.

15842. Is the Catechism expounded to them in Gaelic?—No; but they all understand the English language sufficiently to understand the teacher when explaining it. The teacher makes a point of using the simplest language he can, and they are quite able to understand him when he explains the Catechism or the Bible.

15843. When the children first come to school have they any elementary catechism which they learn preliminary to the Shorter Catechism?—No, they have not in this school or in those of our district, that I am aware of.

15844. Consequently the youngest children begin their religious instruction by learning the Shorter Catechism?—Yes, and reading the simplest parts of the Bible.

15845. Do some children come to school without any knowledge of English at all?—Some of them do; in fact, most of them do.

15846. Then do you think the teaching of the Shorter Catechism is in the first instance reasonably understood by the children, or do you think it is in great measure learned by rote?—I think in most cases it is learned by rote. It is only the more intelligent of the children who can understand it thoroughly—in fact, there are some of the questions that it would take more than a child to understand.

15847. Do you think the religious instruction here is as efficient as it would be in an English school among English-speaking children?—It

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cannot be that, because the children have not the command of the English language so well as English-speaking children.

15848. Would you find it a great advantage and convenience if you possessed the Gaelic language perfectly in teaching?—I don't think it would. I find when any Gaelic is used in school the children are more apt to stick to the Gaelic. They speak too much Gaelic outside for the benefit of the English teaching in the school during the day.

15849. Then you think the children really learn English better because there is no Gaelic?—I cannot say they learn English better, but I am quite aware they learn it as well at any rate. That is my own opinion.

15850. Do you find the attendance of the children very irregular?—Very irregular, especially this year.

15851. Do you think the irregularity is in any material degree owing to poverty or want of clothes?—They make the want of clothes a great excuse, especially this spring. I find the attendance is very much below the average of the past season.

15852. Is the want of shoes pleaded, or is it the insufficiency of their other clothing?—The insufficiency of their other clothing rather.

15853. *Mr Cameron.*—You heard the chairman ask one of the former witnesses whether he was aware that the minister had stated that if the attendance of the children was good the rate might be reduced on one shilling in the pound?—Yes.

15854. Do you go so far as to say you agree with that?—I think the rates could be reduced very much by a better attendance of the children.

15855. Is there a compulsory officer in this parish?—There is, for this district—for the two schools of Lionel and Cross.

15856. Does he make efforts to obtain the attendance of the children?—Very strenuous efforts indeed.

15857. In what respects does he fail?—The parents do not pay much heed to him.

15858. What excuses do they make?—Their name is legion. Some of them during the spring-time say they require the children to stay at home to help them in tilling the ground, and the smaller ones to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. After the labour the herring fishing comes on, and after the herring fishing the taking home of the peats, and the girls require to stay at home to mind the house, and so on.

15859. What is the average attendance in the school here?—For the past years examination it was 222; this year it will be very much below that.

15860. Did you obtain last year a grant for 222?—Yes, I obtained a grant of £200 on 250 presented for examination. The average attendance was 222.

15861. What is the nominal number on the roll?—Close on 300 and sometimes it goes over 300.

15862. What age do you find the worst age for children attending? At what age do they offer the most excuses?—There is a great difficulty in the first place to get the children who are just of age to come to school. The parents do not appear to be willing to let them come. Then, after ten, the children are kept for working, and after thirteen they are gradually taken away altogether.

15863. Has this bad attendance been taken notice of by the School Board?—They always take notice of it, and direct that defaulting parents should be warned. On the occasion of almost every meeting they have there are defaulting parents before them.

15864. But have they taken any steps to correct the evil?—They brought some of the parents before the sheriff.

15865. What happened?—They all got off except one man who was confined for two days. They have been up several times before the sheriff during the last two years.

15866. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—One of the delegates stated that there was no Sunday school. Have you not taken steps to keep a Sunday school for religious instruction?—I opened one when I came here and kept it going till a month ago, when I had to close it for want of scholars.

15867. Had you any assistance in the instruction of the children in Gaelic?—I had one man who kept a Gaelic class to teach the Bible and Catechism in Gaelic.

15868. What were the hours?—From five to half-past six or seven.

15869. Apparently the hour which you set apart for the Catechism in the morning is not very convenient, as the children drop in from ten to eleven. Is the hour of five on the Sunday afternoon convenient?—Yes, it is very convenient; it is after the parents come home from church.

15870. In fact, it is fixed for the very purpose of convenience?—Yes.

15871. Can you account for the falling off in attendance so that you were ultimately obliged to close it?—I think it was simply owing to the want of interest which the parents took in their children having Sabbath school instruction.

15872. Had you both boys and girls?—Boys and girls.

15873. How many have you had at the highest?—Sometimes 180 or 190 when I started first.

15874. Is there any other Sunday school in the parish connected with either of the churches?—There is a Sabbath school kept in the Cross school in connection with the same church.

15875. Is it well attended?—I don't think it is very well attended in the meantime.

15876. Is that the school which the delegate stated he knew nothing about?—Yes.

15877. It is not yours?—No.

15878. *Mr Cameron.*—I suppose, although you have been only two and a half years here, you have had some scholars who left the school with their elementary education completed?—Yes.

15879. How many have left since you have been here?—I should say about a couple of dozen who were fairly good scholars.

15880. Can you say that these couple of dozen, when you turned them out from school, were able to speak English with anything like fluency?—The most of them speak English very well, and those who speak it best are the best Gaelic readers.

15881. If a person met them on the road, could he be able to understand them and make them understand his conversation in English?—Quite well.

15882. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any of your scholars who can read Gaelic?—I believe there are some.

15883. How do they learn it?—I cannot say how they learn it. Some of them can read Gaelic, and their parents cannot. I think the English assists them.

15884. Are there any of the Gaelic Society's schools in operation?—I believe there is one at Sgigersta still in operation. The teacher of that Gaelic school was at one time appointed by the board to come to this school to give Gaelic instruction, and the former teacher left it to the option of the children to attend this class or not; and in about three

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months' time they dropped off. There were not more than a dozen at the beginning, and they dropped off to one, who was the teacher's son.

15885. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—They preferred something else to Gaelic?—They prefer the English.

15886. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The number attending that Gaelic school is very small?—Very small; some days it is not held at all, I believe.

JOHN MACLEOD, Boat-Builder, Ness (35)—examined.

John Macleod.

15887. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been established here?—I have been here all my days.

15888. Are you a native of Ness?—Yes.

15889. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any dealings with the people besides those in your immediate neighbourhood?—No, I am just a boat-builder, and supply fishermen with boats.

15890. How many do you build in a year?—Sometimes I used to build six or seven.

15891. Has your trade been getting better or falling off?—It has been something about the same for a good while back.

15892. Do you build these boats for the fishermen?—Yes.

15893. Then I gather from that that they all use their own boats?—Yes; they all use boats that are built at the port or at Stornoway.

15894. You do not build for Stornoway people?—Sometimes.

15895. Are those included in the six or seven?—That depends on the number of boat-builders that are together. It will give enough to one man to build these.

15896. But as a rule the boats are built for the fishermen and not for the curers?—For both.

15897. Do you build as many for the curers as for the fishermen?—More for the curers.

15898. Then the custom is that the fish-curers own the boats?—Yes; they buy the boats of us.

15899. What are the terms between the fish-curers and the crews of the boats?—They give them the boats on three years' shares. The boat comes to £30, and that is £10 a year for three seasons. If the crew can clear it off in three seasons, the boat is theirs; but if not, it is the property of the curer.

15900. Do they get a chance again?—Yes, if they are engaged to fish for the curer.

15901. Is that agreement independent of any agreement between the curer and the crew as to catching fish?—Yes.

15902. There are separate agreements?—Yes, that is a separate agreement. They have another agreement for the ling.

15903. What is that agreement?—That the curer shall pay so much per ling from this date until 6th July or whatever it is, and the settlement will be in November.

15904. Are the crews of the boats expected to take provisions from the fish-curers, or do they get the price in money?—They are independent of that if they like. They need not go to the curer if they don't like. The curer is bound to pay them.

15905. We saw three boats on the shore here; are these the boats that cost only £30 each?—Yes, the shell of them and the ropes and mast, but not including the sail.

15906. What would the sail cost?—£8.

15907. And the tackle necessary for fishing?—The boat cannot go out without lines. The total cost is about £42 or £43.

15908. You are talking of the ling fishing?—Yes.

15909. They do not require nets for the ling fishing?—No.

15910. You have had a good deal to do with the movement which resulted in the construction of the port here?—Yes.

15911. How many boats of that size will that port contain when it is completed?—Not more than twenty-five or thirty. The excavation is too small.

15912. They are to excavate to the depth of about ten feet?—It will be thirteen feet nine inches, but it is only a small boat that it can accommodate.

15913. What are they going to do with the boulders and rocks that are in the way?—There are no rocks in the way.

15914. But the harbour will embrace some rocks?—Yes. The breakwater is going up on them. They are going to run the pier on the top of them.

15915. Are they going to blast away any of the rocks?—Yes; they must blast when they are excavating to that depth.

15916. And you think it will be a considerable benefit to the fishing population?—I know it will.

15917. Would it have been better if it had been larger?—A great deal. If I had £40,000 to-day I would put it into it, and I would be sure of it being paid back very soon. That is how I would build it, for the locality is too poor to expect anything out of it. I would lay out the money in that way and charge dues. They could go east or west from such a harbour—from Carloway to Cape Wrath.

15918. How many boats are going round there?—A good many hundreds at this time of the year.

15919. Are many of the boats there now?—I don't know how many are at Stornoway now.

15920. Are the most of the people in this place fishermen?—Yes. These are the ling fishermen—the men who are depending on this harbour.

15921. Do the Stornoway boats intend to come into this harbour when it is made?—Yes, it would do for them to come into if it was larger. It could be made larger. I was round the place with the engineer, and I know the route well enough.

15922. At any future time, if they found the harbour not large enough, could they extend it and make it larger according to the plan?—Yes, and they could have a deep-water harbour.

15923. In fact they could extend the present harbour in case they wanted to do so?—Yes.

15924. I suppose there are hundreds of boats at Stornoway?—Yes.

15925. Would a large portion of these boats like to use this harbour when the fishing happens to be here?—Yes, I believe they would.

15926. Do you think the people here are as well off as they were some years ago?—No, I do not. When I remember first they would take notice of a man whom they saw on the street that was in debt to the curers, and now you cannot see a man without that, except very very few.

15927. And when they see a man not in debt do they point him out now?—They can put their finger on every one to-day. It is due to the bad seasons and bad fishing and the system of working they have in the ling fishing. They have to go out and set their lines, and they have a big stone at the end of the lines and a rope up to the top of the water

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with a buoy. So when the herring boats come they are setting their own nets, and these are drifted and they carry away the lines.

15928. Then you agree with what was said by the previous witnesses that the ling fishing has been considerably damaged by the herring boats?—I agree with that. I believe that the herring fishing and ling fishing cannot be done in the same place. It ought to be done in the way of winter ling fishing and summer herring fishing.

15929. To what other cause do you attribute the poverty among the fishermen?—That seems the great cause. It is a very good boat that takes 1000 ling this year. I remember when they were taking 6000.

15930. Do you think there are as many fish on the coast now as there used to be?—I cannot go into that at all.

15931. There is nothing else you can suggest, except that the herring boats should do less damage to the ling fishers, and that the harbour should be larger?—My suggestion is that a large harbour should be built here, and that they should get large boats as their neighbours do from the east coast. All these men have to go to the east coast, and must be under masters who can do with them as they like, engaging them at such a price as they can give them, and they have not even one net of their own.

15932. What do these men generally bring home in a fair year from the east coast?—I have seen them coming home with from £5 to £20; and some of them with less than £5 some years.

15933. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Last year was a bad year, I suppose?—Yes, according to the fishing. They are just taking them at so much per cran.

15934. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you think the people here are suited more for fishermen than for farmers?—I think they are more suitable for fishermen than for farmers. They cannot do both, and it is at the same time that both things should be prosecuted.

15935. And you would like to see them stick more at home rather than go to the east coast?—Yes, for I see all these fishermen on the east coast, and I know a few of them.

15936. There are none of them farmers on the east coast?—No; they may just have an acre or so as a garden.

15937. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean to say that you think the fishermen ought to have no land at all or that they ought to have land enough for one or two cows?—That is my idea. I am sure that fishing and farming cannot be done together.

15938. But ought they to have land for one or two cows, or do you think they should have no land at all?—Well, I should like them to have a garden.

15939. But not a cow's grass?—If they could keep one cow it would be a great benefit to them.

15940. From what funds is the work at the harbour being carried on?—Lady Matheson gave £1500 and the Fishery Board gave £4500.

15941. Do you know whether any application was made to the Board in London for funds?—Yes; I know there was.

15942. You made an application to the Public Works Loans Commission?—No, but I wrote a letter to Mr Gladstone for it.

15943. But you are aware there is a Board which advances money for public improvements, called the Public Works Loans Board?—I know there is a Loans Board.

15944. Was there any application made to it?—I don't think so.

15945. You say it would have been better to make the harbour much larger, and to make it a deep-water harbour. In case the harbour was

ever enlarged thereafter, would the present work be useless and thrown away, or could the present work be made useful towards a larger harbour?—The present work need not be thrown away at all, and I was very much pleased when I saw from the plans that they could make a continuation of a large harbour.

15946. Do you think that the present work will stand; is it substantial?—Well I do not know. I doubt it very much—this piece they are making just now,—for it is just a piece they are running on the front out to the sea, and there is not a back to it. That is the worst I saw about the plan, and I objected to it the moment I saw it.

15947. You mean that the present wall at right angles to the shore is not sufficiently supported?—I think not.

15948. How ought it to be supported?—If there was another one at the back of it, and a hearting, and a parapet the same as the rest of it, it would be sufficient to stand the waves; for the out-sweep of the sea here is stronger than at any place the Stevensons saw in their life, and I am afraid it will take the corner of the outer pier out.

15949. At all tides the boats will not be able to get in?—No; not with the present wall.

15950. Would they be able to come in under your plan for a larger harbour?—Yes there is five feet of water at lowest spring water according to my plan.

15951. What do these big boats draw?—I do not know very well, but I think eight feet will do well enough.

15952. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is looking after this part of the Matheson property?—Not any one.

15953. Who is responsible for the place being so very dirty down about here?—I suppose it is the sanitary inspector.

15954. When this pier is erected will there not be some authority to look after it?—There is a sanitary inspector paid to do it, and he ought to look after it.

15955. *The Chairman.*—Who is the sanitary inspector?—The sanitary inspector for the parish of Barvas. He lives in Stornoway.

15956. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Don't you think the state of matters there is disgraceful?—I am very much disgusted with it, but I cannot help it, I would like to see it clean.

15957. There is no reason why it should not be clean?—No reason. They could keep it as clean as any town in Scotland, for there is a burn there, and they could clean everything down to it. We are fifty feet higher than the level of the sea, and there is always running water.

15958. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has any complaint been made to the inspector?—I don't suppose there has; I do not know.

15959. *The Chairman.*—What is his name?—Hector Ross; he is the parochial inspector too.

15960. Does he often come here?—Yes; I have seen him often come over here.

15961. Does he ever give any order about cleaning?—I never heard it.

FARQUHAR MURRAY, Crofter, North Dell (51)—examined.

15962. *The Chairman.*—Were you freely elected by the people?—Yes.

15963. Will you make a statement on behalf of those whom you represent?—You already heard other delegates complain how the rent has

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been raised. Perhaps it should have been a matter of complaint in the first instance to the chamberlain, because he is a man who likes to see things put right. We have seen him put other things upon a proper footing when he found them amiss. That is all I have to say. There were some people who were removed in order to add to the land attached to the mill. I knew very little about it, and I declined to make the statement, but they sent it in in this writing. This is the statement:—'We the undersigned, 'humbly beg to set before you certain facts and grievances in the follow-'ing statements—to which we call your kind attention and consideration. 'Firstly, there stood in the village of North Dell, a slated house which 'became vacant nine years ago. We occupied one half of the village which 'contained about a hundred acres of good pasture and arable lands. The 'miller of Ness, who receives the 13th part of all the grain raised in Ness, 'envied the side we occupied; and through promises that he never 'fulfilled, he persuaded us to take the land that this "house" stood on, 'telling us at the same time we were not to remove from our old houses, 'and that no dyke whatever was to be put round the land we were to 'give in exchange. This false promise of his didn't last long, for we 'were soon served by one, and then another summon to remove, and 'build ourselves houses elsewhere; then at once began dyke building, 'following by the pulling down of the slated "house," the stones of 'which were put in the dyke building—the rent of which "house" we 'pay till this day over and above our land rents. Secondly, the most 'part, or three-fourths of the grazing land by the sea-shore we are deprived 'of, which originally belonged to the tack where we now are, though the 'rent remains the same for us to pay. Nor is this all—for the last three 'summers Macfarquhar's (the miller) sheep eat the most of what we 'sow in the ground—in our space has been so limited, made between dykes, 'dogs, sheep, and a little over twenty acres of land instead of one hundred 'acres, that we can hardly make an existence, and we ever pray your 'Honourable Royal Commission to look into our grievances thoroughly.—'We remain, your most humble and obedient servants, ANGUS × CAMP-'BELL; JOHN × M'DONALD; JOHN × SMITH, representing Widow Smith; 'NORMAN × M'RITCHIE, representing Widow Morrison and others.—*North 'Dell, Ness*, 7th *June* 1883.'

15964. Have you any further statement to make?—No.

15965. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long have you been in the place?—Ever since I was born.

15966. Did these things happen that are mentioned in the paper?—I know that the men were removed, but I do not know of any of the transactions between them and the miller.

15967. How many were removed?—There were eight of them there that had land, but it is four who are concerned in this matter.

15968. How much of their land was taken from them and added to the miller's land?—They were removed from where they were, and their place was added to the house that you have heard already was left vacant.

15969. Where were they removed to?—From the one side of the march to the other side.

15970. Had they to build new houses for themselves?—Yes, upon the new lots.

15971. Did they get any assistance in building these houses?—I am not aware.

15872. How long is it since this happened?—Nine years.

15973. Has there been any alteration in your own land or pasture?—No.

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15974. It is only those four people that have this complaint to make?—I did not hear anybody complaining except those four.

15975. Then have any of the rest of the people of North Dell any complaint to make?—There were two or three of them that had a house on the other side of the street. It was taken from them—the house they had on the one side of the road.

15976. How many families are there in North Dell altogether?—Twenty-three or twenty-four with land, and three without land.

15977. What do they ask you to represent on behalf of them here to-day?—They ask me to state nothing except that they were paying the rent of that house that is mentioned in the paper.

15978. Are all the people of North Dell paying that?—No.

15979. Only these four?—Yes.

15980. *The Chairman.*—Have you any grievance of your own?—No.

[ADJOURNED.]

STORNOWAY, LEWIS, FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1883.

(See Appendix A, XXXVI. and XLI.)

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Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

DONALD CAMPBELL, Crofter and formerly Fisherman, South Tolsta (60)—examined.

Donald Campbell.

15981. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Tolsta?—There are about one hundred altogether, of whom about fifty pay rent.

15982. Were you freely elected by the people of your township?—Yes.

15983. On what day did the election take place?—About a fortnight ago.

15984. Was the whole township present on the occasion?—There was a large number present, but they were not all there.

15985. What proportion of the township was present?—Between forty and sixty probably.

15986. Who summoned the meeting?—The people of the place. They heard that such a thing was to be done.

15987. How did they hear it?—They heard through the country that these proceedings were taken, and when they heard of these meetings they met too.

15988. And those who were absent knew of the meeting?—Quite well.

15989. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Tolsta?—Another delegate and I were sent here in order to tell how some of the ground which our fathers occupied before us was taken from us. A moorland pasture of about ten miles broad was distributed between our township and the two tacks that marched with us upon the other

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side,—between our township on the one side and the two tacks upon the other side. When these ten miles were portioned out, only the breadth of two miles was left with our town, and afterwards it appeared to them that even this was too much, and one of these two miles was taken from us. We have now scarcely one mile—that is all the breadth. Perhaps it extends about five miles back, this mile between the sea and the moorland pasture. Then the last mile that was taken from us was added to a tack, and we were obliged to pay the sum of £7 before we were allowed to put a hoof of cattle upon this ground, which really was our own. Then, if our cattle were three or four weeks out upon the moorland pasture immediately after they came home, dogs were set after them, and they were placed in pound. The township of North Tolsta was originally under a tack, then afterwards it was lotted out among the crofters, and over twenty years ago it was made a tack of again, and it is now under big sheep. And when they sent away the crofters from that place in order to make a tack of it, they sent some of them away to America, and others of them they crowded in upon us. This tack is a portion of the township. They crowded in upon us in the rest of the township of North Tolsta *the people that were not sent to America in order to make* room for the tack. North Tolsta is entirely tack. It is the people of South Tolsta that elected me to come here, and they call a portion of it sometimes Balmeanach. So when the people were removed from North Tolsta and South Tolsta in order to clear it for a tack, some of them were sent to America and others crowded upon us. It was necessary to make room for them because they were removed from their own place, and some of the people of South Tolsta who were in arrears of rent were removed from their own places outside the township in order to make room for those of North Tolsta that were sent in upon them. These got no land, and it mattered little whether they were alive or dead, so far as the authorities were concerned. There are between fifty and sixty young men in the township—some of them married, some not—who wish to acquire land, and who have not got it. These have been trained in the defence of their Queen and country both on land and sea. These think that a portion of the land which belonged to their forefathers should be given to them—the waste land which is under sheep. There is a great portion of land now lying waste—uncultivated under sheep—perfectly capable of supporting these people if they could only get it. Under the turf of this land there lies the possibility of plenty of oatmeal and barley-meal for the sustenance of these people, if they only could get possession of it. It is sad to see that the people whom God created for His own glory should be crowded in together upon each other to make room for big sheep. As we heard a good man belonging to Caithness saying—'The landlords 'said that the earth was theirs, while the Scripture saith that the earth 'is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.'

15990. *Mr Cameron.*—Do I understand you to say that those ten miles of moorland were taken away from them twenty years ago?—It was not taken from us. These ten miles belonged to these two tacks and our township, and when the appointment was made only two miles were left with us.

15991. Then eight miles were taken from you?—No, that could not be said, because the ten miles belonged to the two tacks and us.

15992. Was it common pasture between the two tacks and the crofters?—Yes, that was the case.

15993. So your share of that would have been about three and one third miles?—No, our share would have been two miles, but then they took away more than one of these two miles from us.

15994. Then the complaint is not that they took away anything from the ten miles, but that they took away one of the two miles?—Our complaint is with respect even to the two miles, that it is less than our proper share. If it were properly divided we should have over three—three and a third.

15995. Then the difference in the first instance is between the three and one-third miles and two miles which you should have got?—Yes, that was our first complaint.

15996. And the second complaint is that of the two miles one was taken from you subsequently and added to the tack?—Yes, that is our second complaint. More than a mile was taken from us and less than a mile left with us.

15997. What sort of land was it that you talk off,—this moorland?—Just moorland pasture—peat.

15998. What stock did it keep?—A mile of moorland pasture will not feed much stock. I cannot exactly tell how much. They feed the most of their stock without fence of their crofts.

15999. If they got this land again, what would they do with it?—If we got it back we would keep more stock than we keep to-day; but in addition, there were over twenty families thrown upon us.

16000. Would you cultivate that land? Would it be susceptible of growing corn, that woodland which was taken from you?—No.

16001. Was not land taken from you which was susceptible of the cultivation, as you say,—that would grow corn?—The tack of North Tolsta was taken from us, and it would yield crops, if we got it back.

16002. When was that done?—Over twenty years ago.

16003. Was arable land taken from them at that time?—All the arable land of that tack was taken from us. It was arable at that time, and people were living upon it. It is now pasture land.

16004. That is ground which you say was originally a tack, which was distributed among the crofters and then made a tack again?—Yes.

16005. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When was the rent last fixed?—About thirty-one years ago.

16006. Has the rent never altered since then?—Yes, it was raised.

16007. What was it thirty-one years ago upon the township?—About £140.

16008. What is it now?—Between £160 and £180.

16009. What is the name of the other tack you refer to besides North Tolsta?—Gress.

16010. What is the name of the tacksman of the North Tolsta and the name of the tacksman of Gress?—Thomas Newal is the manager of North Tolsta. The tenant is a young man, and I do not know his name. Mrs Liddle is the tenant of Gress.

16011. How many families were removed altogether from North Tolsta?—I cannot tell, perhaps there may have been about twenty.

16012. How many came in upon you?—Twenty-three.

16013. Then how can you say that only twenty were removed altogether?—My neighbour and I cannot agree between twenty and thirty as to the number who were there first.

16014. But how many do you say were placed upon you?—I cannot tell.

16015. You can neither tell how many families were placed upon you nor how many went to America?—No, I cannot tell how many went to America.

16016. Are all the families that were put upon you still there?—Yes.

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16017. How long would you take to count them on your fingers?—From ten to fifteen families of those that were in North Tolsta were sent in upon our township.

16018. *The Chairman.*—You stated that some of the people in South Tolsta had been removed outside the township because they did not pay their arrears of rent. Do you object to the removal of people who don't pay their rent?—I object. I would like they should have time in order to pay up their arrears. It might be made up in a short time, even supposing they were in arrears, and they should not be removed to make room for other men.

16019. Do you know how long these people had been in arrear?—I cannot tell. At the time they were removed the markets were bad and there was no price for cattle, and they were taking away the cattle without leave asked in order to pay up these arrears. The proprietor's people were removing cattle in order to pay their arrears without asking leave. They themselves fixed any price upon them that they pleased.

16020. Had the tenants not a right to take their cattle to the market?—Yes, they might do that; but they were gathering them in a certain place, and the proprietor's people were fixing the prices of them.

16021. But they might have taken them to market, had they wished themselves?—Yes, but the prices were so low.

RODERICK MACKENZIE, Crofter, Nether Coll (75)—examined.

Roderick Mackenzie.

16022. *The Chairman.*—This is the statement you have submitted to the Commission?—'Statements by Roderick M'Kenzie, crofter, and Malcolm 'M'Leod, crofter and mason, both of the township of Coll, to be 'submitted to the Commission on behalf of the crofters of said town. 'Fifty years ago the township of Coll was inhabited by twenty-two 'crofters, keeping from three to five milk cows, with several young 'beasts all in good condition, and from twelve to forty sheep. Before Sir 'James Matheson bought the estate four crofters were put in upon 'our township, and when the township of Garryghuirm was cleared other 'four were put in upon Coll, bringing the number of crofters in Coll 'up to thirty.* At the same time a portion of the arable land belonging to 'the township was taken from the people, and given to the tacksmen for 'whom the people were put out of Garryghuirm, thus reducing the 'arable land of the people, while the inhabitants of the township are 'considerably increased. About thirty-three years ago the place was 'relotted out and made into forty-seven crofts, the rent of which was '£120; since then twenty crofters have been put in upon the township, 'every one of them paying rent over and above the £120, at which the 'township was rented when it was relotted. So that we now stand thus—'1st, the township is made less by taking some of our arable land and 'adding it to the neighbouring tack; 2nd, putting people in upon us in 'addition to the natural growth of the population, until now we have three 'families to the one we originally had; 3rd, the rent being increased gives 'the privilege of increasing the stock, until people and cattle are starved 'alike, increasing taxes and every other source of poverty and misery. 'The boundary dyke between us and one tacksman was built by con-'tract, for which every head of family in Coll had to pay 10s. Still we 'have to keep it up as often as any part of it falls down; yet if any of our 'sheep or cattle go over it, they are pounded and paid for before we 'get them out. We are so much pressed by tacksmen on both sides, and

* See Appendix A, XL.

'behind by sportsmen and their gamekeepers, that we are not allowed to 'walk without the fear of being taken up as trespassers, even upon the 'hill pasture for which we pay rent. There are twenty-eight crofters in the 'township of Coll, having only one starved cow each, when the tack on 'the one hand of us would keep one hundred families in comfort, and the 'one on the other side eighty. Further, we beg to state to the Commission 'that in one case we know of an old man who fell into arrears of rent, 'and could not pay, a young man who was willing to take land would 'not get the old man's lot until he got security that he would pay the 'old man's debt, for which he paid £13, which be only managed by sell-'ing the two cows he had. In Coll just now there are ten married men 'and twenty-six single men, who would take land to-morrow if they got 'the chance. Suggested remedies for the foregoing grievances—1st, 'Increased holdings, with sufficient moorland and hill pasture to enable 'us to rear stock to pay our rent. 2nd Revaluation of land by competent 'parties who know the locality, and security of tenure so long as the 'rent is paid. 3rd, Compensation for unexhausted improvements. '4th, That tenants have a full and free access to all moorlauds and 'hill pasture connected with their township, and have a right to pluck 'heather and cut rushes for thatching houses or any purpose of that 'nature without the fear of gamekeeper or ground officer.'

16023. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you remember when the first addition was made to the number of crofters at Coll?—Yes.

16024. Fifty years ago there were twenty-two. When was the first addition?—As I first remember fifty years ago there were two lots in the town.

16025. But when was the first increase in the number of lots?—Forty-three years ago.

16026. How many were added to their number then?—Ten families were put in upon us about forty-three years ago from the outside.

16027. Where were these taken from?—From Garryghuirm, which was cleared, and another township. Out of that place four families were sent in upon us, and these have now become six families.

16028. What direction is Garyghuirin from Coll?—South.

16029. What was done with the land from which these people were brought?—It is under sheep occupied hy the tacksman who marches with us.

16030. What is the name of the tack?—Upper Coll.

16031. How much arable land was taken from them and added to that tack?—Perhaps about £8 worth, and there was no abatement made in the rent.

16032. The place was re-lotted about thirty-three years ago and made into forty-seven crofts. Who was factor at that time?—Mr Scobie was factor at that time. He only occupied that office for three years.

16033. The rent then was £120. How much was the rent fifty years ago?—It appears that it is Mr Munro Mackenzie that lotted the town. He succeeded Mr Scobie, and it was he who fixed the rental at £120.

16034. What was it before that?—The previous rental was the same.

16035. What was the rent fifty years ago?—I cannot remember. I think it was the same amount.

16036. When the place was re-lotted and made into forty-seven crofts, where did the people helong to, to whom these new crofts were given?—They belonged to the place.

16037. None were brought from any other place, were they?—Not since Sir James came.

16038. The rent being increased gives the privilege of increasing the

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stock. What is the meaning of that?—Does it mean that everybody may keep as much stock as he likes?—They cannot keep more stock.

16039. What stock do you keep yourself?—Two cows and a year-old.

16040. No more?—Four head of sheep; no horse.

16041. Have any of the crofters more cows than that?—There are four that have larger stock than I had; but there are twenty-eight in the place who have only one cow, and a stirk perhaps as well.

16042. What rent do you pay?—£2, 9s. That rent was only **£2, 7s.** when the rents were settled by the factor upon information supplied by myself. There was an odd 6d. that has to be added to certain of the crofts—in order to make the proper subdivision of the £120, which was the rent of the whole township. But the factor said there would be no 6d., that it would require to be a full shilling—and this shilling, along with the shilling for hen money, has made the rent £2, 9s.

16043. How long have you been living in Coll?—Fifty-three years.

16044. What rent were you paying first?—The same rent.

16045. Had you more cows then than you have now?—Yes.

16046. How many had you?—Five head of cattle.

16047. And more sheep?—We had no sheep to speak of. There is no sheep pasture.

16048. Did you grow more corn and potatoes then than you do now?—Yes, at that time, but not since our lots were reduced.

16049. How long do your own corn and potatoes keep your families alive in an ordinary year?—According to the seasons. But eight bolls of barley-meal was the largest amount that ever I made in one single year,—sometimes four or five, sometimes six, and about one and a half bolls of oatmeal.

16050. How long would that last you?—Our own crofts used to tide us over the winter and sometimes longer.

16051. How long would the potatoes last in a single year?—In a very good year we might have fifty barrels of potatoes, and these would last till spring. Many years we might not have twenty barrels.

16052. How many bolls of corn of your own had you last year, and how many barrels of potatoes?—I had no potatoes at all. I could scarcely say that the potatoes grew at all last season, but I managed to save two bolls of barley from the storm, and that was all my crop.

16053. Then, in former times, did you require to buy meal after spring to keep your families?—You know that since Sir James Matheson got the property and since the potato disease, things have been very hard. I would have to buy some years fourteen, twelve, or ten bolls of meal, to support my own family, in addition to the crop.

16054. How much have you had to buy since last autumn?—I have bought already thirteen bolls of meal.

16055. How many more will you need before next autumn?—I cannot tell. It must be a great deal, if it can only be had.

16056. What else have you to live upon besides meal?—Sugar. We have neither butter nor flesh. We neither kill cow nor sheep.

16057. Is that the general condition of the people at Coll?—The greater portion of them. How can they be otherwise when their single cow does not give milk? They cannot make 2 lbs. of butter in the year.

16058. Have they any work at home in the island of Lewis?—No, there is nothing of that kind now; but as long as Sir James, worthy man, lived, there was work going that kept some people employed.

16059. How far are you from the sea at Coll?—No distance at all.

16060. Are many of your people engaged in fishing?—Yes, the young people.

16061. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say in this paper that this township is hemmed in by tacks and tacksmen. Will you mention the names?—Upper Coll.

16062. What is the name of the tenant?—Mr Hunter.

16063. Which is the other?—It is another township occupied by crofters that marches with us on the other side.

16064. But you say 'we are so much pressed by tacksmen on both sides.' Is that correct?—The other side is occupied by a crofting township like ourselves. We differ sometimes.

16065. What is the meaning of this stated in the paper that they are not allowed to work without the fear of being taken up as trespassers upon their own hill pasture?—The gamekeepers think that at certain seasons of the year they will not allow a man or beast to go upon the moorland pasture, and they employ one out upon this moorland pasture during the summer. They keep a man out upon the moorland pasture to take up any man or child whom they may find straying there, in case he may be there robbing the nests of the birds.

16066. Is this a deer forest or an ordinary grouse shooting?—We have no deer now. I remember the day—I was young at the time—when I could see one hundred deers on the hill, and I could not see three now.

16067. What is the name of the gamekeeper who does what you have mentioned?—I don't remember his name exactly. He belongs to Gress.

16068. What is the name of the shooting tenant?—I don't know. He is an English gentleman living in London.

16069. Why do you and the other people pay attention to such conduct on the part of the gamekeeper?—Bless you! have not I seen two lads sent for nine weeks to the prison there for robbing a grouse nest, and one of them barely came out alive?

16070. But it is one thing to steal eggs and another thing to walk over your own grounds upon your own lawful business?—That is quite the case, but our great complaint is that we are prevented from sending a boy or anybody else out to attend to the cattle.

16071. Are you afraid of being turned off if you stand out against any such conduct? Are you afraid of being disturbed in your holdings?—Yes, we are.

16072. Is the gamekeeper in the stated regular employment of the proprietor, or is he one that is changeable with the tenant?—I am not very sure, but he may be in the service of both. I believe he is in the service of the man who is the shooting tenant.

16073. Do you consider him, in point of fact, an authority upon the estate, whose will is not to be gone against?—Yes, we look upon him in that light. It is the part of the tenants to be obedient.

16074. You say here that there are twenty-six single men in your township who would likely take land to-morrow if they got the chance. What exactly are they looking for? Is it at present uncultivated land that they would take in and cultivate, or what?—The waste townships that are under sheep, that were cleared before, these are the places the people are looking for, and would be glad to get.

16075. But is there any place of that nature near you except Upper Coll?—No, except Garryghuirm, that was formerly cleared.

16076. To whom does Garryghuirm belong?—To Mr Hunter.

16077. How many families do you suppose this tack, if broken up and made into large sized crofts, would keep? You say, on the one hand, it would keep a hundred families in comfort and on the other eighty. Now, which do you mean would keep a hundred families, and which would

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keep eighty?—Colurich and Garryghuirm could accommodate a hundred families and Gress could accommodate eighty. Are all these places in the same neighbourhood?—Yes.

16078. Is the township much in arrear of rent do you know?—I believe they are in arrears this year.

16079. Would the people, if they got the additional land be enabled to stock it?—They would stock it by degrees.

16080. Supposing they got assistance to stock it at the beginning, would they be willing to pay back by instalment?—Yes, that they would.

16081. From what you know of the sentiments of the townships do you say they want no relief whatever in the way of alms but whatever they wish for they will pay in time?—Any assistance they might get they would pay it back; they don't look for alms.

16082. *Mr Cameron.*—You said there was an old man who was in arrears of rent and that his successor stepped into the croft, paid the arrears by selling the cows, and the arrears were £13?—Yes, that is quite correct.

16083. If the old tenant owed £13 to the landlord, the landlord might himself have sold the cows, and it would have come to the same thing?—If it would be as well to do so, still the man had to have his cattle sold in order to pay these arrears.

16084. Did the cattle belong to the new man, or did they belong to the landlord—as due for arrears of rent?—They belonged to the incoming tenant.

16085. Had the outgoing tenant any stock at all?—The state of affairs was this, that the old man had only one son, and he died. He and his wife were getting frail, and they had an elderly daughter who was supporting them. Now this daughter was getting parochial relief for attending upon her father and mother, and she thought that the rent of the croft should be paid as well as the relief she got for these services she rendered. Now, when the young man got the croft there was only £4 or £5 of debt, and when the debt had increased to £13, Mr Munro, the then chamberlain, came and insisted with violent language that the whole of this debt must be paid, and the new tenant sold his own two cows and paid the debt.

16086. Was he a relation?—No, no relation whatever.

16087. Or his wife?— is wife was not a relation either.

16088. Is it a practice in the townships, or on that part of the estate with which you are acquainted, for the new tenant to pay the arrears of the old?—I have heard several instances in addition to this one, from whom Mr Munro, the chamberlain, exacted the arrears of rent in this way.

16089. And does the practice still prevail at all?—I don't know what the practice may be just now. Ever since the present factor came in there was nothing of that sort done upon us. These things were done by his two predecessors.

16090. *The Chairman.*—Was this young man in possession for some time before the £13 was demanded of him?—He would be about ten years in possession.

16091. Did he pay his own rent regularly from the beginning?—Yes.

16092. And had he cropped the land when it was in possession of the old people and the daughter?—No.

16093. Are the tenants bound by the estate rules to keep a herd for their cattle?—We have a herd for the sheep. And the estate authorities wished there should also be one herd or two herds for the cattle, so that there should be no trespassing upon the moorland pasture, for the

sake of the grouse, but the people of the place objected to such an arrangement.

16094. Then it is a rule of the estate that only the herds or shepherds shall be upon the moor at a particular time of the year?—Yes, that is the rule of the estate.

16095. I forgot to ask the name of the crofter who paid this sum of money for the arrears of his predecessor?—Donald M'Iver, Nether Coll.

16096. And the name of his predecessor?—Donald Macdonald.

16097. Who wrote this paper you have put in?—Murdo M'Leod. His abode is in Glasgow.

16098. Was it read to the people of Coll before you came here?—No, they did not come to hear it read.

16099. Are you of opinion that they agree in it?—Yes, they would, and I am not certain but they may blame me for not having made more statements than there are in that paper. But there is nothing in it which I cannot prove, and which any person can gainsay.

16100. Did the people meet to elect you?—Yes.

16101. And the paper was not read at that time?—No. At the meeting one said put in this statement, and another said put in that statement,—but I put in no statement except what I was certain of my own knowledge was true.

16102. Then this statement, though written by a young man from Glasgow, was really written by you?—Yes, he merely wrote it to my dictation. He is a native of the place, and has come to live at home.

16103. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you elected a delegate because you are one of the oldest inhabitants of the township?—I was elected, whether I willed or not, because I was one of the oldest men and because I speak of old times even before Sir James bought the estate. I am such an age now that I do not require land for myself and I would be giving up land rather than be asking for more.

DONALD MARTIN, Crofter and Fisherman, Back (46)—examined.

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16104. *The Chairman.*—Who delegated you here?—I was appointed at a meeting that was held by the people of the township in the church.

16105. Were the people of Tolsta and Coll there at the same time?—The people of Tolsta were not there. The people of Coll and Vacksay were there as well as the people of Back.

16106. Who summoned the meeting?—I believe the association that is located here gave instruction that delegates should be appointed and a meeting held.

16107. Do you mean the Lewis Highland Land Law Reform Association?—I believe these are the parties.

16108. And did the people of Back elect you on that occasion?—Yes.

16109. Were they all present?—The most of them.

16110. Will you make a statement on the part of the people of Back?—[*Read in Gaelic.*] 'When the townships in which I live was originally 'lotted out forty lots were made and the rent was £140. Since that time 'fifteen additional lots were made, out of the back portion of the town-'ship—out of uncultivated land behind the ring fence. And instead of 'the township getting any abatement of rent, because of that the rent was 'raised. Now there are ninety-two families in the township. There are 'six or seven of these families who occupy mere bothies, and have no land 'at all. Then there are about twelve young married couples living in the

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'houses of their relatives—their fathers and fathers-in-law—who would 'be glad to take land if they got it, in addition to other young men who 'would also be glad to get married, and to take lands if such were to be 'had. Again, it is one great cause of the poverty of the people that the 'holdings are so small that they can only keep as much stock as they are 'able to feed, for if we, the people, had plenty of land so that we could 'keep a sufficient amount of stock, we could be able,—although the Lord 'in providence has seen fit to visit us sorely this year—still along with 'what we could take from the sea, we have sufficient amount of Highland 'spirit in us as would prevent us from allowing ourselves to appear as 'beggars before the people of this nation. We ourselves would then be 'able to maintain ourselves, instead of being a burden upon the charitable 'people of the south. It now appears that things will continue in the 'same state unless some remedy is found for them through the interven-'tion of the Queen and her counsellors. In the third place, this also is 'the cause and poverty among the people, that their holdings are so 'small that they must crop the whole of them every year. They are 'thus not able to leave a portion under grass for one year, as it ought to 'be, in order that the land could attain to some strength, for the land, by 'being continually turned over every year, becomes exhausted, so that it 'requires to be forced by manure before it can give any crop at all, and 'even then it will not yield a good crop. Again, in some places it is the 'cause of poverty among the people that the land is in such a bad plight 'by being so soft and wet, so that it is a risky matter to sow any seed 'there until it is past seed time; and so it is a matter of common sense 'that when sowing is late, reaping must be late too, and so the inclement 'season comes before the crop is gathered in from the places where it 'grows. An additional cause of our poverty is the want of harbours. 'In the place where I live the way the fishing is being prosecuted is 'sufficient to make an old man of one while he is yet young; for in 'winter we have to leave our homes for the fishing at ten o'clock at night, 'and on through all hours of the morning according as the weather will 'allow. We then, six of a crew, will have to launch a boat over a '100 yards of dry ground, and we have to do the reverse process 'when we come home again. We have to put a ton of stones into her 'along with the sailing and fishing material. The boat is thus loaded so 'that if the sea runs high upon the shore it goes over our heads before we 'can clear off. Now, if we had harbours we could work bigger boats than 'we have, where we could have greater safety on sea, and that would be 'less difficult to manage when we came ashore; and if we had that we 'could go three times farther away to the fishing ground than we can 'now do with the boats we have. Again, in the sixth place, there is a 'thing that causes great vexation of spirit to the people, and their minds 'are now raised so that it is difficult to pacify them until things are put 'upon a proper footing. This is the cause of it all,—that we see the 'land which our fathers had brought under cultivation by the sweat of 'their brows put under tacksmen, or, as they should more properly be 'called, desolators of the land, and ourselves heaped upon one another 'upon small patches of the very worst portions of the land, and many 'without any land at all, while upon the land which they possess as grass 'from one year's end to the other my father saw fourteen oat crops raised 'in succession without any manure, and the last crops better than the 'first. Now, in so far as I can understand the mind of the people, and 'especially of the younger portion of them, I fear that there is danger 'that they may rise as the clans of old rose, if they don't get a hold over 'the land of which they are deprived by Act of Parliament,—of which

'they are deprived for the sake of sheep, deer, and grouse. If some will 'say it is not right that we should be seeking these things, I shall not 'regard these as the poor man's friend; for if it is unlawful for us to 'ask it now, it was quite as unlawful for them to deprive us of it 'formerly.'

16111. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—At what time was the land divided into the forty lots at the rent of £140?—About thirty years ago.

16112. You mention that fifteen additional people were placed upon the back of your town, and in place of any reduction of rent it was increased. Now what increase was made?—So far as I can gather from the receipts that I have seen, there was 5s. of road money. This charge for road money was afterwards made into a charge for pasture money. Then there was 1s. of kain. Now, this has of late been added on of our rent, and then separate road money came in.

16113. What is the rent at present paid by the ninety-two families that are there?—I cannot tell.

16114. It is a good deal more than £140?—I believe there is a good deal more than £140.

16115. And not only is there no reduction of rent from the time of the forty lots—£140, but there are now more than double the number of people upon it?—Yes, it is the case. There is scarcely a lot that has not been subdivided, and the very few that have not been subdivided have usually two families living upon them.

16116. You have accounted for fifty-five of the families,—the forty and the fifteen additional, but there are now ninety-two. Were there any people put in upon them, or was that rise the natural increase?—They are the natural increase of the place.

16117. In the statement you made you referred to the state of the land being such that they could not sow early. We heard it alleged against the crofters that they did not plant so early as they ought. Why don't they plant so early, or sow their seed?—I can say for myself, and I believe I can also speak for the others, that there are many reasons in which, from the nature of the soil of my croft, which is so wet, so soft, that it is quite impossible to put one grain of seed into the ground until long after the period of sowing is over.

16118. Have you attempted to drain your own land so far as that could be done?—I did everything I could to drain it. I made no close drains, but I made open drains.

16119. Are you quite aware of the importance of early sowing?—Quite aware of that.

16120. We heard in some other places that the reason why the crofters did not sow earlier was that they could not agree, and that it was impossible for one man to begin until they all began. Is that the case at Back?—Well, as far as I am concerned, I never found that cause interfere with our seed time; but where the soil is light—where it is sandy soil—there might be some foundation for it.

16121. Would you be in favour of a strict regulation among crofters themselves to agree upon early sowing?—We don't by any means oppose any just and fair law that would contribute to our own advantage.

16122. You spoke about the twelve married men among them who want land, and also the young men who wish to marry and settle. Are these people possessed of means to stock the land, or would they require assistance?—There may be some who would be able to put stock upon the land, but there are many others of them who, on account of the poverty of their parents and other reasons, have very little laid by, and would require assistance.

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16123. Are those you refer to—the twelve married men and the young men—strong active men, willing to work?—Quite.

16124. Do you believe that if they got such lands as they would like, they would pay a fair rent, and work most industriously until they got it into a state capable of producing support for themselves?—We believe they are very much depressed in spirit from the fact that they don't get land, in order to get a chance of doing so.

16125. Will you mention the place which you think a suitable place for making a pier for the people of Back?—I think there are various places where it would not be very difficult to make a good anchorage; but because there is a fishing station at Gress, I believe that would be about as suitable as any.

16126. Have you any idea what it would cost to make a pier that would be suitable for your purposes—that you might go out and in all weathers?—I can give no idea of the cost of an undertaking of that kind, but I believe in this particular case it could be done cheaper than in most places.

16127. Would you and others be willing to pay a small toll or rent for the privilege of using it?—Very willing indeed.

16128. *The Chairman.*—Is it a pier or harbour you are speaking of?—A pier, I mean a slip or a breastwork; whereas by a harbour, I mean a place of shelter protected by a breakwater.

16129. And what you want is a harbour into which the boats may run?—Yes; that a boat might enter in all weathers and at all states of the tide.

16130. What would be the length of such a breakwater?—It would require about sixty yards, or perhaps eighty.

16131. How many boats are there that would anchor at Gress if that were made?—They would not require to be anchored. They could be fastened to the quay within the harbour.

16132. But how many would there be in such circumstances?—Sixty or eighty boats perhaps.

16133. Is there a population around Gress and within three or four miles of Gress that would own so many boats?—Only during the herring fishing time.

16134. And then boats come from other places at that time?—Yes; but there are plenty of the natives who come there at the same time.

16135. How many boats do the natives of your township at present own?—Seven or eight in the particular township and about thirty in the parish.

16136. Would Gress suit for the whole parish?—Yes, it would be a sufficient station for the whole parish.

16137. Have you anything further to say?—Now, as to the remedies in order to put matters upon a proper footing. In the first place, to give plenty of land to every one who asks for it—that is from six to eight acres, at an average rent of 10s. per acre according as the soil is worth. In the second place, we want harbours, so that we can prosecute the fishing more sucessfully. In the third place, we want that there should be a fund raised or something provided by Government for providing stock and improving the land. This money we would pay interest for, and would pay it back. In the fourth place, we ask that under an Act of Parliament we and our children in coming generations should have a right to the soil which we occupy, and compensation for any improvements that we might make upon the lands or upon the dwelling houses. Now, if we get all these things, we will be able to live in comfort, enjoying the fruits of the land of our birth and our ancestory.

16138. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there no Gaelic words for 'compensation' and 'improvements'?—Well, I would endeavour to express it in Gaelic.

16139. Is there not a good Gaelic word for improvement?—Yes.

16140. Why did you not put it in Gaelic when you were writing the Gaelic paper? Why did you choose English?—Because I was not certain that the Gaelic phraseology would express the same thing.

16141. If you never heard the people speaking, or if you had never spoken yourself about compensation for improvements in Gaelic, what first put it into your head? Was it English-speaking people?—I knew very well what the English phrase meant, but I was not sure that I could express it quite accurately in Gaelic—that my Gaelic expression would be a quite accurate rendering.

16142. I asked that question because Lowlanders and English people will be apt to think that Gaelic people have no idea of improvement, and that they have no word for it. You understand what I mean?—I knew myself the meaning of the phraseology quite well.

16143. Is it not a pity that strangers should think that Gaelic people have no idea of improvement and no word for expressing it? Is it not likely to put it into their head that the ideas of the people were got from outside, and not out of their own heads?—Perhaps it is.

16144. *The Chairman.*—There are fifteen crofters at the back of the ring fence. Did they improve their own land, or was that land improved for them?—It was themselves that improved it.

16145. Have you got one of these lots?—Yes.

16146. How long have you had it?—About thirteen years.

16147. Are you complaining, as one of those who got the fifteen lots or because the fifteen lots were given?—I am here to represent the people of the township, and to express their cause and complaint.

[*Rev. Mr Cameron*, Free Church, Back.—I wish to explain that the delegate or witness is in the habit of reading the newspapers for himself, and it is there he saw the words 'compensation' and 'improvements.']

ANGUS M'LEOD, Crofter, Aird (70)—examined.

16148. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Aird?—There are sixteen who have lots and eighteen who have not.

16149. How many families are there paying any rents?—Sixteen on the rent roll.

16150. Do you represent the crofters or the whole of the thirty-four families?—The township. I was born there.

16151. Were you freely elected by the township?—Yes.

16152. How many were present at the election?—Most of those in the township who pay rent.

16153. Have you any statement to make on behalf of these?—I remember that sixty years ago the township was occupied by eight crofters. The rent then for the township was about £37. When Sir James Matheson came into the estate the township was divided into sixteen lots and a piece was cut off it, that of right belonged to the township of old. The rent was then fixed at £48 or £49. A dyke to the extent of a few hundred yards was erected round the township by Sir James. Six shillings of addition was then added to the rent of each of the sixteen lots on account of the dyke, and it was promised to us, but not in writing, that when the cost of the dyke would be settled that

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money would be lifted off, and the payment would cease. For about thirty-two years now that dyke has been maintained entirely at the expense of the crofters. We were paying 5s. for road improvements, and an Act of Parliament was passed, I believe, for laying on an assessment for roads so much in the pound. The 5s. that we formerly paid for road repair was converted into hill pasture money, and for a few years we paid it under that name. It was then included in the rent without being specified. When I knew the township, under eight crofts, I have seen my mother selling grain to the distillery here, and paying the rent with it, and selling butter at 6d. the lb., and cheese at 2½d the lb., and paying part of the rent with it. And now, since the population has become increased, what I see is that much of the food of the people has to be brought from other countries, and their kitchen also. Undoubtedly, much money comes into the country now that did not when I was young. The herring fishery, which did not exist then, brings money in to us, and the Royal Naval Reserve brings money into the country. But there is none of the money that is in these ways brought into the country but must be expended upon food brought into it from other places, instead of the food that was produced in the country before. The people are kept crowded together on the worst part of the land, and the best part of it is under sheep and tacksmen, who have no families to speak of to support. I believe that is the cause of much of the poverty of our country. I have seen—but I don't say that the blame was to be laid to the door of Sir James or Lady Matheson—a neighbour of mine put out of his own house, and a member of that family on his death-bed, and the fire of the family extinguished, and threats uttered against any person who took that man in, that they would be deprived of their lands. I believe that one way of redressing the poverty of the people is to give them the lands legitimately and orderly for a proper rent, a reasonable rent. That will be the means of relieving the poverty of the people. Another thing is, that I have seen some losing their lives because they had no places of refuge in which to keep their sea property, that is their boats and their gear. I believe the second means of improving the condition of the people, would be to provide them with places of safety for their boats and their boat gear. I believe if things go on as they are,—if the Government of the kingdom does not look to our condition so as to improve the condition of the people when we have to be getting our food from other countries,—these countries will deprive this kingdom of the money that should be expended at home. If the people go on descending into poverty at the same rate at which they have done within the last thirty years, I believe the great proportion of the inhabitants of the Highlands will be on the poors roll, and that their maintenance will be for the gentry to look to—that the gentry will have to provide for their maintenance.

16154. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Sixty years ago, whenyour own township was under eight people, and paying £37 of rent, what stock was it that each of these eight kept?—Five or six milk cows, two or three younger beasts, of sheep also from half a dozen or a dozen to perhaps thirty or even forty. I have seen my grandfather have forty. They had no horses. Our land is not suited for horses. They can do nothing there.

16155. And how were they able to cultivate a big croft sixty years ago without horses?—They tilled it with spades as they do still.

16156. Was it these eight crofts that were afterwards made into sixteen?—Not altogether. Both ends of the township where the cattle pasture was were partially divided into new lots.

16157. Now, you consider that these sixteen crofts are too small?—I do.

16158. How many suitably-sized crofts could be made out of these sixteen?—I should say about ten.

16159. You say the rent of these sixteen crofts is now £49. Do you say that that rent is too high?—I say it is for the land such as it is.

16160. What would be a proper rent for the township?—I would say, looking to the quality of the land, that between £30 and £35 would be sufficient rent—that is, with the old boundaries of the arable and pasture land of the township.

16161. Then you consider that the rent which was paid sixty years ago was too high?—It was high enough for this rocky ground.

16162. What is the rule just now with regard to the stock that each man is allowed to keep? Is there a summing?—Generally there is not any summing; but thirty-three years ago we were told that the rent would be at the rate of £1 for each cow and five sheep.

16163. For every cow and five sheep a man had to pay £1 rent; but I suppose now that if he has one cow or five sheep more than his share, he does not pay £1 more?—No.

16164. And if he has a cow or five sheep less than his proper share he does not pay £1 less?—No, he gets no reduction of his rent if he had no beasts at all.

16165. Are there many in the place that are short of stock?—The majority of them are so. The ground cannot maintain their proper stock.

16166. Are there any who have more than they should have?—I don't know that there are any who have more than they have a right to.

16167. Are there any who have a full stock?—I don't think there are, unless there are one or two.

16168. And how is the ground able to keep these?—The great part of the stock is kept up with bought food. The man who has cattle sells the fodder to the man who has none.

16169. I understand that about the winter feeding, but what about the summer feeding? Does the man who has more stock pay something to the men who has less?—No, unless he has more stock than he should have.

16170. And then he will pay to some one who has less than his summing?—Yes.

16171. Would it not be better that there should be a strict regulation that would limit the amount of stock kept by each to the amount the croft would support?—The land ought to be able to keep up stock that would pay for it.

16172. Would it not be better that no man should be allowed to keep more stock than the croft could support?—It would, certainly.

16173. You say that ten families could live in comfort in your township, and there are just now thirty-four families. How would you provide for the other twenty-four?—I would give them a share of the good waste lands that bring forth no crops, and that are to be found in the island.

16174. Do you mean to say there is a sufficient amount in your own parish for the population of the parish?—I cannot say exactly, but I believe there nearly is.

16175. What are the names of the vacant tacks in your parish that you could apportion among crofters?—Aignish, Gormacleite, Holm.

16176. And you think that if these places were opened up to the people of the parish they would get crofts as large as the crofts you would apportion among the ten in your own township?—I am not sure that these three farms would, but I believe the whole surrounding country would.

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16177. You think that if the whole of the island of Lewis were taken into account, there is a sufficient amount of land within it to provide suitable crofts for the whole of its present population?—I believe so.

16178. You complain that the poverty of the people is such that the money that is received for herring and the wages the people get in the Reserve are not expended in the country. Do you think more of this money would be expended in the country if the people had such crofts as you speak of?—There would be no occasion to send so much money out of the country.

16179. Will you explain how that could be?—A man who had sufficient land to produce crops on which his family could live, would not need to expend money in buying food that grew elsewhere.

16180. But then such a man would not require to go and make money. How would you expect the people who make their money by the herring fishing to spend their money in the country? I suppose you mean that they would buy with the money they get at the fishing what they require within the country, and would not require to send the money out of the country to get food and necessaries?—I believe they would, and that if those who make money at the herring fishing, and expend it buying food from other countries, had land producing food for themselves and their families at home, they would not need to expend their money outside the island.

16181. When you spoke of getting the land legitimately and orderly, did you mean a reasonable rent?—Yes.

16182. Did you mean anything else than that?—I meant that the land laws for the poor people should be regulated by the Queen and Parliament and by the country under an Act of Parliament.

16183. When you spoke about a reasonable rent, whom did you expect to fix that rent,—the proprietor, or the tenant, or both between them, or somebody else?—I think if the landlord would appoint a person to value the land, no person could settle the value of it so well as those who had been labouring upon it.

16184. Do you really think the tenant alone should be left to fix the rent of the land?—I think he ought.

16185. The big tenant as well as the small tenant?—Well, I cannot say as to the tacksman. He does not look to what he can produce out of the land. His eye is to what is on the surface of the land, and not to what comes out of it.

16186. Supposing you got your good croft at a reasonable rent, what means would you take to prevent that croft being split up again?—Well, I cannot say about that. The population will undoubtedly go on increasing, and the surplus of them will be in want of land, as they are to-day.

16187. You remember a time when your own place, if properly worked, could keep you comfortable, and you think if the whole land were given just now to the present population it would do so still, but what means would you take to prevent the present state of things occurring again?—I believe there is a good part of our township now that is yielding crop which did not do so when there were only eight tenants.

16188. You said the people were quite comfortably off sixty years ago, but you also stated that as compared with thirty years ago they were much better off then than now. Are you prepared to abide by the statement?—Yes.

16189. Thirty years ago was just a few years after the great potato disease and after a succession of very bad years. Were the people better off during these years?—They were.

16190. Leaving out this year, were they better off then than they have been of late years?—There was on each croft at that time, only one family, but now there are two or three.

16191. So that the main cause of the present distress is the sub-division of the crofts?—That is one great cause.

16192. And you would remedy it by spreading them over the vacant places?—Yes.

16193. *The Chairman.*—You have stated that the tenant should fix what is a reasonable rent, and I am going to inquire in what mode you would fix a reasonable rent. In your father's time butter sold for 6d. and cheese 2½d. per lb., and so on, and yet you propose to reduce the rent of your farm below what it then paid. On what ground do you propose to reduce it from what it was at a time when the price of produce was so low?—Butter and cheese are dearer now than they were then, but cheese and butter are not made by the peasantry of Lewis as they were then.

16194. But if the number of tenants were reduced to what it was, then would not butter and cheese be made as before?—Yes, but I don't believe the butter and cheese would be so good as they were formerly, because the land is run out and exhausted since then.

16195. How do you propose then to fix what you call a reasonable rent?—I should say that the way would be to choose in each township three or four men who had come to years, who would fix the total rent for the township. These elders should apportion that rent among the crofts according to their respective value.

16196. Do you consider yourself old enough to be one of these elders?—There is no saying whether I shall ever see anything of what I speak of.

16197. But if you did see it, on what ground would you fix the rent of any particular croft?—I would fix it on this ground, to put a higher rent upon the best land, and a lower rent upon the worst land.

16198. Do you think that the value of produce should have any connection with the value of land?—I would say that the rate of the rent should be fixed according to the produce the land could bring forth.

16199. And that if the prices rise in the course of years land might be revalued at higher rents according to the rise in prices?—I don't think it would be suitable to alter the rent, for the markets might change with the different years.

16200. I was referring to averages of years and not to single years?—I think that should be left to those who had the Government of the land.

16201. Do you mean the Government of the country?—Yes.

16202. But your idea is that if the land were once valued it should remain at that rent for ever?—It is my opinion that the rent should not be altered for a certain time at any rate.

16203. You think it might be altered after a certain time?—It might.

16204. Supposing you were to value it now as against twenty years ago, would you take into account the state of the markets at both dates, and the price of corn and grain at each date, and of all the produce of the land?—Yes, that certainly would be a main cause of fixiug the rent anew. At the same time, the valuator would also bave to take into account whether the tenant had also expended any labour on the farm, the value of which at this date has not become exhausted.

16205. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been asked upon what grounds you would fix the rent. Do you know upon what grounds the

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factor or proprietor fixes the rent?—I don't know on what ground they make up their estimate.

16206. Is it not likely that the only ground is to get as much as they can for it?—We can see that undoubtedly. It is clear to us that they ask as much as they can—that they ask what is not lawful.

16207. When there is a rise put upon the crofters and others—a rise of £1 or a few shillings—do you know what possibly enters into the proprietor's or factor's minds when he takes upon himself to fix that rise?—I don't know, except to bring in more money to themselves.

16208. *Mr Cameron.*—Does it not occasionally happen that the proprietor or factor tells them the cause of the rise?—We get no account of the reason why such increases are made, except that we are told what taxes are added.

16209. But have there been any increases on your croft of recent years?—Nothing, since the time I mention when the crofts were lotted out, except the 5s. of road money which was changed into pasture money.

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE, Crofter, Branahine (64)—examined.

Alexander Mackenzie.

16210. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there at Branahine?—There are twenty-four families paying rent, and there are about three who don't pay rent.

16211. Do you represent the tenants, or both the tenants and cottars?—I represent both.

16212. How many were present when you were elected?—There were considerably more than the half present.

16213. And you and Donald Morrison were freely elected?—Yes.

16214. You produce a paper. Was that prepared before that meeting at which you were elected?—It was prepared after I was elected.

16215. Did you write it yourself?—No.

16216. Was it dictated?—Yes, we dictated it. The whole township was present when it was being written.—'*Branahine, May* 29, 1883. To 'the Royal Commissioners of Inquiry of the Grievances of the Highlands 'and Islands.—Honoured Gentlemen—Having this opportunity of stating 'our grievances, we the undersigned do hereby state some of them 'briefly as follows:—1st, Previous to Sir James Matheson obtaining 'the island of Lewis, Branahine consisted of fifteen crofters, paying '£60 rent, now it consists of twenty-five crofters, with an aditional 'rental of £16. 2nd, All the common pasturage which our ancestors 'had was taken from us with very little exception, and given to 'large farms; also the sea-weeds which were annexed to our crofts 'was taken from us and given to Melbost farm, which was not in its 'immediate vicinity. Last of all, the township of Melbost was thrust on 'the little pasturage that was left us with their cattle, so that we have to 'pay for the grazing of our cattle from the one end of the year to the 'other, on the very ground which we ourselves had less than forty years 'ago, but now in the possession of strangers, so that those that were rearing 'a stock of six milch cows with three or four of smaller animals cannot 'rear one single cow without buying her food. If a large amount of 'money were expended on this island as an excuse of raising our rents, it 'was more to our ruin than for our improvement, for we challenge any 'one who can prove that one single shilling was spent in improving our 'crofts or houses.'

16217. When were the additional crofters thrown upon you?—From fifteen to twenty years ago.

16218. You are referring to the township of Branahine?—Yes.

16219. Where did the additional ten crofters now at Branahine come from?—The township in the parish next to us called Holm was cleared, and the people thrown in upon us.

16220. Were you in possession of a croft at that time?—Yes.

16221. Have you got that land still, or did you lose part of it?—I have it yet. I lost nothing of my croft strictly so called, but these people were thrown in upon us at the upper portion of our township, and the new lots were lotted out to them there, so that our hill pasture was reduced in that way.

16222. Was any of the land on the new lots improved or did the tenants improve it themselves?—A little of the land was improved for them by the proprietor.

16223. Have they improved more themselves since then?—Yes, much more.

16224. Do you know at what rent they were settled there?—I could not tell, but I believe each pays about £4 to-day.

16225. Has their rent been raised since they entered upon these lots?—Yes, for additional pasture land they got.

16226. But their rent has not been raised in consequence of their own improvements?—I believe not.

16227. The £16 additional of which you speak applies, I suppose, to those crofters who had land improved for them?—No, this additional £16 was added to the original crofts, not to these others that were sent in at all. This portion of ground at the back of our crofts was taken from us, and no abatement was made in consequence of that, and the £16 additional was added on all the same.

16228. What is the rent of the whole twenty-four to-day?—I cannot tell accurately.

16229. Were the present inhabitants of Melbost brought to Melbost of late years?—No, there have always been people in Melbost. When Melbost people lost their land, they were added to our township, and they have themselves no portion of the out pasture which originally belonged to the township—nothing except what is within the ring fence.

16230. Then at present the Branahine pasture is common to the Branahine people and the Melbost people?—Yes.

16231. Do the Melbost people pay additional rent for this pasture they got from the Branahine people?—There was no separate arrangement with regard to rent. They pay the rent they paid before when they had their own pasture land.

16232. What rent do you yourself pay?—I got fresh land. It was very rough, and I took it all in myself. I trenched and drained it, and I pay about 21s. of bare rent for it.

16233. How long is it since you got this piece of ground?—Over twenty years.

16234. Where were you before then?—Always in the township. My father and grandfather were there before me.

16235. Who has the land your father and grandfather had before you?—A brother of mine.

16236. Then this increase from sixteen to twenty-five is not entirely by parties brought in; it is partly by the natural increase of the population?—Yes, some is due to the increase of the place.

16237. Do you know how much is due to each cause?—I could not tell at the moment.

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16238. How much land have you got?—About four acres of improved land.

16239. What stock do you keep?—One cow and one sheep. I also keep a horse; but my rent does not allow me to keep a horse, and I arrange with another man for its keep.

16240. What does the keep of the horse cost?—Well, the horse is grazed by a son-in-law of my own, and that makes it cheaper.

16241. Do you plough the croft with the horse, or let it out for hire?—Yes, I plough my croft with it, and I hire the horse out too.

16242. Have you any promise of compensation for the land you improved?—I have no promise.

16243. Have you any promise of being allowed to hold it for any length of time?—Nothing of the kind. We are told we have no claim upon anything beyond the bounds of arable ground. Supposing we make any complaint with regard to the out hill pasture, we are told that we have no cause of complaint with regard to it—that our rights are limited by arable ground.

16244. By 'we' you mean those who got hill to improve?—I mean the whole of the crofters in the place.

16245. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you and those whom you represent wish should be done now to remedy the state of matters?—More pasture ground, and relief from the heavy pressure of the burdens of rent and taxation that are laid upon us.

16246. Do you think your rent of £1, 1s. is high for the amount of ground you have got and the cow and sheep which you keep?—No, I would not consider it too high if it had other necessaries attached to it.

16247. You mean more pasture, I suppose?—Yes, more pasture.

16248. But if you had more pasture would you expect to pay more rent or would you expect the pasture in addition to what you have all for the guinea?—That piece of pasture ground at the back of our crofts which was taken from us we still pay a rent for, in respect that there was no abatement made when we were deprived of it. Some of it was restored to us.

16249. But you say you consider your rent would not be high if you had other advantages added to it. If you had other advantages, would you expect to get it for the same rent, or would you be prepared to pay additional for it?—We were deprived of pasture, and there was no abatement of rent.

16250. I understand you think you ought to have the same holding with additional pasture for the same rent?—It would be easier for me to pay additional rent if I had some more pasture.

16251. Where is this land to be got, and who holds the additional pasture which you wish to get?—The old moorland pastures of the township are now attached to the tack of Upper Holm.

16252. Do you know whether that tacksman has a long lease or not?—I cannot tell.

16253. Suppose the proprietor found that at the expiry of this lease more land could be added to the crofts—do you think the crofters could stock the land, or do you agree with the statement made by other delegates, that the Government should assist the crofters to stock the land?—I think we will require Government assistance, as previous delegates said.

16254. It is stated here that in the improvements that were executed by the proprietor not one shilling was spent in improving your crofts or houses. I understand that refers to the old crofts, but that some improvements were made on the new crofts?—These additional crofts

that were cut outof the back portion of their crofts, and upon which some money was expended, are called by a separate name. It is a distinct township now, and so the statement is true that not one penny was expended on our township.

16255. But money was spent upon crofters in a different locality?—Yes, the proprietor expended money in improving crofts at Holm, but these don't belong to our parish. Holm is in the parish of Stornoway.

16256. Were the people who were employed in making these improvements natives of the place?—They were Harris men, the greater portion of them. Some belonged to the place.

16257. Was there much other work going on at that time in the district?—Yes, there was a good deal. It was at the time people were removed from Harris and they came over upon the Lewis side of the march in order to provide for their families. It was the neighbourhood of Stornoway they came to.

16258. I suppose the people prefer getting work at home to having to go south to find it?—Very much.

16259. Have the crofters had their attention directed to the new estate regulations with respect to the improvement of houses?—Yes, all the people have seen the leases.

16260. Have the people in your township taken advantage of these regulations to improve their houses?—Yes, there are some that have taken advantage to some extent of these regulations, but we have no great encouragement in doing so when we have no security against removal. We had not even a lease of the place.

16261. Don't the regulations themselves give that very security you ask for?—I have not seen that any one among us has got it yet.

16262. Have you asked for it?—I cannot say that we did.

16263. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the tenant of Holm?—Mr Helme.

16264. Is Holm a good farm?—Yes, it is a good farm.

16265. Were any improvements made upon that farm by the proprietor?—Yes, a good deal.

16266. What was the nature of them?—Fences were set up, parks were made, and a good deal of it was trenched.

16267. Is all the land that was one under cultivation by crofters cultivated on that farm?—Yes, the whole of it was cultivated, as far as I can make out, and more.

16268. Do you know how many pairs of horses he keeps?—There are two pairs always.

16269. Do you know how many families reside upon that farm?—I am not aware there is more than one family—the grieve's family. The rest are unmarried people who work the farm.

16270. Has he got any cottars dependent upon him other than those who are necessary to work the farm?—No.

16271. Are there sheep upon this farm of Holm?—Yes.

16272. A good lot?—They vary. The tenant has two or three other tacks, so that he can change the stock.

16273. In this island?—He has other two upon this estate.

16274. Where are these?—Galston and Upper Barvas.

16275. Was it for the benefit of the people that were once upon this farm of Holm that they were removed to other places?—They were not willing to go. They were sent away against their will, and the lands they had were added to the tack upon each side of them.

16276. Have the people been falling off ever since in their circum-

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stances—those that were so removed?—They are not better off now than they were then.

16277. Who has got the farm of Melbost now?—Mrs Houston.

16278. Were there people removed from that farm?—No, but all the out pasture was taken from them.

16279. Was that of considerable consequence to them?—Yes, it was of very great consequence to them. The loss of it was of great injury to them.

16280. Was the position of your father much better than your own?—Yes, he was well off. He lacked nothing that was necessary for a man's support.

16281. Have you yourself been industrious all your days, endeavouring to make the best of it?—Yes.

16282. And yet you are a poor man?—Yes. My position is nothing compared with what my father's was.

TORQUIL M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Knock (40)—examined.

Torquil M'Leod.

16283. *The Chairman.*—Have you been freely elected by the people of Knock?—Yes.

16284. How many were present when you were elected?—Forty or fifty, at least.

16285. How many families are there in the township of Knock?—Forty-four or thereabouts.

16286. Then the people who elected you came from other places than Knock?—There were a few from other places.

16287. But most of the Knock people were there?—There were scarcely any people but the people of the place.

16288. Have you any statement to make on the part of the people of Knock?—I have to say, in the first place, on their behalf, that to begin with, a portion of the arable land of the township was taken away from them to provide a site for a manse and a glebe for the Established Church. Then a piece of macher land that we had was taken from them and added to the tack of Aignish; that is, a green sward over a patch of sand. Then the moorland pasture which our fathers had we were deprived of, so that if we now will send a cow for a few weeks to that moorland pasture we must pay 2s. a head for the period, and 4d. for sheep for the same pasture ground for a settled period. Then the people in the township are very much crowded together, and the ground outside our township is given to other crofters. While they were deprived of this pasture land there was no abatement in the rent, so that in the present circumstances of the township of Knock I can see no way by which the people can live. There is another specific thing connected with the fishing that is one of the causes of the poverty of the people. It affects more or less the whole population, but especially our township. During the last twenty years five boats were lost in our township for want of a place of refuge. The five boats belonged to the same crew. They were lost in the gale of October last. Seven of the boats belonging to Knock were utterly destroyed upon the 1st of October last for want of a place of refuge. Things have come to such a pass by our being deprived of our pasture, and for want of places of refuge, that if in these respects we are not relieved, this island of Lewis, so far as I can see, will come in a short time to be a burden upon the rest of the nation. I can see no remedy for improving the condition of the people unless Parliament

will see fit to deal justice to the people, by giving them additional land, and providing harbours of refuge to enable them to save their property on the sea. I believe the people should get the waste land that is locked up from them, through the whole island at present being under sheep and deer, and of no great use to the people. I remember the tack adjoining our township having been occupied by a crofting population. I could purchase a stone of meal from them when I required it, a barrel of potatoes, a bushel of oats, and a pint of milk. I see nothing on that farm to-day except green grass, rushes, and white sheep; and they even attempt to prevent us from approaching the fishing port which our fishers used, and which is one of two used by us, one of them being upon this farm.

16289. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What was the rent of the place before they began to take things away, beginning with the glebe?—I cannot tell.

16290. What is it now?—I am not quite certain.

16291. Do you know what extent of land was taken for the glebe?—About five acres.

16292. Any hill land?—I am not aware he got any pasturage.

16293. What was the extent of the piece of macher land that was taken from you and given to Aignish?—Probably about ten or twelve acres.

16294. What were the other parks taken away from you, to which you had to pay 2s.?—The summer moorlands grazing.

16295. Was that of considerable extent and value to you?—It was of great use to the people.

16296. That park, I understand, was not given to anybody, but simply a rent was put upon it?—It is now what we call a forest, and there are deer upon it; but we are allowed to send our cattle there, and we pay that amount to the proprietor for the privilege.

16297. Is that forest let to a tenant, or the right of shooting?—So far as I know, it is in the hands of the proprietor.

16298. Has the forest any particular name?—We have no distinctive name for it.

16299. Is it near the mountain of Murnich?—No; it lies west from here about three or four miles, out upon the road leading to Gara-na-hine.

16300. Can you mention how many crofters were placed upon you, and where they came from?—There were at first four placed upon one end of our township.

16301. Where from?—One came from an adjacent township called Swardale, and three came from among ourselves. There have been six placed on the other end.

16302. Where did they come from?—They all belonged to the place.

16303. Then it comes to this that the lands were all subdivided?—Yes, it came to that.

16304. You stated that, in your young days, you could buy milk and other things from the neighbouring tack. What tack was that?—It was a Mr Alexander that occupied it, and the farm was Aignish.

16305. Was it regularly cultivated?—Yes.

16306. And it is now a sheep farm?—Yes.

16307. Do you consider that the introduction of a sheep farm in that way is less beneficial to the neighbours and to the country at large than an arable farm?—I think it is of less use to both the neighbouring people and the country at large.

16308. You spoke about so many boats being unfortunately destroyed connected with the herring fishery. You heard it stated that about Gress

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was a very good place for a harbour or pier. Would a pier at that place be suitable for you?—At some portions of the year it might, and others not. The distance is about fifteen miles by land, and seven or eight miles by sea.

16309. Do you fish upon the Gress side or the Stornoway side chiefly?—It is at Gress that we fish herring just now. We go there every Monday, and come home on the Saturday. Herring are not found beside us now as they used to be.

16310. Do you know that the present rent, though you could not mention the amount, is bigger than the rent was before the glebe was taken off?—The rent is higher to-day. I am quite convinced of that.

16311. And you got no allowance for that or the piece of macher land?—Nothing whatever. I would like to speak about the school. We have great reason to complain of the excessive school rate and the little advantage which the young children enjoy in return for the burden that is laid upon us. I would be exceedingly pleased to know that some change would be made in the administration of education that would improve the education of the children, even supposing the burden should remain. There is one thing which I personally refer to as a burden, because I had a large number of children of school age. It is this, that at the time of summer, when it was easier for the children, badly clothed and sometimes badly fed as they were, to attend school regularly, and when it was easier for us to send them there, the school was vacant. I think it would be altogether for the circumstances of such places as ours—where we have bad roads and ill-fed and poorly-clad weak children, that the vacation should come in winter instead of in summer. Another thing in connection with the progress that the children are able to make under the present mode of education is this, that I consider the Act is an Act that has really come in order to deprive us people of the Highlands of any school worthy of the name.

16312. How far is the school from you?—It is just about a quarter of a mile.

16313. Are your children not able to go that quarter of a mile in winter?—How can you expect our children to attend regularly in winter with bad roads in frost and snow?

16314. Have you a vote in the election of the School Board?—No.

16315. Are you aware there is any dissatisfaction in the parish, generally speaking, with the administration of the School Board?—I know that the great majority are dissatisfied.

16316. Have the great majority attempted to put in a board that would please themselves?—They have not the chance.

16317. Don't you know that everybody who pays £4 of rent has a vote?—Yes, but I know that the great majority of the crofters in my parish don't pay £4.

16318. But are not the great majority of electors crofters, paying £4 of rent?—Yes, that is the case.

16319. And why is it that if the crofters are not satisfied with the board, they don't endeavour to put in a board that would suit themselves?—I cannot tell what the mind of the other people is upon the subject.

16320. Have the people of your district ever represented to your board that they wish the children's holidays to be in winter?—I am not aware that the people of our township have brought it under their notice until now.

16321. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What did you pay for school rates last year?—3s. 8d. upon the £3, 15s. rent.

16322. How many children have you going to school?—Three.

16323. What fees are they charged?—One shilling a quarter for each.

16324. Are your children not well taught?—I don't see much improvement in them.

16325. Are you able to judge yourself?—Yes, in so far as they have yet gone.

16326. Are you a good English scholar?—I am not a great English scholar in any way, but I can test their education so far as it has gone.

KENNTEH M'LEOD, Crofter, Garabost (54)—examined.

16327. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Your statement is as follows:—'Statement 'to be laid before the Royal Commission by the delegates of the 'Garabost crofters. When the brickwork commenced about thirty-'five years ago in our neighbourhood, the best part of our hill pasture 'was taken from us and attached to it. This was made into parks 'enclosed by turf dykes. These dykes we had to keep in repair 'till about two years ago, without receiving any wages for our labour. 'Paraffin oil manufacture was also for some time carried on in connection 'with this brickwork, and a stranger who came to superintend it got part 'of our pasture also; and our peat bunks were taken from us for the use 'of these works, and we had to cut them at a much greater distance from 'our houses, and sometimes the peats we cut in the latter place were 'carried away without our consent and without payment. One man, who 'cut some in the old place after we were told to give it up, had to pay a 'fine of £2, and his rent was raised 10s., and he still pays this increase of 'rent which was imposed upwards of twenty years ago. If our cattle or 'horses entered the parks even in winter we had to pay pound money for 'them. The children who attended the cattle were often ill used. The 'new part of our township was once common pasture, and we got no 'reduction of rent when deprived of it, but instead of this, we had to pay '5s. once paid as road money for the almost useless park which remained. 'The road money is now paid by a tax of sixpence per pound of rental. 'The rent of the whole township now, including that of the parks and of 'the new part of the townsbip, is nearly double of what it was forty years 'ago. Although the loss of life and property from want of proper 'harbour accommodation has been considerable, we got no help or 'encouragement from the estate for making a harbour; and a quay which 'was made at Bayble by the stranger with the help of the fishermen, 'who contributed £1 per crew, was destroyed, the stones having been 'removed for making improvements connected with the estate. Suppos-'ing a man on the day of collecting the rents, from some unavoid-'able cause, failed to answer his name when called, no explanation 'whatever would exempt him from paying a fine of 1s. This applies 'only to the time of our present factor's predecessor. If any one dared 'to seek redress of these grievances, the uniform result was a threat to 'deprive him of his lands. When Kenneth M'Leod, one of the delegates, 'built a house on his father's croft twenty-five years ago, a fine of £5 was 'imposed, and on succeeding another crofter some time later, he had to 'pay £6 of arrears which were due by his predecessor. The remedies 'we would propose are—1. Larger holdings. There are several large 'sheep farms available for this. 2. Fair rents, fixed by arbitration. 3. 'Fixity of tenure, and compensation for improvements.—KENNETH + 'M'LEOD, delegate; TORQUIL M'LEOD, delegate.'

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Kenneth M'Leod.

16328. How many tenants are in Garabost?—Sixty-nine.

16329. Do you know how much rent they pay?—Over £180, so far as I can make out.

16330. When was it raised last?—Our being deprived of out-pasture was a rise of rent, because it was upon this pasture we were able to feed our stock.

16331. Who commenced this brickwork?—Sir James Matheson, the proprietor.

16332. And the hill pasture was taken from you then?—Yes.

16333. And the rent continued the same?—There was no abatement; on the contrary, this additional 5s. was placed upon us.

16334. What had the brickwork to do with it?—The brickworks are fenced round, and there are four parks surrounding the brickwork, and these are rented out, and we got no reduction.

16335. Are these works still going on?—Yes.

16336. Were you obliged to keep these dykes in repair?—Yes, we were keeping up that dyke.

16337. What had you to do with the dykes?—We were so much afraid of the estate people, that we were afraid if we did not do what they liked in keeping up the dyke, we should be deprived of the small holding we had.

16338. Were you relieved of that two years ago?—Yes.

16339. Did you never get anything for all the trouble of keeping up the dykes during all the time?—Not a penny.

16340. Were these dykes of any use to you?—They were very injurious to us. We could not get to the well without going over these dykes, and besides, the people on the other side would not allow us to take the water.

16341. Were any of your people employed on these brickworks?—Yes, some of us would be working in it, but there were regular workers at the brickwork, and they were keeping these enclosures as their own pasture ground.

16342. Was your peat bog entirely taken from you at the time for the use of these works?—Yes.

16343. How far was it from you then?—We had to go a good bit to get any peat bank.

16344. You speak of a man being fined £2 for cutting peats in the old place?—Yes.

16345. And his rent was raised?—Yes.

16346. How long since?—Twenty years ago.

16347. Who was the factor?—Old Munro.

16348. I suppose you have no fear of that being done to you again?—We are tired of that administration anyhow.

16349. Have they all got cows?—Yes.

16350. How many have you yourself?—Three.

16351. What is your rent?—Including taxes, it is £5, 12s. Some of them only keep two cows, some one. We are deprived of pasture land, and cannot keep stock.

16352. How do you manage to keep these three cows?—The three would not make one good cow.

16353. Are you mostly fishermen?—Yes, the young people.

16354. Is there any place in your township where a harbour could be made?—Yes.

16355. Would the same place do for you and Bayble?—Yes. It is in Bayble that we used to keep our boats.

16356. You say that the stones of a quay that was made there were

removed and destroyed for the purpose of being used in some works connected with the estate?—Yes, there is no doubt of that.

16357. Who did it? Where were the stones put?—Many can testify to that. There was a steamer carrying away the stones from that quay all the way to Stornoway.

16358. Was that in Sir James Matheson's time?—Yes.

16359. Why did the people allow that to be done?—We were so much depressed by the hard times we had and the administration we were under—we were so thoroughly accustomed to the word 'you will 'be deprived of your land.'

16360. Do you think, if you had gone and told Sir James Matheson himself, he would have allowed such a thing to be done as destroying your pier?—We cannot tell.

16361. You did not try?—No, we never did.

16362. Was the quay really of any use?—Yes, it was the quay where the boats used to throw out their herring. Many a score of crans of herring did I myself put ashore there.

16363. Did the people themselves erect the quay?—It was Mr Methven that built the quay, but in order to recoup himself for his expense, he levied £1 upon every boat that was in Bayble,—£1 for once,—and that was an excellent bargain for them.

16364. And were the stones of that quay removed altogether?—The stones were not entirely taken away; the quay was rendered perfectly useless, for when once the sea was able to make a breach in on it, by the stones being removed, it was of no further use.*

16365. Did you build a house on your father's croft?—Yes.

16366. Had you any fine to pay for that liberty?—I paid £5 of a fine.

16367. What was that for?—When I built the house there was only my father and mother and one brother and a little sister. After building the house, I offered the factor to pull it down again if he would not impose this fine upon me, but he told me that, supposing I should pull it down, I should have to pay a fine of £4—the difference being only £1. I considered it would be a very poor house indeed that was not worth that.

16368. Were you getting a share of your father's croft when you had this house?—I had a third portion of the croft, and I was paying the rent along with my father ever since I was seventeen years of age, and helping the family.

16369. Did you build the house at your own expense?—Yes.

16370. Do you remember what it cost you?—I cannot tell exactly what the first house cost me, but I have an idea what my present house cost.

16371. How much was that?—£90.

16372. Is it a very good house?—It is a slated house.

16373. Was the building of your former house, for which you were fined £5, against the regulations of the estate?—Probably it was at the time against the regulations of the estate; but then I offered to pull the house down, and that would not relieve me of my fine, they were so keen for it.

16374. Who was the factor at the time?—Donald Munro.

16375. Have you a lease of your own present croft?—No. It has certainly had to do with the character of the buildings on the estates,—the little encouragement we got in these matters, and the use of that phrase I stated before—of casting up to them that they would be deprived of their land.

16376. What induced you to build such an expensive house?—To provide a comfortable dwelling for myself and my family.

* See Appendix A, XL.

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Kenneth M'Leod.

16377. But did you get no assurance of compensation for the value of the house?—No.

16378. Have you any such assurance now?—No; I believe that the want of such assurance prevents men from improving their dwellings in this place.

16379. Had you also to pay £6 of arrears for another man into whose croft you came?—Yes.

16380. Was he any relation of yours?—No. The man who was in arrears was no relation of mine. An uncle of mine assumed this croft as joint tenant with him, and both fell into arrears, and then I had to pay his £6 of arrears before I got possession. The man fell in arrears, but there were no arrears against my uncle.

16381. You say the people are discouraged by the want of assurance of compensation; how was it that you had so much courage as to dispense with the assurance?—I had some spirit to undertake the matter, but for many a long day I was looking upon it as a foolish proceeding.

16382. Have you ever repented of building that big house?—Yes, I have;—when we were deprived of that back pasture land and the other matters I have mentioned.

16383. Has that been done since you got your house?—Not altogether. Some of it was done before I built my house. Things were not so high then as they have been since I built the house.

16384. *The Chairman.*—It has been represented to me that the quay which you said was destroyed for the use of the estate was broken by storms, and the stones were scattered upon the shore, before they were touched. Was that so?—That is not the case. The stones were removed first, and it was the breach caused by the removal of these stones that gave the sea the advantage over it.

16385. It is also stated that the quay was built by Sir James Matheson, and not by Mr Methven at all?—Of one thing I am certain, that £1 was laid upon every one to meet the expense of the quay, and that was paid to Mr Methven, fish-curer. We as Highlanders and Islesmen don't distrust and dislike one another at all, although we are so much crowded in upon each other. Our grievance is, that we were deprived of the lands, and that these have been given away to tacksmen, deer, and sheep. There was a dyke fence that was built between Aignish and our township, and we paid for the building of that dyke—the half of it—the tacksman paid the other half. Now, his sheep come to us when our own cattle are on the moorland pasture, and when any of ours will go to him, whether sheep or cattle or horses, he charges money for them. We cannot charge him in return; we are so depressed that the fear of the estate management and the like of that has taken the courage out of us.

[ADJOURNED.]

STORNOWAY, LEWIS, SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1883. LEWIS. STORNOWAY

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

JOHN STEWART, Crofter and Fisherman, Bayble (50)—examined.

16386. *The Chairman.*—Were you chosen by the people of Bayble to respresent them?—Yes. John Stewart.

16387. What number of people are there in the township?—This township—Bayble—is really divided into four different places, for every one of which delegates were appointed. I cannot speak for the whole of them, but I can speak for Upper Bayble.

16388. What is the number of families in Upper Bayble?—About sixty.

16389. Did the people know of the meeting when you were chosen?—The whole township was present when I was elected.

16390. Have you any statement to make on the part of the township?—In the first place, I have to say we have too little land, and again we are much crowded together because of the numerous population,—poor crofts and high rents. In this way we are so much reduced, so far brought down, that it is with the utmost difficulty that we are able to keep body and soul together,—people gathered from all parts of the island and thrown in upon us, and new lots apportioned out at our very doors for these people, so that we cannot move about freely and carry peats or any other supplies to our own houses,—a fence dyke round us, and the only bit that we had in order to get to our peat moss was this year taken from us and given to another man, so that now we are in a worse plight than ever. If we had land, and I myself, as head of a family, endeavouring to rear my family as well as I can,—if I had an opportunity of getting a piece of land, and all of us had, we would be enabled to live more comfortably than now we can do. I take my living for my family out of the sea. What I take out of the croft would not support my family for one week this year. I was only able to make one boll of meal, and I had no potatoes at all,—so that I have to live upon the good-will of the Stornoway merchants, and because of the unsuccessful fishing I have run so much in debt with them, that now my credit is gone. They say Cape Horn is a wild place. Now this place where I live is exposed to the winds that blow down upon the one side from Cape Wrath and upon the other from the Butt of Lewis—two places that are quite as wild as Cape Horn. Our shore is so exposed from these two quarters, that while we could work well enough at sea, we are not able to save our lives or our boats when we reach the land. For want of a place of refuge, I lost a boat that cost over £100. If we had a place of refuge there, since we can work well, we would be able to take our living out of the sea, as other people in Scotland are able to do. I remember the quay having been built there, and my father having paid his £1 for the boat, as all the

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other people who had boats had to pay; and that quay was broken down by order of some one connected with the estate,—I don't know who. This has rendered the place more exposed, through the breaking down of the quay, than it was before the quay was built at all,—so much so that my own son, along with four of a crew, were drowned by the capsizing of the boat at our own door. Our only resource then is in this way cut away from us. My son was supporting me, and after his loss I am now reduced very low. The township is very large, and I would beseech you to hear one other delegate, who is older than I am, to speak on behalf of the town.

16391. Is Bayble near Garabost?—It is right opposite it.

16392. Is the quay you speak of the same that was spoken of by the people of Garabost yesterday?—Yes, it is the same landing place of the herring boats.

16393. Was the quay that was there before sufficiently good for what you required?—Yes, we could save our boats there, and it was very handy for landing the fish and gear.

16394. How many crofters were there in the place you represent when you first remember?—About thirty.

16395. How has the increase arisen?—There were some came from outside; the rest are the increase of the place.

16396. How many may there be from the outside? Are there ten?—Probably there were not ten families coming in, but a single man would come in and marry a girl from Bayble, and settle there.

16397. Do you think there were five families sent in by the order of the factor?—Not since I remember. I remember one in particular that came dext door to myself from the parish of Uig.

16398. What meal and potatoes do you get out of your croft on an average of years?—Two bolls of barley meal and one boll of oatmeal would make an average year, and about twelve barrels of potatoes. I never got as high as twenty barrels of potatoes in any one year. I have only half a lot.

16399. Who has the other half?—The widow of a neighbour who was drowned along with my own son.

16400. What stock have you?—One cow and a stirk and one sheep. When I have to buy for my family I have also to buy food for the cow. I cannot get out of the croft what will feed that one cow.

16401. What rent do you pay?—35s. of bare rent.

16402. Had you more out-pasturage when you first remember?—Yes, we had that portion at the back of the ring fence of the township, where other lots were cut out for us.

16403. Who got those other lots?—That increase I spoke of was partly the increase of the place and partly some coming in from the outside.

16404. Except the one family from Uig, the people of the place have got the whole land, though it is differently divided?—You know when these lots were cut out, they were given to young men and to some old people that had no lots at the time.

16405. Is there any additional land in the neighbourhood that you could get?—There is a little upon our side of the township yet, but the giving of that to us would only shut the others in more than they are; but there is plenty throughout the country and I would be quite ready to go to any place in the island that would be near the sea, to take up a bit of land, in preference to remaining where I am.

16406. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—At whose expense do you know, was the quay that was destroyed originally erected?—I cannot tell, unless it was at Sir James Matheson's, with such assistance as he might get from

the fish-curers, and with this £1 that was levied upon the fishing boats.

16407. Though you don't know upon whose authority the thing was destroyed, did you see with your own eyes the work of destruction going on?—Yes, I saw it with my own eyes. The practice was to go down with a steam launch and a lighter. The lighter would be left there beside the quay, and stranded upon the beach, and filled with stones, and then when the tide came in the launch would come back and tow it to Stornoway.

16408. How long ago did that occur?—Over twelve years ago.

16409. Did the people protest or make any remonstrance against this?—I told them they were doing a bad turn to us, but I said nothing more than that.

16410. Were you afraid to make any more serious complaint?—Yes; were it not for that I would not have let the stones be taken away, for they were of great service to us.

16411. Was it to the people engaged in the actual work of loading and unloading that you made the remonstrance?—Yes.

16412. How many families in your district would be interested in or benefited by the proposed new quay that you speak of?—It would be a means of livelihood to about two hundred families from Bayble alone, in addition to such other families as could make use of it from neighbouring places, such as Garabost, Shashader, and Knock. These would make it a fishing station in the summer season.

16413. Have you any idea what the cost of such a pier, suitable for your locality, would be?—I could not give any idea as to the actual cost in money of such an undertaking, but to build what we call a harbour of refuge, which the boats would run into for shelter, would cost very little in money. Stones are there; it is easily constructed, and the people of the place all round about would be very willing to lend a hand. I myself am an old man, and I would be very glad to lend a hand.

16414. Would it not also be worth your while to pay annually a small sum for the use of that pier?—We would be only too glad to do so.

16415. *Mr Cameron.*—You state that if you got a suitable harbour of refuge, you would be willing to take your living in a great measure out of the sea?—Yes, I would not have worked both my strength and my credit in making a livelihood, if I had had that in the past.

16416. Is that the opinion and the wish of the people whom you represent also?—Yes, so far as the quay is concerned, but they would also like to get assistance from the land. Those that could not work by the sea would also have to be looked after, and the Government should see to it that they also should have some kind of assistance given them.

16417. Are all the people in your neighbourhood what you may call a fishing population?—Everybody that can.

RODERICK M'LEOD, Crofter and Fisherman, Upper Bayble (69)—examined.

16418. *The Chairman.*—You heard and understood what the former witness said?—Yes.

16419. Did you agree with what he said?—Yes, so far as he spoke.

16420. If you have anything to add, will you do so?—We do not, by taking advantage of this opportunity, express any dissatisfaction or any

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hostile spirit towards our proprietor, but we wish to tell the condition in which Sir James found us. There were twenty-four crofters in Upper Bayble when he got possession of the estate. There are now one hundred and three, where there were originally only twenty-four, when Sir James came to the place.

16421. Are you talking of the same place as the last witness?—Of the same place. There were twenty lots upon the other side of the river at that time in the place called Upper Bayble; now there are thirty-one. People are so hemmed in on every side, and other people thrown on the outland pasture to such an extent that they are now not able to keep any stock at all, or to have the means of any support for them. As far as the rent is concerned, we don't blame the proprietor, except in so far as he has taken the land from us. The old arable land was not in any way benefited by the new lots that were being cut out behind it; that is, there was no opportunity of giving it any rest. The original crofters are getting poorer and poorer every day by means of assessments. But it was not Sir James who was to blame for that, but former factors of his. I myself own one of six boats that paid £120 during a period of twenty years, of which he was never aware. The proof of this is that when we came to the present factor about the matter this imposition ceased. We wish that the people would get relief by giving them land through the island, where there is plenty of land waste. I wish to say nothing further, except that we wish to claim the protection of the law of the land. We are entitled to the protection of the law when we don't break it, just as we feel that the law is just in punishing us when we do break it.

Rev. ANGUS M'IVER—re-examined.

Rev. Mr. M'Iver.

16422. *The Chairman.*—You come here wishing to make an explanation of your former evidence?—Yes; in my statement which I made to the Commissioners on Monday last at Meavaig, I said that the only thing I knew that the proprietrix of this island had done for the people of this island, was to contribute £10 towards the building of a new church on the island of Berneray. Since giving that evidence, I remember it was told me at the time that Lady Matheson had distributed some clothes and shoes, as well as some meal, among the poor some time after the death of Sir James Matheson, the date of which I cannot remember. I also said that the area of Lewis would accommodate all the crofters and cottars on the island, and I said I thought £5 lots would put the people into a comfortable state as crofters. The way in which I want to explain that is, that I know the crofters in Lewis at present who pay £5 in rent, and I believe they can be perfectly comfortable as crofters. Now, my ground was that if the rents of Lewis were reduced by half, say, what it was in 1843, that would leave them perfectly comfortable. Of course, taking the £5 which it is to-day, £2, 10s. would be the same rate,—the £2, 10s. would be the same when the rents would be reduced. The whole matter was that, I believe, if the rents were reduced to what they were in 1843, it would accommodate all the crofters and cottars in the island.

16423. *The Chairman.*—Do you mean to say the crofter rents have been doubled since 1843?—Yes.

16424. You say that as a fact?—Yes.

* See Appendix A, XLI.

ALEXANDER MORRISON, Commission Merchant, Stornoway (29)—examined.

16425. *The Chairman.*—You appear here on the behalf of the people of Stornoway?—I appear on behalf of Bay Head and on behalf of the Stornoway branch of the Highland Lewis Land Reform Association. The principal grievance which the Lewis people have got, in general with the whole of the West Highland crofters, is that any one buying an estate buys them, and has got the power of turning them out of their native soil, without compensation or anything else but sending them off. When a man buys the Lewis land and 26,000 people, he buys the rights and liberties of the people, with the right of turning them out; and it is the wish of these poor men that the right of eviction should be stopped entirely so long as they pay rents. The principal grievance also is that there are lots of land in Lewis to support from 60,000 to 70,000 people, and instead of that land being given to the crofters, it is wholly under deer and sheep farms, and let. These crofters are willing to pay a fair rent for that land if they only got it, and there is plenty of it for them. If any crofter is put into a bit of bog land, and reclaims that land with the sweat of his brow for thirty years, as the law exists at present, he does not get a cent. for compensation for improvements, no matter how it goes, so far as I am led to understand. The Lewis people are overcrowded, and put down to the worst pieces of land, down to the sea-shore, and the best land in the island is under deer and sheep farms. They wished Lady Matheson to give this land at a fair rent, and subdivide it out to the tenants, for they were willing to pay, but they were refused; and I understand they did not get it, and what they wish is that they humbly pray Her Majesty's Government that they would compel the proprietors to give them the land at a fair rent. There is no part of the west coast like the Lewis. They are the finest race of men we have got to recruit the army and the navy. The people are loyal subjects, and willing to fight for Her Majesty the Queen and their country, and it would be a pity to exterminate them all from their native soil for the sake of deer and sheep. I may further say they are not Revolutionists, Communists, or Socialists. They only want what is fair and just, and what they are willing to pay for. They are loyal subjects. There is a spirit of discontent all along the West Highlands at present; and unless the Government step in and make some concessions to the people by way of giving them the lands for which they are willing to pay, and fixity of tenure, they may be led to break the law, and a spirit of discontent may get up that no Government could put a stop to So it is the wish of the people that their grievances should be remedied, in order to put a stop to the system of oppression and slavery under which they are labouring at present.

16426. *Mr Cameron.*—You state that the first and principal grievance of the people is, that when a proprietor buys an estate he buys the people with it, and has the power to evict them. Are you of opinion that that power has been largely or at all exercised within the last few years in the island of Lewis?—I am certain that the people are more frightened of the proprietor and factor than they are of the God that created them.

16427. But I wish to know whether this fear of being evicted is well-founded or not—whether it is founded upon experience?—Those people and their forefathers occupied the soil for hundreds of years, and they

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consider it a case of hardship to be under the sway of any man who has it in his power to exterminate them out of the land of their birth.

16428. But has the proprietor of the Lewis practically exterminated the people out of the land of their birth?—In some districts of the Lewis they have been compelled to leave, and emigrate to foreign shores against their will.

16429. Will you state to what extent that was prevailed?—They have been forced to leave parts of Uig against their will, and they have been forced to leave Ness and Galston, over at the Butt of Lewis, and they have been forced to leave other districts.

16430. You mean they were evicted,—that they were simply turned off by the arbitrary will of the proprietor?—In some districts they were, and in other districts they were put on to take bog land, and to commence reclaiming it again.

16431. When did these evictions take place?—Some years ago; I am not exactly sure.

16432. Have any evictions of that nature taken place within the last twenty years—I mean evictions in an arbitrary and wholesale manner, such as would naturally produce the effect to which you allude in your statement?—I am not exactly sure as to twenty years, but I know it is within the last twenty or thirty years.

16433. Is it your opinion that Sir James and Lady Matheson have managed this property in such a manner as to create a *bona fide* fear that people who pay their rents and are well-conducted will be arbitrarily evicted?—The 26,000 inhabitants of the island are principally people at the bidding and beck of one single individual, and it is to take the power from them by a proper measure being passed by Parliament, that it is the only hope and cure for a present state of matters.

16434. With regard to arrears, you say a law should be passed by which no crofter could be evicted so long as he paid his rent. Have you any idea what the arrears of rent on the island of Lewis are?—I have no idea what they are.

16435. Have you any reason to believe they are very considerable?—I cannot say.

16436. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that the arrears were very large, would not the effect of such a law as you indicate be that large numbers of the people under this law you suggest might be at once removed from the island of Lewis?—We would have a clause in the Bill for that matter of it, that every man who had three or four or five years' rent to pay should be evicted. People don't want the land for nothing.

16437. Do you think the people under such a law would be more secure in their holdings than they are under the present management of the Lewis?—Certainly I do.

16438. With the power given to the landlord to evict them if they were in arrears of rent?—Provided there were three or four or five years' rent against them.

16439. Do you think, on any estate of the Highlands, a proprietor who wished to buy that estate for sporting and other purposes would not be more willing to purchase the estate under such a law as you suggest than under the present state of things, where the matter is left to the good feeling and generosity of the proprietor?—As to that I cannot answer.

16440. Have you ever taken any means of comparing the value of Highland properties where there are crofters and where there are no crofters?—No.

16441. Has it ever been brought under your notice that Highland property where there are no crofters very often fetches as much as fifty years' purchase?—Well, it is a grievance of the people. It is the people's grievances we are talking about; it is not a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence.

16442. Then I only ask you a simple question. Have you ever studied the question of the value of Highland properties that are brought into the market?—No.

16443. Do you believe if some of the Western Hebrides were now in the market, that they would find a purchaser at all?—The Lewis, I am certain, would be sold. If the parties who are acting for the trustees, or whoever they are that the island belongs to at present, sold it, I am sure the whole crofters would go in for it, and buy it right off, if they got it at a moderate price. It would only cost about £7, 18s. a head, and give £10,000 more than was paid for it.

16444. I may assume that though you profess not to know that the crofters in the island are in arrears of rent, you in common with the public at large are aware that there are very large arrears of rent due by the crofters in the Western Islands?—I was not aware of it. They are paid up here, so far as I know.

16445. Then do you not consider that if, instead of relying upon the kindly feeling which subsists between landlords and tenants, and under which wholesale evictions have not taken place, you were to pass a law by which you would destroy that kindly feeling, and enable any landlord to evict any tenant who owed him rent, it would be a very simple means of at once clearing a large portion of the Western Islands?—What the people want is that they wish the Government to pass a law to put a stop for ever to eviction, and have fixity of tenure, and the land at a fair rent.

16446. But in your statement, you proposed that no evictions were to take place except for non-payment of rent?—That was admitted before,—that in the case of any crofter being three, four, or five years in arrears of rent, he should be evicted,—because they do not want the land for nothing. They want the land at a fair rent.

16447. Then you mean that, in addition to the law by which crofters are not to be evicted except for non-payment of rent, they are to be allowed to run a certain number of years in arrears of rent?—Certainly, to give them a chance.

16448. And therefore the mere non-payment of rent would not form a ground or justification for the landlord to evict. It would require to be cumulative arrears?—I said that in the event of four or five years' rent being against them, Government or the law would permit them to be evicted then; but not under four or five years, because they might have a few bad years, and might get into difficulties, but might pull up and pay it afterwards.

16449. So you would alter it, and say not that no crofters are to be evicted except for non-payment of rent, but except for non-payment of four or five years' rent. That is practically what you would have?—Yes.

16450. You would also pass a law by which proprietors are to be compelled to give the crofters land at a fair rent, and I presume you mean some rent that would be fixed by an impartial person?—Yes, or compel the parties to sell their estates to the people,—the one or the other.

16451. Do you think that the land of the Lewis, let out at what you call a fair rent, would fetch anything like the rent it brings now?—I am sure it would. I am sure if the people got the land, and if they were certain that they would not be turned out, instead of the Lewis support-

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ing 26,000 people in misery and poverty, as they exist at present, it would be able to support 60,000 or 70,000 people in plenty, and quite contented.

16452. And that the fair rent alluded to would be equal, taken on an aggregate, to the whole rental of the island of Lewis at present?—Yes. They are not Communists or Socialists; they want to pay for what they get.

16453. That I quite believe, but what I am trying to get at is your own notion of the value of the rent, and you think that what you call a fair rent to be paid by the crofters, would be equal to the total rent now derived from the island of Lewis?—Yes.

16454. Have you ever gone into the question, or made any calculations, or studied it, to enable you to give that answer, which, I must say, does not coincide with any of the previous evidence we have had from crofters or representatives of the island themselves?—I have gone through every part of the isalnd, and I know the best parts are under sheep and deer, and the worst patches are occupied by the crofters down at the sea-shore.

16455. We had it from one witness who lived on the spot, and might be supposed to know, that he considered the larger portion of the deer forest called Morsgiel, which is now let for £1000, would be to the crofters in his parish worth £40. You don't coincide with that?—I don't see that the crofters could interfere much. They don't want to do away with the Game Laws in that way.

16456. But it has nothing to do with the Game Laws. What I meant was to try and ascertain from you upon what basis you founded your opinion that the land of the Lewis, if divided among the crofters, would produce the same rental as is now obtained under the present system?—If all the large sheep runs and other farms and islands that are laid waste at present were given to the people. I say and maintain here, the rental would he quite as high as at present.

16457. But, taking the sheep farms and leaving out deer forests,—because they may be considered, perhaps, as waste,—why do you apply the word 'waste' to sheep farms?—They produce mutton do they not?—Most of the land that is under sheep runs in the Lewis was at one time cultivated with the sweat of the brow and with the daily toil of the poor crofters, who had to work for the land, and never got compensation for improvements, and after it was taken into a state of cultivation they were driven out, and sheep and deer put in their stead.

16458. That is not exactly an answer. I want to know why you apply the word 'waste' to land that is grazed by sheep—which are the produce of the land, the same as any other?—Because it is waste. The country is getting wild, and the grass itself does not grow right, and the heather is coming to grow again.

16459. But on what proportion of the land which you say is waste could corn be grown?—The finest portion of the land is over at Uig, and is laid waste, and over at Park, and several other large tracts of the country that are under sheep and deer, and the people down on the sea-shore.

16460. But I want to know what proportion of the land that is under sheep could be cultivated by the plough and be made to produce corn?—A considerable proportion. I cannot give you a proper answer to that.

16461. Supposing crofters had this land, would they not be dependent upon the rearing of sheep in a far larger proportion, in the same way as the tacksmen are dependent upon sheep?—The crofters want the arable land, and the moorland besides for their cattle and sheep, for which they are willing to pay.

16462. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In your estimate of the capacity of this island to support double its present population, have you calculated what quantity of land is necessary for crofters to possess in order to enable them to live upon it?—I would consider six to ten acres of arable land, and the moorland in connection with the crofts.

16463. Have you estimated what ought to be a fair rent for that?—No, I did not.

16464. I suppose you know the acreage of the island of Lewis?—I do not know the acreage.

16465. Have you not made a calculation, on the above estimate of the number of acres that would support a crofter, to enable you to show that the island would support twice its present population?—I have been calculating so many people. I have been thinking a great number could be put upon the sheep runs that are under one man.

16466. But that is a vague estimate. Unless you know the number of acres in the island, and have calculated exactly whether the acreage of the island would yield that number per croft which you consider necessary to support a population of 60,000, a mere vague statement is of small value to us. We want to ascertain facts, and we expect people who come and make these large and generous statements to have looked well into the statistics of the island, to know the number of acres that are arable, and the number that are fit for pasture, and to make a rational scheme for laying it out as they propose for the benefit of the people?—There are vast districts in our island that are not occupied by the people at all, and in former years they used to have their crofts there, but now all these districts are under sheep and deer. Instead of supporting 26,000, it would support 70,000 or 80,000.

16467. But it is quite impossible to say that unless, with the knowledge of the number of acres in the island, you can apportion it among the population fairly. Would you be surprised if it were discovered from the statistics of the island, that it could not give anything like the number of acres you think of land fit to be lived upon?—I know the districts

16468. But you do not know the number of acres and the value of the acres?—I do not know at the present time.

16469. But it is necessary to know that in order to speak for the whole island and the whole population of the island. Then, supposing the island were so distributed among the whole population, each of them having as much of the land as you think necessary for them to live upon comfortably, what provision would you then make to prevent the reduction of the quantity of land occupied by those people—because the population, of course, would go on increasing? What provision would you make to prevent the subdivision of the land?—At present the people are ignorant, and the majority of them cannot even talk the English language, and the system that would be suitable for them at present would not be required in a few years, because when their children are educated and have a knowledge of the world, they would not condescend to wait upon their present crofts. But our people at present are not in a position to pick themselves up in the Colonies. They are not educated, they have not got the English language, and in every way they would be an unsuitable lot to send away to the Colonies.

16470. Do you mean to say that the majority of the people of Lewis, who are among the best peasantry in the West of Scotland, are not good subjects for emigration, to be sent to a suitable colony, merely because they do not speak first-rate English?—I say no,—that they will be far better under present circumstances, when they have the

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sea to fall back upon as well as the land, and that they never would be as comfortable in any part of the land as they would be in the Lewis.

16471. Are you aware then that all the people who have emigrated within the memory of man from Lewis to all parts of the world are living worse than they would be at home?—I am aware that a considerable number of those who were evicted and exterminated out of the land of their birth were in a worse plight in the country of their adoption than they were in their old country.

16472. From what source have you derived your information on this subject?—From various letters and information which have come.

16473. There was some emigration in Sir James Matheson's time?—Yes.

16474. Was it to any considerable extent?—No.

16475. Was that voluntary, or forced?—So far as I know, they were compelled to go.

16476. On what account?—Why, in the Lewis, if the people are deprived of their land they must go somewhere. It is as well for them to leave the country altogether.

16477. Do you mean that Sir James Matheson sent them away against their will?—They were deprived of their lands against their will.

16478. Was that not because they could not or would not pay their rents?—They were willing and able to pay, and they are so still.

16479. Are you quite sure that those people who emigrated in Sir James Matheson's time were not in arrear?—I am certain of it.

16480. All of them?—I am not certain of the whole of them; but I know the majority were the same as at present. And there was no reduction made of the rent this season when the crops were an entire failure, and every proprietor along the coast gave a reduction; our proprietor gave no reduction at all.

16481. Do you know what was the rent when Sir James Matheson bought this property?—No.

16482. Do you know what it is now?—About £23,000 or £24,000, I believe.

16483. Do you know, in point of fact, whether Sir James Matheson greatly increased the rental since he bought the estate?—I know he did.

16484. To what extent do you know?—To a considerable extent. I know the whole crofter and fishing population would buy the island if they got it at a fair price; and £15,000 or £20,000 more than he paid for it.

16485. How have you ascertained that?—Through coming in contact with the people all over the island.

16486. But you have already said, though I must take the liberty of doubting the accuracy of the statement, that the people of Lewis are in a state of poverty and misery. There may be many, and too many, in that condition, but do you adhere to the statement that the majority of the people of this island are in a state of misery?—I do—poverty and misery.

16487. Is that consistent with the fact that a great many of their houses which we have seen are among the best houses we have seen in the Western Islands, that their land appeared to us to be as good land—such as there was of it—as we had seen in some other places, and the people themselves as well and tidily dressed as we had seen in other places? We saw that on a considerable scale in several parts of the island. Is that consistent with the fact that the people to whom those houses

belong are in a state of poverty and misery?—The people would build better houses and reclaim the land and have everything in order if they had fixity of tenure.

16488. That is scarcely an answer. Do you say that a man is in a state of poverty and misery who has a house and a piece of land at a moderate rent—paying £2 or £3 for it, on which he manages to keep two cows and a few sheep?—I say that taking them as class altogether, they are in a state of misery and poverty.

16489. Are you aware that in the island of Skye, where we have been, we have found people paying rents treble those of, I believe, the majority of the crofters in this island, and who are not able to keep half the same number of cows, and some of them no cows at all?—Yes, I am aware that the evil is wide-spread all over the Western Islands.

16490. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You hold some office here connected with the reform of the land laws?—Yes, I do.

16491. In what manner were you elected?—I was elected by the free will of a number of the Stornoway people.

16492. Was there a large number present?—There was a considerable number present.

16493. There was a meeting here last week, or a fortnight ago?—There was a meeting here last week.

16494. Did you take any part in it?—Yes, I did.

16495. Was the meeting unanimous?—So far as I could see, it was.

16496. How many might there have been present?—According to my calculation I fancy there would be about 4000 people present.

16497. I presume you are a native of the island?—Yes.

16498. You have been here all your life, off and on?—Yes, and I have been out of it for a good bit too sometimes,—for six or twelve months.

16499. Where were you when you were away generally?—I have been about Scotland and over England.

16500. Have you been abroad?—No.

16501. You stated you were pretty well acquainted with the island all over, and have travelled a good part of it, and your means of knowledge therefore, I presume, are pretty considerable?—Certainly.

16502. You have been questioned about the removals of the people. Am I accurate in stating that removals may be of two classes—that is, a complete extermination out of the country, and also a shifting of them from one place to another?—Yes, we have both of these systems here.

16503. In fact, they vary considerably; but still I presume they are never for the benefit of the person who is removed?—It always tells against the person who is removed.

16504. You state you have no objection that, in the event of their not paying arrears for four or five years, there should be the power of eviction. When you speak of the arrears, do I understand you don't mean arrears in the present circumstances, but under the new system of fair rent?—Under the new system of fair rent.

16505. You also made a statement about sale. You think the people are very anxious to become proprietors of their own ground?—Yes, rather than remain under the present state of existence in which they are.

16506. In your travels all over the island, though you are not able to condescend upon the number of acres that are now waste, but formerly cultivated, are you not satisfied there are a very large number of acres—particularly in Uig—that are now unturned by the plough?—A considerable portion of the Lewis islands are laid waste in that way.

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16507. Are you aware that in former times the crofters generally supported their families out of the produce of the croft—that they had their food out of it and also their clothing?—I am aware they combined both,—that they fished at sea and worked on land besides.

16508. And made their clothes to a certain extent out of the wool?—To a certain extent they might have done so.

16509. Is it not a fact that in all the removals that have taken place, it is out of the best lands that the people have been put and crowded into places that it was not worth while for the big farmer to take?—Yes, they have been driven out of the best portions of the Lewis, and driven down to the most barren places—the same as they were driven out of Park and put in upon Crossbost, a place which they reclaimed with the sweat of their brows, and nothing at all for their labour.

16510. We have been informed in several places that we have visited in the north of the island, that the crofters have a very large proportion of hill pasture; but is it not a fact that the pasture generally is of a very inferior class?—Yes, it is.

16511. So if a man had an out-run of 500 or 1000 acres it might be of very little value indeed?—Very little indeed.

16512. Whereas in the case of a farmer with a similar out-run elsewhere, it might be worth a very great deal more?—Certainly.

16513. You were asked also about the expenditure which the late Sir James Matheson had made upon the estate. I suppose there is no doubt of that?—He never expended any money upon crofters.

16514. We are coming to that, but let justice be done. There was money spent on the island?—Money was spent in works which were a failure, I understand.

16515. Can you point to much of the expenditure that took place for the benefit of the crofters other than the roads?—The crofters derived no benefit from it. They only were paid 10d. to 1s. 2d. a day, and no labourer would work for 1s. 2d. a day. That was about the wage they got when the improvements were going on.

16516. Except roads, can you point to anything that was done for the direct benefit of the crofters?—There was nothing done for the benefit of the crofters, as far as my knowledge goes, all over the island. I mean their lands were not improved, and they got no houses, and there were no improvements done of any kind that I know of; and I know of districts in the Lewis where there are no roads at all, and where these people are paying road money for the last thirty years, and where there has never been a road at all.

16517. Are you aware that a charge has been made upon all the tenants of 5s. for road money, or the most of them?—Yes, I am.

16518. Are you aware that of late years, with regard to the houses, by the regulations of the estate, those who improved their houses with the consent of the proprietor and his approbation are entitled to a certain melioration?—I am aware that the people have no confidence themselves in building houses, or laying out money, because they may be turned out of those lands at any time, and they have not got security or fixity of tenure.

16519. But in the clause I refer to it does not say how long they may be, but when they are turned out they are to get compensation for their houses?—I was not aware of that.

16520. If you look at the articles you will find there is a clause to that effect?—Those articles might have been in existence; it is well to have it on paper, but it is a different thing to have it in facts.

16521. You made a very strong statement, which I beg you will re-

consider; when you were asked if there were many cases of eviction within the last thirty years, you said people were more frightened of the authorities than of much higher power. Do you adhere to that?—I do.

16522. Has that feeling, which you say prevails here, a very depressing and demoralising effect upon the energies of the crofters?—It has a very demoralising effect upon the people.

16523. Is it consistent with your own knowledge that some of the authorities—I do not mean any of the present authorities—were such as not to command the confidence of the people; rather, on the other hand, to keep them in a state of terror and alarm.—Yes.

16524. I suppose that is pretty well known?—Well known.

16525. Would such a thing as fining a man 5s. for being late in keeping an appointment, and threatening that he would be turned out if he did such a thing, not have a very demoralising effect upon the people, particularly if there was no redress?—Yes, that was a very common occurrence.

16526. You were asked about the poverty of the people. Some may be in possession of a couple of cows and sheep, but may not they be in debt to the merchants?—They are in debt to the merchants. It is the merchants who support them, and they are the ruination of the mercantile community, through taking meal and everything they want on credit, and they are not able to pay; because if they had the land they would be in a first-rate position, and without it they are in poverty.

16527. Would the mercantile population of Stornoway not be better by a large thriving population being among them, than with a few tacksmen who do not expend much money?—Yes, it would revive trade in the town, and would be the best thing for business. If the people got the land back, with the thriving population, it would benefit the country, the wholesale trade as well as the retail.

16828. I suppose you have no personal interest in the crofting community. You are not personally connected with the crofters?—No, I derive no benefit by this agitation; I am not paid for it.

16529. But you would desire to purchase a small place if you had the opportunity?—Certainly.

16530. And I suppose many people would be delighted to get an opportunity to acquire land?—Yes, all over the island.

16531. Is there any complaint in Stornoway about getting grass for cows?—Yes, the people of Stornoway, at the time Sir James Matheson bought the island, had grass round the town, whereas they have not got it now; and the majority of the tradesmen and working men had an acre or two of land and a head or two of cattle, whereas now they have got nothing at all, and there is now a spirit of discontent all over.

16532. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated you were quite convinced in your own mind that by a redistribution of the estate it would maintain 70,000 people?—That is my opinion.

16533. We were told that the rental of the estate was £18,000 Now, I think you stated also that the people would give about as much rent for it, or about as much purchase price for it, as what was paid for it?—Yes.

16534. Would that imply that the present rent all over was not too high?—It is not a matter of rent so much.

16535. I mean all over the estate, and the fact that the people could pay for it as much as Sir James Matheson paid for it, would not that imply that the present rental, as a mere matter of commerce, was not so high?

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—They would allow the same price for the island as Sir James paid for it, and it would be only £7, 18s. a head.

16536. But, supposing they did that, would the interest of the money that would go to purchase it at that rate—a fair interest for the money,—represent as much as the present yearly rental? What was the purchase price?—About £190,000.

16537. And that at 3 per cent. would give nearly £6000 a year. Now, 70,000 people represent 12,000 families. With the present rent of £18,000 that would only give a croft of 30s. to each family?—I say, that instead of the island supporting 26,000 people in misery it would support 60,000 or 70,000 in a contented way.

16538. *The Chairman.*—You have repeated that several times, and we want to satisfy ourselves as to the reasonable grounds on which such an opinion is formed; will you be good enough to answer the questions that are asked?—Yes, I am endeavouring to do so.

16539. *Professor Mackinnon.*—That would be about three times its present population, or nearly three times. Now, I would like to ask you whether you consider there is about three times the amount just now under sheep and deer of the surface of the island than there is under crop?—I say there is, in my opinion, about three times more land under deer forests and under sheep than the crofters possess.

16540. Considering the moorland pasture that they have also?—Considering the moorland pasture they have.

16541. Then, acre for acre, and farm for farm, between the sheep tack and the croft, between the deer forest and the croft, which pays the higher rent—the crofting farm or the sheep farm of the same size?—It is my opinion that the crofting townships pays a higher rent, or quite as high as any tack that would be held by any tacksman or shepherd.

16542. Or deer forest?—I do not say deer forest.

16543. But you have no place particularly in view, that you can give as an instance where we could verify that instance?—The land is there, and men are there to show it to you, and the whole district is waste.

16544. But if you could show me a crofting township and a farm much about the same size at the same value, to enable me to see which carries the bigger rent, that would enable me to make up my own mind as to your opinion. Have you any ground for the statement that the crofter pays at least as much, value for value, as the large tacksman does?—I expect they do. It is my opinion they do.

16545. For deer forests, you may assume, as we have evidence, they pay exorbitant rents?—They pay an exorbitant rent.

16546. Then, even supposing this place were redistributed among 12,000 families, with its present rent, it would only give a 30s. croft to each man in this island just now. Would that keep the man in comfort?—I cannot answer that question without knowing what the size of the croft would be.

16547. You yourself gave, as the size of a suitable croft, six to ten acres of arable land. What amount of moorland do you think ought to go along with that croft?—Give them moorland in common, if the whole township used the moorland in common.

16548. How many acres of moorland would you give with the arable?—I cannot answer.

16549. How many times the amount of moorland is there in the whole island in comparision with what you would make arable land out of?—The half of it, any how.

16550. Do you mean that the half of it is capable of easy cultivation?—I do not say the half is capable of easy cultivation, but I maintain

there is a considerable proportion of the soil that could be cultivated, and a considerable amount of moorland is under sheep and deer which is fitted for a crofter population.

16551. But you are not able to give me any figures?—No, I am not.

16552. You are of opinion that the people could perfectly well go and occupy these places inland as well as along the shore, and build houses, and maintain themselves in comfort?—Yes, they want to get their lands back that their forefathers were deprived of, and I do not suppose they would have any objection to pay a fair rent.

16553. Do you mean to say there is any evidence that there ever were 70,000 people in the Lewis?—I never heard of 70,000 people being in the Lewis, but I know that if the people got the land, the Lewis would be able to support 70,000 people contentedly and in a good way, and that the place would be a splendid recruiting ground for the army and navy, and that it would produce a race of men without their equal in the whole United Kingdom.

16554. You say that in the future the people would be educated so that they would not remain in the place?—I maintain that when the people do get educated they will not remain in the place at all.

16555. Even in the improved circumstances of the people that you map out?—That is my opinion—that they will not remain.

16556. So that the position of the island is to be like this,—that in the immediate future there will be some 70,000 who will afterwards voluntarily clear away?—No, but any overplus or overcrowding—the balance which the island would not be fit to maintain—would emigrate of their own free will and accord when they get educated, and when they know what the world is doing. But at present there is no use of the people emigrating, because they cannot even talk the English language, and they are not educated, and have not been brought up to hard labour.

16557. Are you prepared to state that the people who emigrated from here in 1851 are at present less or more comfortable than those whom they left behind?—Those whom they left behind, in my opinion, and so far as I know, are far more comfortable than the majority of those that emigrated; I do not mean educated men from the town.

16558. I do not mean such either; I mean those from the country districts. Are they and their children worse off than their neighbours whom they left behind?—I maintain on authority that they are worse off than those they left behind.

16559. And you say that those in the Lewis are in poverty and misery and in debt to the Stornoway merchants?—Yes.

16560. Then those who have emigrated must be very badly off indeed?—Yes, they are.

16561. You spoke of reclaiming land under present circumstances as penal servitude?—I mean that parties working for ten or fifteen years reclaiming bog, when they get nothing for their labour, are suffering what I call penal servitude.

16562. We had a witness here yesterday who stated that he himself built upon his croft a house worth £90. Don't you consider that that man had in his own mind a reasonable assurance, either that as matter of fact he would not be turned out of that house, or that he would get something for it when he left?—He may have had a private arrangement.

16563. He said he had none. Did not the mere fact of building that house indicate a reasonable assurance in that man's mind?—He might be fool enough to do it, but there were others who built houses and were kicked out, and got no compensation at all.

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16564. Can you give me the names of any such?—Yes.

16565. Who built these valuable houses, and were turned out?—I did not say valuable houses; I said houses.

16566. But it was a valuable house that I mentioned. Well, give us the name of a man who built a house and was turned out, and got nothing for it?—I have got the name to give, but I will not give the name without asking his consent, in case summary vengeance might be taken upon him otherwise.

16567. You represent particularly the district of Bay Head. Have you any particular grievance from the Bay?—The principal grievance is that the lands they had were taken from them, and they want them back again. In common with the workmen of the town, they would like very much to get back the lands from which they were driven, and which they are willing to pay for.

16568. Where were these lands?—All round the town.

16569. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were asked what extent of arable land would be sufficient for an enlarged croft, if the man would be able to live upon it?—I said from six to ten acres of arable land, with moorland in connection with it and in common.

16570. The extent of the arable land is quite fixed?—From six to ten acres is the average of crofters' land of good quality.

16571. But it is impossible to tell by acres what the moorland would be, because the hill pasture varies very much, does it not?—They use the hill pasture in common.

16572. But supposing a crofter could get a piece of hill land to himself, I supppose it would depend very much upon the nature of the hill pasture what extent it would be necessary to use along with the croft?—It would depend upon the nature and quality of it, because in some districts the hill pasture is better than in other districts.

16573. Then is it not the proper way to ascertain what would make a croft comfortable in the way of pasture, to know how many sheep and how many cows it would pasture in summer? Is not that the proper way to get at it?—The proper way to get at it is to give them the hill pasture and the land, and they can arrange those matter themselves.

16574. What stock would be necessary for the crofter to live in comfort?—I should fancy from six to ten head of cattle and from forty to fifty head of sheep.

16575. Would they require a couple of horses?—Not necessarily; it might require one horse.

16576. Then that is the size of croft which would enable the crofter to live in comfort?—Yes, that is what I consider.

16577. You were asked some question about what should happen in the future. If such enlarged croft were laid out, I presume you would prevent subdivision of the croft?—Yes, undoubtedly.

16578. And you believe that emigration would voluntarily take place?—Yes.

16579. That the people would see the evils of subdivision so much that they would not permit subdivision to take place?—Yes, that is what I mean.

16580. Would you make that compulsory?—Yes, I would make it compulsory to have whole lots without subdivision.

16581. To a certain extent, you would prohibit subdivision by law?—Yes, I would.

16582. *The Chairman.*—What roads were in the island when Sir James Matheson bought it?—I know that the people worked at relief works—making roads.

16583. But were there any roads in the island; and if so, to what points did they lead?—Yes, there were roads in the island.

16584. Where to?—I think there were roads all the way from here to Ness.

16585. A road you could drive over?—Yes.

16586. Any other roads?—Yes, there were other ones.

16587. But you do not know them?—I am not confident about them, because it was before my time.

16588. Did Sir James Matheson build any schools in the island?—He may have done so, but I am not aware of any schools.

16589. Was there steam communication with the mainland when Sir James came here?—Yes, there was.

16590. I am afraid you are mistaken. Are you not aware that Sir James put on the 'Mary Jane' himself, the first steamer that traded with the island?—No, I was not aware of that till now.

16591. You mentioned that Sir James made certain improvements at a certain time, at what time were those improvements made?—I suppose about fifteen years ago.

16592. Do you mean he paid 1s. 2d. per day fifteen years ago? Are you not speaking of the years 1848 to 1852?—The only improvements he did in the Lewis that I know of were on the grounds round the castle.

16593. That is within your recollection; but you have been talking of things far beyond your recollection. In improving the castle grounds within your recollection, was he in the habit of paying people 10d. per day?—So far as I know, and have been told, the wages on the average were from 10d. to 14d. per day,—within the last ten or fifteen years,—in my own day. That is what I have been informed.

16594. Where did you get your information?—I come in contact with a great deal of information. I am always on the move.

16595. Was it from the people who received these wages?—Well, I have been hearing about it all round.

16596. Did you get it directly?—No, I have not got it directly.

16597. Are you aware that at no distant period a shilling a day was the usual wage for labour in this country?—Within the last forty or fifty years the working wages in this country for unskilled labour were two shillings a day.

16598. You are not aware that the rise in wages from a shilling took place in 1848?—No, I am not aware of that.

16599. You mentioned that the people were quite willing to go inland, to take crofts inland as well as on the shore?—They are willing to take the land that was under cultivation before, and is now under deer and sheep.

16600. Is there such land inland?—Yes.

16601. Where is it?—Park.

16602. That is on the sea-shore?—It is inland a good deal too.

16603. Are you aware that an attempt was made to settle crofters at Little Deanston and failed?—No.

16604. Is the Rev. Angus M'Iver a member of your association?—He is not.

16605. He gave it as his opinion that the crofters to be comfortable should pay only half the present rent, but I think it is your opinion that the rent over the whole island is not too high?—I say the matter of rent is not the principal grievance; it is the matter of land. They want the land altogether.

16606. But rent has really a good deal to do with it. Do you think that the island is not too highly rented, or is it too highly rented?—Some of

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the crofters complain that the rents are high enough; but it is not the rent question that is agitating the people at all.

16607. The acreage of the island is 417,000 acres. You think that would hold 70,000 people comfortably?—I think it would.

16608. Have you divided 417,000 acres by 70,000, and found how many acres it would give to each?—No, I have not.

16609. It gives between 5½ and 6 acres to each, and you know yourself the character of a great deal of the land. You mentioned the stock which the people in your opinion should have. Now, taking 70,000 people, or say 12,000 families, with one horse, eight cattle, and forty-five sheep for each family—the total stock which the island would need to carry would be 12,000 horses, 96,000 head of cattle, and 540,000 head of sheep. Do you think the island would be capable of carrying that stock?—I say there would be a considerable proportion of those people who would be at the fishing industry.

16610. Say half of them?—Perhaps half of them.

16611. Then do you think there is sufficient land to carry the half of the stock I have mentioned,—or 6000 horses, 48,000 head of cattle, and 270,000 head of sheep?—I am not prepared to answer that.

16612. You say that each family ought to have from six to ten acres of arable land and a share of the hill pasture attached to it. Well, with the stock above mentioned, it has been calculated that you would require some three and a half million acres instead of 417,000 acres. But you have given us your statement as matter of opinion, you are not prepared to give the ground of your opinion?—No.

16613. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—We have had evidence enough to show us that, in the late Sir James Matheson's time, there were many things done which were perhaps not to be approved of, by persons who perhaps very ill represented him. I wish to put a question as to what good he did; I do not think that the good things men do should be entirely forgotten, or unknown to a new generation. You said that Sir James Matheson had done nothing to your knowledge for the benefit of the crofters. Was it not for the benefit of the crofters to expend large sums of money on the schools in the island?—The Free Church expended large sums.

16614. That is not an answer. Was it not a thing for the benefit of the crofters to spend money for the education of their children?—I was not aware that sums were expended in the country districts by Sir James.

16615. Did you never hear that for years before the Education Act was passed Sir James Matheson contributed liberally to the support of every school in the island, and that he expended thousands of pounds in that way?—I was not aware of that till now.

RODERICK M'SWEEN, Crofter, Steinish (77)—examined.

Roderick M'Sween.

16616. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have a statement to submit to the Commissioners?—Yes.—'*Statement of Crofters' Grievances from the Town-*
'*ship of Steinish, in the parish of Stornoway*, for submission to the Royal
'Commission, 6th June 1883.—Gentlemen, We are poor ignorant men,
'and would humbly lay our grievances in brevity before you for redress
'and remedy. These are, viz., that the proprietor deprived us of 120
'acres of agricultural ground and moor pasture, of which he gave, without
'any reduction of rent to us, 19 acres to Mrs Houston, a large farmeress

'at Melbost, and 50 acres to one Mr Simon Fraser (who came here a 'total stranger), who rents the same at £11 sterling. Roderick M'Sween, 'the eldest man in the said township, and the longest crofter paying rent 'for forty-three years past, remembers well of the previous rent having 'been £30, 17s., whereas it is now £41—thus giving an increase in 'rental of £10, 3s.* After the deprivation of the great extent of land 'taken from us, the proprietor has given the best part of our township 'to others without our consent, namely, 8 acres to J. Leadingham, '30 acres to George Mackenzie, besides the Tongue of Tong, the best 'grazing we had, to Mr Grant, a large sheep, &c., farmer. These are only 'a few out of many of our grievances, which we would humbly submit to 'your Commission; but as brevity must be observed, we will presently close 'with the last but not least hardship to which we have been subjected, 'and which is a shame and disgrace in a Christian country—that is the '*bona fide* fact, the impossibility of getting a road to our burial ground 'without trespass and scaling a dyke six feet high with our dead for 'interment, although we have been paying taxes and road assessment 'for the whole period of our occupancy of our present crofts or lots. We 'shall be glad to appear before you, and in our own humble and illiterate 'manner answer any questions you may be pleased to ask us; and 'hoping you will be the cause of redressing our grievances and ameliorat-'ing our poor condition, we have the honour to be, gentlemen, your 'most obedient servants, the crofters of Steinish, near Stornoway. Per 'RODERICK M'SWEEN and MURDO M'LENNAN.'

16617. Who wrote the paper you now submit?—Mr Walter Rose.

16618. Was it read to you before?—It was the people of the place who put down what was put into that paper by Mr Rose.

16619. So that you know yourself quite well what is in the paper?—Yes.

16620. How many people are in that place paying rent?—Fourteen at present pay rent.

16621. How much rent do they pay?—Upwards of £40. I came there forty-three years ago, and there were eight lots then.

16622. You say that 120 acres of agricultural ground and moorland pasture were taken from you first, and you got no reduction of rent for that. When was this done?—It is thirty-three years at least since most of it was taken from us.

16623. And then there were nineteen acres given to Mrs Houston; when was that?—About the same time. I was at sea at the time.

16624. And the fifty acres given to Mr Fraser,—was that at the same time?—All at the same time.

16625. And in none of the cases was there any reduction of rent?—No.

16626. Now, you say the rent has been increased by £10 during the last forty-three years. Does that mean that the £10 includes taxes?—Yes.

16627. So the actual rent has not increased so much as that?—No.

16628. You said that the proprietor gave without your consent eight acres to Mr Leadingham; when was that?—A long time ago. I cannot mention the date. I was at sea at the time.

16629. And thirty acres to Mr George Mackenzie; and no reduction of rent?—Eight acres of the thirty were given to Mr Mackenzie in Lady Hood's time, and the rest in Sir James' time.

16630. With regard to the grievance about the churchyard, it is stated in the paper here that there is no road to the burial ground except by scaling a dyke six feet high with your dead for interment. Is that

* See Appendix A, XL.

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the only place where the people of your township bury their dead?—Our burying place is at Uy.

16631. But is this place also used by the people for burying their dead?—The complaint is not that the chuchyard is surrounded by a six feet wall without a gate, but that there is a six feet wall near our own house on the road—the only road we can conveniently go to the churchyard.

16632. But suppose there was a gate on that wall, you would require a road through the farm to the churchyard?—Yes.

16633. Was that the way you used to go long ago?—Yes; that was the regular burying place.

16634. Is this a grievance that affects other people as well as your township?—It affects only our township. The others can go by another way.

16635. Did you endeavour to get a gate put upon the wall to allow you to go to the churchyard?—There was a gate, but in order to prevent the possible access of a beast through that gate into the parks, the gate was broken down, and the entrance closed up.

16636. Have you made an endeavour to get that gate restored?—I did not like to trouble the factor, but the ground officer was spoken to this year about it.

16637. What did he say?—I do not know what he said. It was somebody else who spoke to him and not myself. The conversation occurred at a funeral at which the ground officer was present.

16638. In regard to your crofts, what is it the people in your place would wish to be done?—When I came to Steinish forty-three years ago, I was paying £4, 4s. of rent. I had four milk cows then. It is thirty-three years since the pasture I have mentioned was taken from us, and now I can scarcely maintain one cow. Two cows are the most that any crofter in the place keeps, and it is as much as they can do to keep them.

16639. How would you put these matters right?—What the people want is more grass for their cattle, and the arable land which they lost. They require kitchen with their food as well as the food itself—milk and butter, and clothing to clothe themselves.

16640. Do you think the place is large enough to support the whole fourteen of you—the land you had before?—We would be very well contented with it.

16641. The rent has increased, but chiefly by taxation. You don't complain that the rent is too high?—I know it is too high.

16642. You yourself pay £4?—I pay £4, 12s. 6d. besides taxes.

16643. What rent do you think would be a fair rent for your croft without taxes?—If it was at the same rent at which we had it before we would be content; that is £4, 4s. with the pasture land restored.

16644. Is it good land that you have?—It is not bad land at all; we are not complaining of the land.

16645. Would it be easy to give you back what you had before?—It is easy enough, if they liked to give it to us.

16646. Why was it taken away; was it that the boundaries would be easier marked, or what?—I cannot answer that.

16647. You know the boundaries of the place well enough; were the boundaries more natural in the old time than now?—The boundaries that are now between us and the tack were made at the time when the tack was erected. The dyke was made close to our doors when that land was taken from us. A boy standing at any of the doors in our township, in the centre, could easily throw a stone to the boundary on the one side and to that on the other.

16648. So if the old boundaries were renewed again, do you think the fourteen families could live upon the old land in comfort in your place?—Yes.

16649. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the tack on the one side?—Goramclete.

16650. And what is the name of the tack on the other side?—The other tack is Mr Simon Fraser's, and it has no other name than that of Steinish.

16651. Was that fence put up entirely for the advantage of those two tacks, and to the loss of the crofters?—These dykes were erected entirely for the benefit of the tacks on each side. We were deprived of our peat moss at the same time.

16652. In regard to this wall keeping you from the churchyard, is the road on the other side of the dyke along to the churchyard destroyed?—It is not destroyed, it is as good as ever.

16653. That is on your own side, but on the other side what is it?—There is a part of the ground on that side—the tacksman's side—where there never was a road; but beyond that the road is as it was.

16654. Is it a very old burial ground?—The oldest churchyard in Lewis. It is called Aignish.

16655. Do you know it is illegal by the law of Scotland to shut up any road leading to a churchyard or to a church?—I believe it is.

16656. And if so, why did you permit this?—Because we were very peaceable, and preferred to bear it rather than put other people to trouble.

[ADJOURNED.]

STORNOWAY, LEWIS, MONDAY, JUNE 11, 1883.

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

NAPIER CAMPBELL, Solicitor, Stornoway (50)—examined.

16657. *The Chairman.*—By whom are you delegated to appear here?—I am appointed by several crofters. I may mention it was the wish of the general body of the crofters that I should appear; and I was also appointed by parties who were understood to represent the crofters,—I refer to the Highland Lewis Land Association, who were acting as a committee in public to prepare the parties for the reception of the Commissioners. I produce a specimen of the mandates I have.

16658. Would you make your statement?—[Paper read.]

16659. Has that paper been already read before the Land Law Reform Association of Lewis?—I believe it has; not this particular paper perhaps, but the draft of it. I may just state in connection with it, to show the unreliability of the public here, within a few minutes it was

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conveyed to Mr Munro by one of the officials, and I am threatened with an action of damages; and I am here to defy any action of damages.

16660. Before we say anything about it, we must first consider whether we shall consent to receive it, and we shall retire to consider that. There are statements here touching the character of a dead man, which make it necessary for us to consider whether we should receive the paper.

The Commissioners retired, and on resuming, the Chairman stated In the absence of the Chairman of the Commission, the Commissioners have resolved to receive Mr Napier Campbell's statement provisionally, reserving for a full meeting of the Commission the question of its final disposal.*

CHARLES MACKENZIE MACRAE, M.D. (65)—examined.

Charles Mackenzie Macrae.

16661. *The Chairman.*—You were elected at a meeting in Stornoway, presided over by the chief magistrate, to come here and speak on the land question?—I was.

16662. Have you a statement to make to the Commission?—I have drawn up a few notes, thinking I could convey the little I have to say in this form better than I could in the way of answering questions, for which I have no particular aptitude.

16663. We shall be very glad to hear your paper?—The pressure of the times, as felt in the Highlands and Isles, varies in nature and severity in different localities. In each there are, from recent experience, lessons to be learned and suggestions for the future, claiming the careful study of every lover of his country. In Lewis as elsewhere the parties chiefly interested, the rulers and the ruled, have already to some extent given expression to their sentiments on the present crisis; the Supervision Board also as it affected its own province; and perhaps in the nature of things, it was inevitable that the relative viewpoint of parties should give its distinctive, if not a one-sided colouring to the pictures they drew. The Poor Law functionary came to his scrutiny strong in a cold belief in the elasticity of legal charity. After having to deal before with evasions and distortions of fact, backing appeals of relief by the poor, he judges partly from past experience, notes carefully every semblance of prosperity, and distrusts the famine cry when starvation was imminent. The landlord party, strong in a traditional fame for good government and fair treatment of tenantry, naturally resented the imputation of oppression, or any wrong that could have grown into system otherwise than insidiously and unawares. And the sheep farming process, denounced by the crofter as the encroachment of the lower animals on the rightful domain of the tillers of the soil, had become so commonplace and approved as middle class farming, and removal elsewhere the right safety valve for a plethora of people, that it seemed not to admit of question that all available space for crofter holdings had been exhausted in the demand for large farms, deer forests, and sporting grounds. The crofter, on the other hand, protests that he has suffered long and grievously in his pinched and cribbed condition, bearing long in silence, until his smothered discontent caught the glow and felt the spur of the general land agitation, and now makes known by respectful petition and other demonstrations how sorely he feels aggrieved. Many, ready enough to denounce oppression out of sympathy with the crofter, incline to think his real condition was largely concealed by his patient and passive submission to hardship—an

* See Appendix A, XLIV. for amended Statement.

endurance arising, as he now represents, not from contentment or stolidity, but from sheer dread of arbitrary power. It is not surprising if acts of tyranny and misrule seemed incredible to such as knew the large outlays incurred by the late proprietor with a benelovent purpose—the vast sums expended on the reclaiming of moorland and on public works during the destitution of 1847, of which he bore the brunt singly —on extensive and repeated emigration—on postal communication, on roads, bridges, the patent slip, and other projects, and specially on the erection of schools and support of teachers in the pressing demand for education prior to the national systen. Any statement belying such beneficence on the part of the superior may reasonably be referred to misguided counsel, to errors in judgment and management on the part of some former officials, not fitted by the right experience or special wisdom for a charge of such gravity. Hence the objectionable methods resorted to with the object of averting pauperism, swelling the rentals, with the view of securing a fair pecuniary return for expenditure. Hence the failure to stimulate the tenantry to utilise the resources of land and sea, to adopt better modes of land culture, and better habits of thrift and industry, and to enlighten them generally; how best to help themselves. When thus attending to estate management, may I add that, as far as known to me, the gentleman presently in charge justly possesses the people's confidence, as seeking with all the impartiality in his power to serve the dual yet common interests involved. It is safe to say, however, that while a single factor may overtake the mere business transactions and exactions of this estate, the additional duties devolving on property in the right and adequate oversight of some 25,000 crofter population, with all the lessons they need in their present stage of transition, mean a task and a responsibility that seems too great for any one individual, however competent. The chapter of grievances thus accumulated consists to some extent of errors of head as much as of heart. In some respects, they are faults of a system that had become stereotyped, and retained from a kind of conservatism as the proper ancient order of things—a policy the evils of which appear worst in retrospect, viewed in the light shed on popular rights by a more forward civilisation. The detail of grievances from the modern point of view may well be left to the crofters themselves; while the main complaint of cottars is the withholding of land, the grievance of crofters, rising above all petty disabilities, is the smallness of holdings, and in many cases alleged unfairness in the modes of diminishing their former extent without any abatement of rent. They speak of the paring and curtailing and abstracting of pasture lands to enlarge tacks and straighten boundaries, or to create new crofts, but with no deduction of rental to the former possessors,—rather in some cases an alleged abitrary increase. They tell of processes of depopulation, and causing crofters who remain in the island to be removed from one district to be planted on the borders of another, or wedged into the vacancies of a township already overpeopled. At the same time, they contend that while the population has thus largely outgrown the arable area of land to which they are restricted, that yet the island itself is not overpeopled, and that poverty and chronic destitution are very much the result of insufficiency of land. And the opinion is firmly held, that along with other sources of subsistence increasing year by year, the land resources of the island, if wisely developed and appropriated, are equal to the maintenance and comfort of a much larger population than now occupies it. In this belief a strong current has set in recently against emigration, and none the less that it has been held up so much as the present panacea with landowners and other philanthropists for general land ailments. It is no doubt true

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that in these districts, more especially wherein land produce and stock are the sole dependence, a disposition has occasionally sprung up in hard times to leave the native soil, and exchange home drudgery for better prospects beyond sea, particularly when friends gone before may be holding out brighter days, inviting to follow, and offering help. It may be that, in such circumstances, there has been imprudence shown in repressing the emigration spirit, when perhaps the proper course should he meanwhile neither to foster nor restrain it, unless advised either way, plainly appearing to the people impartial, and given from a sense of duty. Emigration, that should approve itself as judicious and beneficial alike to the emigrant and those left behind, must move on some such lines as these, viz., first, it must be entirely voluntary, and at the same time, when spontaneously resolved upon, should be generously aided and kindly directed, to move not in isolated units, but in family groups, of which the younger members at least should be sufficiently educated and fitted to face a wider sphere than the circles of purely Celtic intercourse. Secondly, it must, as regards the home field, prove a thinning rather than the crowding process which it has proved as hitherto conducted. Formerly, when a township was being depopulated, such as declined to emigrate were usually disposed of by being transplanted into villages already much too densely occupied, and thus lessening rather than increasing the home provision. Thirdly, it must embrace careful provision for the well-being of the emigrants in the land of their adoption; planting them (if in sufficient numbers) in small land colonies, with a few skilled farmers intermixed, to teach by example the proper working of new fields of labour—and providing likewise pastoral oversight and educational appliances such as they enjoyed at home. In removing even to the most suitable parts of our colonies, Lewismen have learned that their home habits, language, and lack of culture must entail many hardships ere they can adapt themselves to the new order of things. It is not surprising therefore, if they turn eagerly to the resources and capabilities of their native isle which yet remain to be developed. To such as are not blinded by foregone conclusions, it is very obvious that the home resources, alike of land and sea, are by no means exhausted, but are rather in the incipient stage of being turned to profitable account. Many think that fishing and land culture would prosper best disjoined. But there are incidents of climate and season which seem to show that in the present stage of advancement they may with advantage be combined. In either directions there is yet ample room and to spare at home for exertion, and crofters with the two-fold occupation may be accommodated for years to come, in the land of their birth, and that not with any obvious apparent sacrifice of the landlord interest. A strong impression prevails that if the proprietrix were given to understand that such new or extended allotments would eventually result in mutual benefit to all concerned, she would gracefully concede the prayer of the crofters' humble petition—which to grant would be in harmony, not only with her own most generous actings, but with the whole tenor of the beneficent and patriotic example of her lamented husband, our late proprietor. To provide for the surplus population, yet without any holding, it is reasonable to submit—1. That the large tracts of arable and pasture lands adjacent to good harbours and fishing ground, presently held by tacksmen, should when out of lease be allocated to crofters on fair terms of rent and lease. Such eligible localities there are of considerable extent in the parishes of Uig, Lochs, and Stornoway, extensive enough to accommodate many hundreds of cottars and squatters presently without any holding. 2. There lie on the outskirts of the arable and cultivated

lands in nearly all the old villages or townships, tracts of bleak, but in parts very reclaimable, lands, from which the moss has been stripped for fuel, as used up by successive generations. These large spaces of denuded and exposed subsoil form part of the so-called common pasture ground usually styled 'backing' or 'cul' by the crofters. As such, however, their present benefit of said backing is more imaginary than real. They are generally eyesores to look at, black and rugged-looking, here moss bogs, there patches of gravel, with tufts of heather interspersed, and altogether of little or no service to man or beast. Owing to the very level or slightly undulating character of Lewis land, and the very workable subsoil in many places, these outlying clearances from moss are for most very susceptible of being converted into grass-grown pasture or corn-producing land. Of such, there are several large tracts to be found convenient to fishing stations, and very convertible into croft allotments. Such exist extensively in Ness on the moorland side of Lionel, Habost, and Swainbost, in Lochs, also beside fishing inlets, and on both sides of Broad Bay and other parts of Stornoway parish. When such moss stripped land is indispensable for pasture, and cannot well be apportioned in crofting, they might be so appended as to enlarge old lots when contiguous and previously too small; and townships so situated and divided into sections of three or four crofters each, might combine t eclaim each section, getting a proportion of acres in partnership, to be gradually trenched, laid out in crop or pasture, and fenced with feal or stone, both commonly at hand. Thus, the now bleak and almost useless moorland could be turned into separate and protected grass enclosures, transformed into the grazing so much in demand, but one acre of which so converted would be more valuable for pasture than a score in its present condition, and the Lewis waste and so called bog land would to a large extent gradually assume the aspect of lowland-like culture and fertility. By this method many crofts now too small might easily be enlarged. And in fishing villages particularly (in others also) enclosed grazings would besides other benefits save herding of cattle by children, and so remove one main obstacle to school attendance. Were the entire crofts to share the benefit of this trenching, draining, and fencing process, the way would be paved for another improvement in croft farming, viz., rotation of cropping, and laying out portions under grass in succession. This suggests that throughout the crofter land (3) an improved husbandry is much needed to give proper justice to the soil. Generally but a small portion of crofter land has been properly drained or trenched; scarcely any properly fenced. On the western seaboard, where they depend most on land produce, waste interspaces, stone cairns above and under ground, water-logged furrows, and wet tortuous rigs, still abound as they have done for generations, and grazing grounds are conducted still on a system of ill-managed communism, and giving no scope to individual industry or efforts. With a better system of tillage, and under fairly adjusted terms of lease, rental, and compensation, there is no reason why the croft should not cope acre for acre in productiveness and return acre for acre with the large arable farm. In this matter the last hard season, with its sore privation to the crofter, reads a lesson not to be neglected. Tacksmen generally secured and preserved their grain and hay crops in fair order, and their return of potatoes such in quantity and quality that in several instances a portion was profitably sold. The reason of the difference was that the tacksman's land from proper culture was dry and kindly enough to admit of early sowing. So well fenced and protected, that all seeds were put seasonably in the soil, and being healthy from frequent change of seed, their stronger crops were much

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less injured by the ungenial season, while by rotation of cropping this soil had attained and maintained a state of fair average productiveness. It is quite practicable to transform the crofter's land to yield the same satisfactory results by like skill and proper husbandry. Given, on equitable terms, a holding of some six acres in fishing districts—eight to ten in purely agricultural parts,—guarded against subdivision and squatting—restricted to summing according to rental and grazing—the charge of hill stock, when existing, committed to a competent common herd. Given also adequate stimulus to treat the soil on the improved system of culture—to alternate rest and cropping, and so arranging that two or more neighbours could show not only a common fence, but also common implements, so far as to lighten materially their toil, one plough and pair of harrows would serve three crofts,—with these advantages the earth would yield her increase as never before, the crofters' burden and drudgery would be lightened, the miserable exposure of children in herding (thus one great hindrance to education removed), would nearly cease; and some progress made towards a comfort and prosperity less liable to the violent fluctuations that have hitherto affected land returns. The crofters' domiciles also as well as their crofts very generally need thorough remodelling. In three-fourths of them is no regard paid to science in site, style of erection, or sanitary safeguards. Even when walls, roof, and separate apartments are passable, the surroundings are sadly neglected,—without proper roadway levelling or drainage. Some planted so in peat banks and hollows, or between earth mounds or on moss-imbedded boulders, that draining is scarcely possible, and hence reeking cesspools and unhealthy stagnation of a variety of things offensive within and without, leading, it would almost seem in the worst examples, from long association, to a general tolerance of filth as if it were a vested interest. Reform in this direction lies not only with landlords, but with all empowered to secure to our loyal islanders the full benefits of civilisation and the rightful fruit of their labour. But, fourthly, it is clear, that however much the maintenance of Lewis crofters may be supplemented by land reforms, its mainspring and staple source must be looked for from the fisheries, for which the shores are so well adapted. Precarious as weather and climate are, and often the cause of failure for a season, the people ever cling with hopeful expectancy to the prospect of coming success, and now more than ever, seeing that a cheering beginning has been made in the construction of harbours, for the safety and encouragement of our adventurous fishermen, it is earnestly hoped that each parish shall ultimately be provided with a port of safety, with landing place, breakwater, pier or quay as may suit, at the most suitable fishing centres. No doubt, eventually, the fishings shall be prosecuted more extensively, more profitably, and on a better system than hitherto. Much good would result were it possible to modify or entirely remove such drawbacks as the credit and truck system, specially as they affect the cod and ling fishings. The system oft inflicts loss on the curer, demoralises the fisherman by offering facilities for dishonesty and the contraction of debt, and presses most on the honest solvent fisherman who pays the curer the high percentage on his goods, based on his calculation of loss, while the price of fish is uniform to the honest and dishonest. In much the same category may be placed the bounty system now universal in the herring trade—a gratuity in the way of airles—it may be more than some earnings in bad seasons. A high bonus for the privilege of being fished for—should the fish never come—a principle very liable to abuse, and tending to foster anything but enterprise on the part of fishermen. Among the projects mooted for the promotion of our

fisheries, telegraphic communication between Stornoway and the principal fishing stations round the coast is specially important, as will be urged by special delegates. Probably, in course of time, the way might thus be prepared for another scheme also mooted, the construction of a line of tramway communication between the same west coast and Stornoway, say from Ness and Carloway, in separate lines, or forming a junction at some points. The proved appositeness and vantage of these western stations for deep-sea fishing, and probably also for early herring fishing, point out the gain of connecting them with the nearest steam and railway termini, and so with the southern markets. The greater value of fresh fish and other products in saleable condition would give immense impulse to the fishing interest and to general traffic —speedy sale being furnished not only for ling, cod, herring, salmon, and lobster, but for every commodity the island could supply for immediate consumption. Such a line would be facilitated and cheapened by the level character of the interior. It might be made available also for the transport of peat fuel from the vast accumulations of moss it would pass through. In Stornoway this fuel is becoming yearly more costly, and a cheaper supply would greatly benefit especially the working classes and the pauper population that have flocked so eagerly into the town? The export trade in fuel, now small, would also readily increase, give considerable employment, and enlarge the moss-divested clearances. But, however much such measures for extracting their wealth from sea and land may conduce to our material welfare, it must be borne in mind —lastly, that the great lever for upraising islemen from their depressed condition, the sure highway to genuine progress must be looked for in the train of a thorough education permeating the entire social fabric. It must be confessed that Lewis is not yet in the way of reaping the full benefit of its educational machinery, and this very much because the school is unhappily associated with high rates and oppressive burdens in the minds of a people long indifferent to its value, and seeing little in taxation to render it attractive. Hence are the advantages of regular school attendance persistently sacrificed to the most paltry excuses, such as irregularity of diet, deficient clothing, or bad shoes—the herding of cattle —the nursing of infants—the illness of some member of the family—the pretence of slight illness—the dread of infection, real or assumed—the merest whims of the children—in short, the various shifts which parents accept or connive at when they themselves never realised their need of being taught, when the cost, however small, is grudged, and the great boon nauseated on account of its concomitants. When the enforcement of school attendance has to face such difficulties, it is a question worthy the study of a paternal Government if among such classes as the long down-trodden Hebrideans, education should not at their present stage be presented on the footing of a free gift—and not only fees remitted, but school attendance secured by premium of some sort rather than by penalty. In the domain of intellectual culture, much remains to be attained by Lewismen ere they reach in educational advantages to parity with more favoured communities. When the curriculum of the elementary school has been completed, and the more vigorous native intellects have penetrated the dense crust which has long enveloped them, and, having imbibed the love of knowledge, are eagerly desirous of higher attainments, they find progress arrested by the want of a more advanced school. Hence, one of our most pressing wants is an institute for the higher instruction, efficient of staff, easy of access, and available on their own soil for promising youths of straitened means, but superior endowment. On this subject the following representation has been made by the

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Stornoway School Board to the Education Department:—'*School Board of Stornoway, Stornoway*, 21st *Nov.* 1882.—In reply to your circular of April last, on the subject of higher education, I am instructed by the Stornoway School Board to state that there is no school under their management, or in the whole island of Lewis, in which provision is made for secondary education. All the Lewis schools are elementary, and as the board schools are situated in rural districts, and at great distances from each other, it is impossible to convert any of them into a central higher class school. The only schools that could be made such are those in the towns of Stornoway, but the board regret that none of these is under their management, nor, meanwhile, likely to be transferred. These Stornoway schools are three in number, viz., "Lady Matheson's "Seminary," an industrial school for girls and young boys, and supported mainly by the proprietrix of the island, a "Free Church "Congregational School," and the "Nicolson Institution," a partially endowed school. Were all these handed over, a higher school might be reached by the graded system. Were even one transferred to the board it would greatly facilitate the taking of steps towards the attainment of secondary education. But as matters now stand nothing can be done in this direction. The town schools supply sufficient school accommodation for all the children of school age, and the people could not face the expense of building a new school, being too poor, and already much too heavily taxed for the support of the existing schools, besides their other parochial burdens. The circumstances of the people are altogether exceptional, and in the matter of higher education, they are really worse off than they were previous to the passing of the Education Act. The large population of the island (now close on 30,000), and the inability of the people generally to send their children to a distance out of the island to be more highly educated, render it imperative that provision be made without delay for supplying near home the advantages of secondary education, at least such as would give islanders the preparatory training so commonly accessible on the mainland, qualifying pupils for the universities, for normal schools, for the teaching vocation, and for other special professional, intellectual, and mercantile pursuits. Were such a higher class school established in Stornoway, it would not only meet a greatly felt want in Lewis, but would serve also as a higher class school for the adjacent islands. Already has the State adopted Stornoway as the most fitting central seat of naval instruction for the natives of the Outer Hebrides and western seaboard of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire joining the Naval Reserves. It would suit equally as the best central position for a higher educational school convenient to islesmen and others throughout the same wide area. The School Board of Stornoway earnestly hope that their Lordships will recognise the very great necessity and benefit of such an inestimable boon to their island, and the peculiar difficulties in the way of attaining it by local effort, and that they may be able to suggest or devise, in concert with the Endowment Commissioners or otherwise, some resources by the aid of which such a school could be established. The board feel confident that by the greater facility for study afforded by such a school, properly equipped and easy of access, the desire for education and higher attainment, already largely created by the extension of primary schools, would be greatly stimulated, and one great barrier to the upward progress of Hebrideans, an old and real educational disability, would no longer exist. The board further beg leave humbly to submit that to provide such a pressing requirement for the benefit of a truly loyal and law-abiding community, who are utterly unable herein to help themselves,

'and who have long pined in intellectual darkness and penury, were an 'act of generous legislation well becoming a paternal Government that 'has been wont, even in exceptional instances, to prove itself prompt and 'liberal in remedy wherever grievance or necessity, specially affecting the 'poor, were, as in this case, so very palpable and urgent.' From the board's letter to the Education Department it will be seen that this town has no school under the control of the School Board, or subject to any modification or change which the ratepayers may be desirous to effect, in the way of obtaining a better and more advanced education for the children. A strong application is about to be made also to the Endowment Commissioners and likewise to the directors of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for their assistance in obtaining the boon —and may we not hope that these efforts will be approved and seconded as well as our other needed reforms effectually enforced and secured to us by the Royal Crofters Commission. Great and lasting will our obligations be if as the result of your patient and onerous labours difficult problems now pressing for solution will be cleared up—our home industries better developed, our social condition raised, the relationship of landlord and tenant thoroughly adjusted—the poor crofter's heart cheered, his heavy burdens lightened, his sorest land grievances ended, and the humblest among them set on the path of upward ascent from the very rear to the very forefront of civilisation. In looking hopefully to Government, we know the reproach of inveterate begging and petitioning—we know the great difficulties in the way of exceptional legislation, but we do think if our Legislature were fully informed and suitably impressed with our uphill encumbrances, with the unequal burdens and dead weights we bear beyond most of our fellow-countrymen, and that need to be removed ere we stand on a par,—fitted fairly to advance on equal terms,—a generous statesmanship would devise steps and arrangements so to facilitate our progress that we should shortly march abreast with any other Briton in civil and social life, as in sterling character and manly daring, alike on the ocean wave or battlefield.

16664. You are a native of the island, I think?—Yes.

16665. Have you resided almost permanently in the Lewis?—I have.

16666. You refer at the commencement of the statement to certain improvements, outlays on a patent slip, and so on. Have improvements taken place in the Lewis in your time?—Very considerable.

16667. In a paper sent to the Commission, a petition from the crofters to the Prime Minister, it mentioned that while in the aggregate the rent of the land had been more than doubled during the last forty years, there had been no improvements during that time worth adverting to. That is not your opinion?—It is not my opinion.

16668. You think there have been considerable improvements?—I have specified the large extent of land reclaimed, such as at Deanston,—perhaps not a profitable subject for the proprietor—but there has been a great deal done; and over at Shawbost there has been a great deal reclaimed and let to crofters, and at various other places.

16669. The land at Deanston has gone out of cultivation again?—I believe the drains have got choked up. Deep moss reclamation is not so profitable as when you have it partially removed and access got to good subsoil.

16670. There has been a considerable amount of increase in the arable land, exclusive of Deanston?—A good deal.

16671. And the importance of Stornoway has very much increased in the last forty years?—It has.

16672. With regard to family emigration, do you think any number

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of people would care, if assistance were given, for such a system of emigration as you refer to? Do you think many families in the Lewis would be willing to go?—Not at present, till they see what comes of this land adventure.

16673. With regard to the schools, you said the compulsory clause does not work satisfactorily?—It does not.

16674. And you proposed to replace it by offering attractions to encourage good attendance?—Yes, or perhaps remitting the fees.

16675. In what other way would you encourage attendance?—It is very difficult to say. We find the difficulty of securing regular attendance so great that it is worth the attention of the Legislature to suggest some measure for carrying it out. We have tried penalty, and we have sometimes listened to excuses that we could hardly fail to accept as reasonable and plausible when perhaps they were fictitious. We cannot always say they are wrong, and we find a difficulty in punishing the pupil.

16676. Then do I understand you are not prepared to specify any remedy for that state of things?—There have been some methods used by the Ladies' Association that encouraged children very much to attend schools—providing them with clothing, and providing them with books, and when it was difficult for them to attend on such pleas, as want of clothes and shoes, taking ways and means to supply these. I would look upon that under certain circumstances as an inducement.

16677. Are you prepared to recommend that these should be supplied out of the rates?—I suppose already the Parochial Board is liable for such, but it would burden the rates very much.

16678. Are Lady Matheson, the trustees of the Nicolson Institute, and the trustees of the Free Church School, averse to giving up their schools to the board?—I do not know that they are positively averse at present. There are some negotiations going on with regard to the Nicolson Institution. The trustees are presently inclined to transfer it as a whole, but the congregational school is not likely to be transfered, and Lady Matheson's seminary is working so well as it stands that perhaps there is no urgent reason why the School Board should look for its transference unless to facilitate this higher education that I speak of.

16679. But that would be a very important object?—A very important object.

16680. Do you think the trustees of the congregational school do not see that this is a very important object?—There are some difficulties in regard to the transference of the Nicolson Institution that have not been cleared up. I believe they are presently before the Educational Endowments Commission.

16681. *Mr Cameron.*—You say you think that large tracts of arable and pastoral land in the vicinity of the sea might be allocated to crofters, and I think you referred to the three parishes of Uig, Lochs, and Stornoway; are you pretty well acquainted with the land to which you refer?—Thoroughly well.

16682. Have you had any experience yourself of farming?—A little.

16683. What parish are you a native of?—The parish of Barvas.

16684. Do you consider the quality of the land in those parishes to be susceptible of improvement?—In some places I consider it is susceptible of improvement, particularly where it is seen what kind of subsoil is exposed after the removal of the moss. In some places the moss has been all thoroughly removed, otherwise there are thousands of acres in the parish of Ness that are perfectly reclaimable.

16685. The land you refer to in Ness is not similar to that at Deanston?—The difference is that at Deanston the moss is very deep and the drains get soft, and the crop at that deep moss is not at all so profitable. It grows grass very well, but it does not grow crops so well.

16686. And this land which you refer to is what is called backing?—Yes; between that and the moss that has not been used for fuel.

16687. And that land consists of ground from which the moss has been removed?—Mostly.

16688. What is the character of the subsoil?—Clay in a great many places. Where it is rock I do not consider that reclaimable. It is partly rock, but apart from that, I can point out several districts where the subsoil is by no means rock.

16689. For what purpose is that ground utilised?—For cul or backing, and I have stated in my paper that with a routine of cropping, and properly protecting the patches of land they have, and having a piece of grass land enclosed, they could provide pasture for their cows that would be of infinitely more service than an infinitely larger proportion of that land.

16690. What is that land used for now—for grazing?—For cattle.

16691. How many acres would it require of this land as it now is to feed a cow?—There are some patches of it where I suppose it would take twenty acres to feed an animal.

16692. And that only I presume in summer?—Only in summer.

16693. The quality of the grass is not good?—There are some places where there is no grass at all—just a tuft of heather here and there.

16694. And the subsoil is clay and gravel?—Mostly clay.

16695. What treatment would you apply to this land in order to bring it into cultivation to be of use to the crofters?—It would need to be trenched and drained, but I think the desirable thing is protection. There is no protection to the crofters' land at present, but they are in want of fencing, and they can never carry on a proper system of cropping till the land is fenced. I mentioned a kind of way in which it might be done, by two or three crofters getting a piece of land in partnership and having implements in common—a common plough and perhaps a pair of horses between them. A pair of horses might do for three or four crofts, but that implies that the land should be put into proper order at first.

16696. I should have thought from your description that trenching land with such a subsoil as you describe would be sufficient without draining, but you are inclined to think that draining would be also necessary?—In some places. Perhaps there are several places which would not require draining, such as high land where there is a fall.

16697. There is a tile manufactory on the property?—Yes.

16698. Are tile pipes made there?—A considerable quantity.

16699. So that the price of draining with tiles would not be so expensive as in some other islands?—I should think not.

16700. Now as to this process of improvement, which I suppose you will admit would be somewhat expensive, how would you propose that the expense should be borne?—It would depend on the terms on which the crofter would get the land, and the length of the lease. The rent at first should be more or less nominal according to the difficulty of reclaiming the land. Some parts of the soil are easily brought in and others not. Or he might get a proportion of the reclaimed lands for a certain term of years, and pay interest on improvements for the rest.

16701. You mean, as I understand, that the crofter is to improve the land and to receive it for a certain number of years rent free?—Yes, or for a nominal rent.

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16702. Do you think the crofters could afford time to do that?—Well, when the weather does not admit of their carrying on the fishing. I speak of it mostly in connection with the fishing, and when fishing cannot be carried on they have a great deal of idle time on their hands.

16703. And you think that assistance either from Government or from the proprietor would be a reasonable condition of such a scheme being carried out?—They must require some help. I am not able to advise a proper way of carrying it out. I know some crofts where the crofter has been labouring hard at it for two or three years, and where he considers himself to have suffered very great loss by not being able to carry on the fishing while at this work, and in that case it has impoverished the man. I think, generally speaking, very few could bear to labour without some remuneration on land of that sort.

16704. So, in point of fact, it would require some assistance in money before the crofter could devote much of his time to improve the land upon a large scale?—I think so.

16705. And I gather from your paper and the answers you have given that your impression of the crofter is that he would be willing, if he got encouragement, to improve the land?—I do think so.

16706. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have seen a paper which was issued some time ago about the population of the Lewis at different periods?—Yes.

16707. Is there really any authentic information as to what the population was about 1750, or is it merely supposed to be a rough estimate?—I think it is tolerably well ascertained from information, possessed chiefly by the clergy I think.

16708. You are well acquainted with the island, and have seen what has been in cultivation?—I have.

16709. You are also aware that a very large contingent from the island of Lewis was formerly ordered to be called out by the Seaforth family?—Yes.

16710. Well, supposing the population was only 7000 as alleged, how many men out of these 7000 were fit to bear arms? I suppose you would not make a higher proportion than one out of ten?—Perhaps, about that.

16711. That would only give 700 men?—Yes.

16712. Are you aware that a charter was granted to the burgh of Stornoway about two hundred years ago?—Yes.

16713. Does that now exist?—No, I think it is not in force.

16714. Are you aware that it conveyed considerable advantages and privileges to the then inhabitants of Stornoway?—Yes.

16715. Which they have lost?—Yes.

16716 Are you aware that, after Sir James Matheson acquired the property, he applied for the right to the foreshore?—Yes.

16717. Was that a further deprivation of the rights of the people of Stornoway?—They consider it so.

16718. A severe deprivation?—Yes.

16719. Are you also aware he made a claim upon the old harbour which had been constructed by the money of the people of Stornoway, or claimed certain rights over it?—He claimed certain rights over it.

16720. And that was a matter also that created a good deal of dissatisfaction?—It did.

16721. You mentioned that among the improvements which were made and the money that was laid out in Sir James Matheson's time, there was the erection of a patent slip, and you say that was very much

for the benefit of the crofters of the Lewis?—Not directly for the crofters.

16722. But no doubt it was in favour of the trade of the place?—Yes.

16723. You have stated in your very valuable and interesting paper that you regret that the crofters have not been better instructed in the matter of tillage and cultivation. Would it not have been a wise thing if a good deal of the money which has been spent in other ways had been spent in the way of giving them encouragement to improve the system of tillage?—I think so indeed. It would be much more profitable in the long run for the proprietor and for the tenants generally. I do not think the places taken up for reclamation were judiciously chosen at all.

16724. You also referred to the cottars who have no lease at present. They are anxious to get small patches of land and willing to cultivate them?—Yes, and have been so for a long time.

16725. That is consistent with your observation?—Yes.

16726. I presume they are a large body all over the island?—Yes, about 700 or 800, I suppose, all over the island.

16727. You also stated, but I should like it to be a little more emphasised, that in many of the removals that took place when some people went to America, and some crowded into the other townships, it did not benefit the places from which they were removed?—That is my opinion.

16728. In fact, very often the removals took place for the purpose of creating tacks?—It did not lighten the burden of those who remained in any way. It did not help those who remained to derive more benefit from the soil.

16729. You also stated that looking to the present population of the Lewis, although you are favourable to emigration in families, you consider there is ample room at present, if the lands were judiciously distributed, for all that remain?—Yes, that is my opinion.

16730. You also stated that it is your opinion that the crofters with enlarged holdings would be enabled to hold their own in the matter of the value of their stock and produce in the market?—Yes, but that referred more particularly to the produce of their lands—enabling them to sow and plant earlier and to reap earlier.

16731. I now ask you a further question—whether or not you think that the crofters, having got encouragement in this way, would be enabled to rear stock that would compete in the market with the large farmers?—I think they would, if the quantity of stock were reduced and the quality improved.

16732. With regard to the back lands or cul, there is no donbt that anybody who looks closely at it must see what a dreadful disfigurement it makes where the peat moss has been cleared off?—Yes.

16733. You are in favour of this being reclaimed either by individual crofters or by bodies of crofters if they got encouragement to do so?—Yes, or in the way of extending the lots they have, where the places are contiguous.

16734. Is it not the fact that half of the expense has been done away already by the peat being cleared off?—Yes. That is the fact in many instances.

16735. So you do two things,—you avoid the dreadful disfigurement in the neighbourhood of the township, and you improve the land as land fit for cultivation?—Yes, and also improve the climate to a considerable extent.

16736. You were asked in reference to a petition put in by the crofters, in which they said there had been no improvements during the period we

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have adverted to. Of course, the crofters are only speaking for themselves. Will you mention anything that has been really done for the benefit of the crofters of consequence?—Well, the schools that were provided for them by Sir James Matheson before the Education Act came into operation were a benefit. But perhaps you allude to land?

16737. It is the land which is alluded to here, but we shall take your answer in the very fullest manner. Recollect I speak of the benefit to them for which they did not pay. Of course, anything they now pay for in the shape of rent I do not consider benefit?—I am not aware of any improvements on land but what rent has been charged for.

16738. You mentioned, in answer to the Chairman, that considerable improvements were made at Shawbost. For any thing that has been done there has not rent been paid by the present occupants?—Yes, it has.

16739. Probably you cannot tell whether the rent is a fair rent for the outlay or not, but still rent is paid?—Yes.

16740. You also made reference to the quantity of land—that a great deal of land might be taken in towards Ness. Where is that land specially?—On the moor side of the villages, as you go along to the port to the right hand side.

16741. You think there is a great deal of land there?—Yes. It is pretty level; and Ness being such a fishing station now, there is not much occasion for backing or pasture land. They are in the habit of having the cattle in the houses there for a great part of the winter, except when they go to the moors in summer. The pastures are far from them.

16742. Suppose the parties got some fixity of tenure, without attaching any definite meaning to that—suppose they got some security that they would not be disturbed,—is there anything to prevent them taking in that land without any assistance whatever?—I do not think there is.

16743. Or any disinclination?—No. I think many of them would be thankful to get it.

16744. All they want is some kind of understanding or rule fixed that they will not be disturbed capriciously?—Yes, that on both sides they are regularly bound by engagement or lease.

16745. I understand that a number of young men for a considerable time past from the town of Stornoway are in the habit of going abroad and getting on very well in the world. Is that so?—Yes, it is quite true.

16746. That has been the case for a long time?—Yes.

16747. And at this moment there are many young men born in Stornoway and the Lewis who are in very good positions in India and elsewhere?—There are.

16748. Is there any reason why the crofting population of the Lewis, if they had the chance, would not raise themselves in the same degree?—Not the least reason.

16749. With regard to your schools, was there not some bequest left by Mr Mackinlay?—No, I am not aware he did. He founded bursaries in his lifetime. The year before he died he left the sum of £150, which has been divided into four bursaries, two of £15 and two of £10 each, tenable for three years. They are held by four young men who were successful in the competition.

16750. Has any assistance been given by the proprietor, or any encouragement been given to the proposed enlargement of the quays at Stornoway, which seem to be very much crowded?—I cannot say anything positive on that subject.

16751. Is there a rent charged for laying these barrels on the roadway

and otherwise?—I believe some of the gentlemen who are to appear in connection with the harbour business are better able to inform you on that subject than I am.

16752. At the time the home farm was attached to the castle, were there not a number of people removed?—Yes, a good many people were removed.

16753. What became of them?—They have been removed into the suburbs of the town, a good many of them. Others have been moved a little further out from the town, out to Laxdale.

16754. Had most of these people cows?—Yes, most of them.

16755. Did they use to sell any of the milk?—Yes they did; some of them have cows still.

16756. Did they get any compensation when they left?—I am not aware they did, except value for the old roofs and aid in building new houses.

16757. *Professor Mackinnon.*—We have been told all over the island by the crofters that their holdings are very much too small, and by the cottars that they have none at all, and some of the cottars perhaps would be glad if they got as much as even a crofter had, we have also had evidence on the other side to the effect that the capabilities of the island are quite sufficient to maintain off the land its present population,—one gentleman stated nearly three times its present population,—and I should like to have your opinion upon that. In the first place, what do you think an enlarged holding should consist of, as a general rule?—Well, it should vary according to whether the crofter is connected with fishing or not I think that in connection with fishing villages a croft of six acres ought to be sufficient, but it might vary a little according to the quality of the land, and according to the extent of back pasture which they would have for cattle. Then, in a purely agricultural place, where they are dependent on the land, they would need nine or ten acres.

16758. Your paper stated that, from the peculiar characteristics of this place you think it proper that the crofting and fishing be combined about the harbour?—Yes.

16759. Then suppose you had a croft about the harbour extending to about six acres, and a croft inland of about ten acres, and that you had got all that could possibly be expected of reclamation from the *cul*, and as much as could reasonably be expected recrofted from the different tacks, you are of opinion that the present population would be provided for fully in that way?—I think so. That is my opinion. I think the island might accommodate even more, but I cannot say how many. There are some of the big farms perhaps that would not be adapted for crofters—I mean those that are exclusively agricultural.

16760. *Mr Cameron.*—You mean pastoral?—Yes.

16761. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you think it desirable that the big farms should be entirely done away with?—I would not say they should. I think the prosperity of the island is so much connected with the fishing, that if possible every crofter's lot should have access at least to a good fishing station, except where they manage to live now on land without fishing.

16762. And where the men principally subsisted upon the land as distinct from the sea, would you then wish that there should be a graduated system of crofts to small farms, or do you wish them to be of a uniform size?—If possible, it would be better to have them graduated about fishing stations particularly, if there should be a middle class attainable, but there is a difficulty in getting arable land to be profitable of itself in this country.

16763. Could you not have a pretty good croft that might be chiefly pastoral?—That is quite true.

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16764. And still able to support the family that would work it?—Yes.

16765. With respect to the reclamation of the *cul*, of which we saw a very great deal which is at present fit for nothing at all, it is neither pasture nor cropped, do you think that in some cases the crofters would be able to reclaim some of it at their own expense if they got it for a nominal rent?—I think so.

16766. But in the event of their being assisted in reclaiming it the interest of the money would have to be paid?—Yes, no doubt it would.

16767. But still that would be for their benefit?—I attach great importance to the fencing—to the people having what they reclaim exclusively to themselves. When the pasture ground is shared in common, there is not the least inducement to reclaim. I think they ought to have their lands better fenced. It would serve a great purpose.

16768. And of course the materials for fencing lie all round about?—Yes, generally.

16769. Of course, one would always understand that in the event of money being lent for the reclaiming and the fencing it could only be upon interest, which would have to be paid back?—Of course.

16770. But still that would go for the benefit of the crofters?—Yes.

16771. So even if he paid rent in the shape of interest or otherwise, it would be for his benefit that this land was reclaimed?—No doubt.

16772. If he got it for nothing without any interest that would be charity?—That would not do.

16773. And he does not want that?—He does not want that.

16774. With respect to the schools, you stated that encouragement should be given for securing regular attendance rather by reward than punishment, and that the children attending most regularly should be encouraged in some shape or form, though perhaps you could not manage to frame a particular scheme. I suppose you would not expect that much more than elementary education should be given in all the schools of the island, Stornoway excepted, but that they should be restricted to the common subjects?—I think there is no necessity for having advanced education in the country schools. One school in Stornoway would serve not only for Lewis but for the Long Island.

16775. But at present there is no such school?—None.

16776. And you think, by rearrangement of existing schools and bringing them under the School Board, such a school might be created?—It might be, but there is not much likelihood of such a rearrangement at present, and there is no way of getting a central school suitable for such a school.

16777. Do you expect the Endowed Schools Commissioners will be able to solve the problem?—With the aid of the Crofters Commission.

16778. Has the Society for Popagating Christian Knowledge not included Stornoway among the places where they would give a special grant to a better class school? Have you seen their draft scheme?—Yes, I think there is an endowment of £60.

16779. That would be a great help?—Yes. But I should like if we could get a building grant from Government, as other schools do. I am afraid, however, they will not give that. Possibly a proper representation might induce them to give it.

16780. The Mackinlay bursaries are confined to Lewis lads?—Yes.

16781. Are the bursaries bestowed by competition?—By competition.

16782. Who is the administrator?—There are three trustees appointed by Mr Mackinlay,—two ministers and myself.

16783. It is entirely on the island?—Entirely on the island.

16784. Of course you have had no experience as yet of the value of that endowment?—There has been experience. I think there are three of

the successful competitors for the first bursary, now public school teachers in this island.

16785. You expect a great deal of good out of that?—I do. If the bursary system could be extended, it would be of very material benefit to this country, and it would enable men to go and study in the grammar schools of the south.

16786. And stimulate the other schools of the island as well as Stornoway?—Very much.

16787. I suppose intellectually as well as physically there is no lack of raw material?—No lack of raw material.

16788. Is the revenue of the Mackinlay Trust £150 annually?—No. The original sum is £150, and it has been divided into four bursaries, two of £15 and two of £10, tenable for three years each.

16789. And that exhausts the total capital?—Yes.

16790. And the bursaries will come to an end then?—Yes.

16791. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you think there is any change in the physical condition of the people since the time when you were young?—Yes, I think there is some little change.

16792. For the better or for the worse?—It is a more varied condition. I think there is a greater amount of comfort and a greater appearance of a civilised condition; but then I think there is a larger amount of poverty on the other hand, and there are a greater number of poor people than there were in my youth,—that is to say, people who are in difficulties for their support. There is a class of people who have availed themselves of the facilities for making money that have sprung up of late years, and that did not exist in my youth.

16793. Is there any improvement in the houses of the people?—Yes.

16794. In their internal accommodation?—Considerable improvements.

16795. Is there more attention to cleanliness and to sanitary laws?—Yes, but there is still much to be done.

16796. Is it possible by estate regulations to improve the condition of matters in that respect?—Well, I think if I had the power I have spoken of to-day as in the hands of one person, a great deal might have been done in that way—in the way of improving the houses and making matters more respectable.

16797. Have there been any such regulations with the special view of improving the condition of the houses and their surroundings?—Yes, there have been such regulations as insisting upon having two doors to the houses, but one of these doors has been allowed to get into disuse,—in fact, closed up,—a door for the cattle and a door for the inmates, but that has not been continued.

16798. Do the cattle still in the great majority of cases live under the same roof with the inhabitants?—Yes, in the other extremity of the house. They are generally long houses, and the cattle live in one end.

16799. But in a great number of cases are the cattle not separated by any division from the human beings?—I think in most houses there is a division of stone or wood.

16800. If there was a separate door, I suppose there would be, from a sanitary point of view, no great objection to the cattle being under the same roof?—Not if the drainage outside was in good order; but they have the part of the houses where the cattle are excavated in order to retain the manure, and it retains the oozing and liquid that should be removed.

16801. Are epidemic diseases more or less common than they were fifty

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years ago?—I cannot say they are much more common, but when an epidemic does break out it spreads rapidly.

16802. I suppose the closeness of the houses to each other in a great measure adds to the danger?—Yes, from the organic products accumulating there.

16803. Are diseases of the chest more prevalent than they used to be?—It was thought at one time that we were exempt from consumption. I have seen cases of it, and I think in nearly all of them it could be connected with the south in some way—parties who had gone south and worked hard in service there.

16804. Has there been an increase in that respect?—Not much increase, but I think on the whole there are more cases now to be seen.

16805. As regards the children, are diseases common to children more or less prevalent than they were before?—Well, I daresay diseases of the chest, such as catarrhal complaints, are more prevalent. It is singular that croup is prevalent in the Lewis but unknown in Harris. Harris is very hilly.

16806. Is Lewis less rainy or more so?—No, I think they are pretty much of a muchness.

16807. Are the children better or worse clothed than they used to be fifty years ago?—Well, their clothing has not improved,—I mean the clothing manufactured at home, because the population having increased so much, and the number of sheep not being increased, the home clothing is not so easily kept up.

16808. I suppose many of the children are clothed with thin cloth bought in shops?—Yes, there is a good deal of that—not sufficient protection from the weather.

16809. Is it common with them not to wear flannel, or do they generally wear it?—I do not think they generally wear flannel.

16810. Is that bad for their health?—If they have what they call plaiding, it does not matter so much, but they have introduced cotton shirting very much now.

16811. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned in your statement something regarding the export of fuel; is there any such export?—Yes, peat.

16812. For what purpose?—I believe they prefer it in certain distilleries.

16813. I presume that trade never can assume any great proportions?—It is possible it might, but the fuel is getting scarcer around Stornoway and some of the villages here.

16814. With regard to the waste lands, you think if money were advanced the crofters could utilise that money, so as to be able to pay interest upon the advances? Would the improvement pay interest upon the capital expended?—I think it would.

16815. Have you observed the improvements at Shawbost—were they conducted in such a way that the crofters could afford to pay a fair interest on the cost?—They complain very much there that the land has been overpeopled at Shawbost, that they have been too much crowded, and that they were not able to have the stock that would help them to pay the rents. That is one of the villages which has not been sufficiently developed as a fishing station.

16816. With reference to the lands that were reclaimed there, do you think that, so far as the reclamation went, it was one which paid the outlay?—I think it must have paid the outlay.

16817. And similar reclamations elsewhere could be profitably made?—I think so.

16818. A question was put to you, but you did not give a very decided answer to it. Do you think that the crofter population could pay the

same rent for land that the large farmers pay?—Not at first. I say they could not perhaps pay it at first, but a graduated rent. When you plant a crofter in a new place, it will take two or three years before he gets a fair stock. I do not think he could be able to pay the same rent by any means at first, but I think in the course of time there would be no loss to proprietor.

16819. You mean that at first the crofter would have to incur considerable expense in building his house and improving his land?—Yes.

16820. After the first seven years, let us say, do you think he could be in a position to pay the same rent which a large farmer pays?—Well, the crofters are of that opinion themselves.

16821. You mentioned that it would be very desirable to have landing-places and piers and shelter for boats about the island. How many of these places should there be?—There should be one on the west side. There is one now constructing at Ness; and there should be one in Broad Bay.

16822. There should be two at all events besides the one at Ness?—Perhaps three.

16823. At whose cost should these be erected?—Well, it is expected by the estate that part of the money which has been given out in distribution would be repaid gradually and used for that purpose, but I should hope they will be effectually supported by Government and the Fishery Board, as in the case of Ness.

16824. If advances were made for making piers, would there be any interest payable by the fishing population upon these?—That would depend upon the conditions upon which the money was given.

16825. Would the fishing population be able to pay any interest on these advances?—I do not know that they could at first.

16826. And you think that these piers would have to be erected either by the proprietor or by Government—that the advances would have to be made gratuitously?—I think so.

16827. I do not quite understand how you propose to do away with the credit system on which the fishing is conducted. The curers now give advances to the people, because the people have no ready money, is that so?—Yes.

16828. And the people become in consequence bound to fish for the curers?—Yes.

16829. How do you propose to get out of that system?—My idea is that the fishing system should be conducted like any other. If the curers choose to do it for their own interest, good and well; but why should a crew be started that has no claim upon the curer unless they have some provision themselves to start?

16830. Would you make it illegal to advance money to a crew?—I would not make it illegal. I believe in some instances it is impossible for the fishermen to start otherwise, but there are so many faults to be found with the system in the way of affecting commercial integrity, that I think it would be proper that it should be undermined somehow.

16831. I think there is a general opinion that the system is a bad system, but I should like to know how the system is to be changed?—It might be changed by the fishermen having the fish paid for apart from any goods that might be obtained by them from the curers.

16832. But if the curers are under advances to the fishermen already, the curers will always have the pull upon those fishermen?—Yes. It is very difficult to break up the system, because if the curers insisted upon payment of arrears the fishermen are quite in their power. The fault was in commencing the thing, and it is very difficult to break it up, but if it is possible it is very desirable.

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16833. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to make to the Commission?—Yes. I do not mean to reply to all that has been said either in the way of commenting on it or contradicting it. A great deal has been said that I know is not strictly accurate; and there have been statements made that I cannot say whether they are correct or not. As I did in other parishes, I shall begin by giving a few statistics regarding the parish of Stornoway, and afterwards make a few general remarks on matters connected with the management of the estate since it was acquired by the late Sir James Matheson. Of the total area of the parish of Stornoway, not including the burgh of Stornoway and the town lands, there are 44,747 acres, let to the crofters at a rent of £2,491, 1s. 6d., or at the rate of 1s. 1¼d. per acre, and there is an area under nine arable and grazing farms—not including the home or manor farm—of 16,851 acres, the rent of which is £1102, 10s. 6d., equal to 1s. 3½d. per acre. The stock held by the crofters in 1882 was 2805 head of cattle, 5880 head of sheep, 201 horses, and 32 pigs. The nine tacksmen have 202 head of cattle, 2007 head of sheep, 29 horses, and 4 pigs. I may also give the stock of 1881, as there was a larger number of cattle and sheep sold in 1882 than there had been for some years. The crofters then had 3074 head of cattle, 5732 sheep, 213 horses, and 27 pigs, and the tacksmen had 192 head of cattle, 2047 sheep, 28 horses, and 7 pigs. In both cases the respective rents were those already stated. The Commissioners have asked me to furnish them with a statement of the rental now and in 1844. When Sir James Matheson bought the estate, the rental in 1844, exclusive of feuduties, but including salmon fishings and £200 for shootings, was £10,681, 2s. 5d. This includes the statute labour and 'kain' money, that was contributed by 2059 crofters—the number then in the island. The present rental, according to the valuation roll of 1882-83, is as follows:—

Industrial seminary,	£15	0	0
The patent slip, which I may say cost £6000, brings	80	0	0
Gargnaline and Barvas hotels,	139	0	0
„ mills,	198	0	0
House property in Stornoway, purchased by Sir James Matheson since 1844,	556	0	0
Fishing store houses erected by Sir James,	38	0	0
Salmon fishings,	145	0	0
Shootings,	3754	0	0
Fish-curing stations, including taxes,	145	0	0
Land rent,	12,713	4	10
Giving a total rental of	£18,163	5	8

or an increase since 1844 of £7482. The land rental of that year was £10,256, in 1882 it was £12,713, being an increase on the land rental of £2457. I am at present unable to say how much of this increase is on crofters and how much on tacksmen, not having had time to make it up. But I find that in 1852, £365, 18s. 11d. was charged against tacksmen as interest on improvements, and £202, 5s. 3d. on crofters. Some of the large farms as they were improved were for some time thereafter held by the proprietor, till he brought them into a proper state of cultivation, and thereafter let, so I am unable to show the total amount of interest charges

for improvements. The increase in the land rental is, however, principally on tacksmen and on waste lands reclaimed, on which crofters were placed. Seventeen townships were partly reclaimed from waste land in different parts of the island, and on these about £1500 were expended. Besides these new townships, waste land was reclaimed and added to old townships. It has been said that the land for these new townships was reclaimed from the crofters' pasture lands, and that the townships from which such land was taken received no reduction of rent. I have to explain, that after the land was reclaimed, the townships in the island were adjusted and allotted and rented anew at what they were considered worth. The rents in some cases were raised and in other cases reduced, and many of them were left at the rent they stood at in 1844. This readjustment and revaluation was done in 1849, 1850, and 1851, when Mr John Munro Mackenzie was factor, and in the work, he had the assistance of a practical farmer and a land surveyor. The whole island was relotted and rented at that time; and with this exception—that the statute labour and 'kain' money was included in the rent, instead of continuing to be levied as a separate payment. There has been *no* rise of rent since that period. There were in all 890 acres of land reclaimed. Part of this was added to existing holdings, which were entirely remodelled, and the remainder given to cottars or squatters in the townships to which the new land was attached. There was expended in the reclamation of waste lands and in building farm houses and offices £99,720. Of this sum there was expended on the reclamation of land given to crofters the following sums:—At Barvas, £1320; Shader, £944; Lionel, £372; Port of Ness, £24; Cross, £13; Eorodale, £17, 10s; Breasclete, £202; Doune Carloway, £273; Carloway, £260; South Shawbost, £52; F. P. Borve, £181; Mid Borve, £71; North Dell, £422; Newmarket, £676; Gnershader, £85; Laxdale, £46; Jamesfield, £444, let now to the Sandwick tenants for £7; Steinish, £194; Knock, £214; North Galston, £615; Bayble, £576; Sheshader, £116; Aird, £104; Port Voller, £39; Bragor, £71; Arnol, £62; Brue, £81; Swainbost, £251; Habost (Ness), £137; Skegirster, £107; Portnaguirin, £100; Shinlishader, £269; Islinich, £95; Brenish £138 = 8471, 10s. It has been stated here that the late Sir James Matheson never did anything for the island. Immediately after purchasing this property Sir James' attention was directed to opening steam communication with Glasgow. He offered a premium of £500 to any shipowner in Glasgow that would put on a steamer, but no one accepted the offer. He then took shares in a steamer named the 'Falcon,' which then commenced to run between Stornoway and Ardrossan. Her career, however, was short, and she took fire and had to be scuttled. I may mention an incident which occurred at this time in connection with the burning of this vessel. The merchants by that time had begun to depend on getting their goods regularly by steamer, but when it so suddenly ceased to run, before they could order their supplies and get them brought by a sailing vessel, the town of Stornoway had run out of almost everything. There was not one pound of tea or sugar or tobacco or snuff in the place. After the 'Falcon,' Sir James purchased the steamer 'Mary Jane,' and it was put on in 1845 to run between this town and Glasgow. This boat however, became too small, and in conjunction with the Duke of Sutherland he got another vessel, called the 'Marquis of Stafford,' which was stipulated to call at Lochinvar on its way from Stornoway to Glasgow. Sir James subsequently gave up his connection with the 'Marquis of 'Stafford,' and the steamer 'Islay' was put on by Mr Ramsay of Valdalton. Thereafter Messrs Daniel Hutcheson and Co. took up the trade which is carried on now so efficiently by Mr MacBrayne. Before Sir

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James' time the island had been without any means of communication with the mainland, except a sailing mail packet to Poolewe once or twice a week, with a steamer plying regularly once a week to Glasgow. The inhabitants found in the south a ready market for their produce, and the prices of everything rose, particularly eggs. After the 'Mary Jane' was put on I have heard the merchants say that it was of such advantage to them that they could turn over their capital three times before their bills became due; whereas formerly, when they depended on sailing vessels, their bills often became due before their goods arrived. The next thing I would like to refer to is what the late Sir James Matheson did for education in the island. First of all, there was the 'Female Industrial 'Seminary' in Stornoway, which was built and has since been kept up at the sole expense of Sir James and Lady Matheson. Besides this, there were new schools built at Knock, Borve, Lionel, and Bernera, and there were teachers paid at Back, Shawbost, Callanish, Valtos, Balallan, Steinish, and in other places, the names of which I cannot recollect at present. Free education was given in these schools, but the attendance was so wretched that ultimately Sir James handed the schools over to the 'Edinburgh Ladies' Association,' but he continued to give a subscription for each school to the society, and Lady Matheson still does so. The total amount expended on schools and teachers' salaries up to 1870 was £11,680. In 1844 there were about 45 miles of imperfectly formed roads in the island; there are now 200 miles, which with bridges cost £25,593. Even in 1845, of wheeled vehicles there was only one gig in the whole island, now there are 87 taxed conveyances. Among many other things Sir James did for the benefit of the people, I may mention that he was the means of introducing water and gas to the town of Stornoway. He expended in making the patent slip, £6000; curing houses, £1000; on bulls for the improvement of the crofters' stock, £1200; a quay for the steamer at Stornoway, £2225; chemical works, £33,000, and though that was not a profitable speculation for the proprietor, it afforded employment for a good many people. The Rev. Mr Angus Maciver stated that he did not know of anything that Sir James and Lady Matheson had done for the parish of Uig, except to give a £10 subscription to the building of a church at Bernera, and some clothes, shoes, and meal to the poor. I think the making of roads and bridges in Uig was of some benefit to the parish. There were also schools upheld by Sir James at Valtos, at Bernera, and at Callanish, and besides the grants he gave to the 'Edinburgh Ladies' Association' for other schools in the parish. There has been a large sum of money expended on Morsgeil forest; and from £500 to £800 are annually expended in upholding the place, which gives employment to people in Uig. The building of the lodge at Uig also gave employment to not a few people, it having been constructed of concrete, for which skilled labour was not required. I may also mention that Mr Maciver himself was one of the teachers paid by Sir James for many years at Shawbost; and it is perhaps not going too far to say that thereby Mr Maciver was enabled, in some measure at least, to prosecute his studies for the ministry and attain to the position which he now holds. I venture to say that a gentleman in Mr Maciver's position, before making the remarks he did on this subject, might have taken some pains to acquaint himself with the exact facts of the case. It was stated by many of the delegates who appeared before the Commissioners that the crofters of the Lewis were in a much more comfortable condition and better off many years ago than they are now. I find, however, in Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account, published in 1797, that the minister of Stornoway of that day says—'Some of the land about the town

'is let for 36s. per acre yearly. . . . There are about twelve large farms in 'the parish, and what portion of them is not occupied by the tacksman 'himself is let to sub-tenants, who pay to him each person from £1, 10s. 'to £3 of yearly rent, and twelve days' service. Many of these sub-tenants 'are employed in fishing ling, which they sell to their masters at 5d. each, 'engaging on board the herring-busses at £1 per month; in manufacturing 'kelp at £1, 10s. per ton, and working at road making and other labour 'at 8d. a day. By these means and the produce of the soil they are 'enabled to pay their rents, and procure a tolerable subsistence.' He also says—'In no season is the produce of the parish sufficient to maintain its 'inhabitants, who would often be in danger of suffering through want, 'were it not for the extensive importation of meal to Stornoway.' Again he says—'The inhabitants of this island might live in comfortable circum-'stances, were it not for the frequent and heavy rains which fall in it at all 'seasons of the year, and more especially in harvest, whereby the hopes of 'husbandmen are often blasted, and the fruit of his toil and industry lost.' As to wages, he says—'The wages of men-labourers are 8d. a day without 'meat, and 6d. with two meals of meat and a dram; women 6d. a day, 'or 4d. with two meals of meat; man-servants for farm-work from £2 to £5 'per annum, and two pairs of shoes at 7s. For women-servants from 10s. 'to 20s. and two pairs of shoes at 6s. Herds for looking after cattle from '6 merks to 8s., with two pairs of shoes and other small perquisites.' The prices of cattle were from 30s. to £3 per head. Beef was sold in Stornoway at 1½d. to 3d. per pound, mutton at 5s. and 6s. per wedder; sheep 3s., 4s., and 4s. 6d. each; lambs 1s. 8d. and 2s. each. Butter, 12s. and 14s. per stone; cheese, 4s. and 5s. per stone; fowls, 4d. to 6d. each. In a supplement to this account of Stornoway, written by another hand, it is said—'The parish 'never supplies itself with sufficiency of provisions, and always imports 'a great deal from Caithness, Berwick, &c., and is at this time (1796) in 'great distress, without the probability of a speedy supply.' Again he says—'The people are not fond of a military life, but early habit reconciles them 'to seafaring, and from that element they derive their chief subsistence. 'The common people in this island marry very early, and when death 'separates them, if the surviving party—whether male or female—finds it 'convenient to engage a second or third time in this state, some of them 'remain a few weeks, and some only a few days in widowhood. So that 'grief for the loss of husband or wife is an affliction little known among 'the lower classes of the people here. A woman in this country, whose 'husband accidentally shot himself, settled her contract of marriage in the 'way she thought fit before the body of her late husband was interred, 'and she married next day after she had performed the last duty to the 'deceased.' In the same book, statistics are given by which the stock of the island of that day may be compared with what it is now. In Barvas in 1796, in the whole of the parish, it was calculated there were 1050 horses, 2670 black cattle, and 3392 sheep; while now the crofters' stock numbered 549 horses, 3591 head of cattle, and 14,238 sheep. The horses then sold on an average for £2, 10s.; cows and stots at £2 5s.; and sheep at 3s. In the parish of Lochs the stock was 2488 black cattle, 4000 sheep, and 348 horses. There were *now* held by the crofters alone 50 horses, 3392 head of cattle, and 11,132 head of sheep. The whole stock in Uig *was* 3562 cattle, 5044 sheep, and 682 horses. To-day the crofters have 2386 cattle, 8097 sheep, and 20 horses. The minister of this parish also states that the parish *never* supplied itself with a sufficiency of provisions. From these extracts, it can hardly be said that the Lewis was in such a prosperous state *long* ago as many delegates have represented. Even at that time, with a small population, the crofters appear to have

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been in poor circumstances, and not unfrequently in a state of destitution. I have already mentioned that the island was lotted and rented in 1849, 1850, and 1851, and I believe that if each crofter had held by his croft as he then got it, and not have subdivided it with his sons, they would have been, comparatively speaking, comfortably off, to what they are now. Everything possible was done to prevent this subdivision of crofts. Many were served with summonses of removal for allowing their sons and daughters to squat on their croft, though these were not enforced. In some cases the son was obliged to pull down the house he had built, and go and live with his father again. Notwithstanding, in the course of a year or two, he would commence to build a second house; but the difficulty was, if we had obliged him to pull down the house again, what were we to do with him, for we could not drive him out of the Lewis. In my opinion, were there free emigration, this subdivision of crofts might be prevented, but not otherwise. Frequent complaints have been made about new crofters being placed in townships; what frequently occurred was this—a number of young married men would apply to the factor, and sometimes to the proprietor, to give them waste land outside the township—and waste such land too often was, in every sense of the word, as the surface was removed to form bedding to their cows. The crofters in the township would support this application, urging, possibly, that the applicants were their relatives, and that they would earn their living by fishing if they had even the site of a house. Now the original crofters make it a grievance that the application was granted. This policy was, in my judgment, a mistake. Very frequently, while driving along a road, strangers think that the land outside the villages could be cultivated, forgetting all the while that such as it was, it was the pasture of the original crofters; and that to place additional crofters on it, was to put on additional stock upon the ground. The crofters themselves, in reply to such an argument as that, would say that their sons and their daughters were already on them, were married, and had families and stock, and that by putting them on waste lands outside the township they would not increase the stock more than there was on the ground. There was one such case in the parish of Ness, where some twenty young men applied for land in this way. It was represented that they were fishermen, and only required a site for a house and land to keep a cow each. They were fishermen, but to-day they are amongst the poorest in Ness. Delegates from the township of Lionel complained of new crofters being placed in Adabrock, but they took no objection at the time, and supported the application in every way. I stated in the parish of Uig, that I never heard of any complaint from any one in the parish of being highly rented. But I had a complaint from the township of Balallan, in the parish of Lochs, and I referred the matter to two practical men—one chosen by the people and the other by myself. They accordingly valued the place. At the same time, I added to the township a considerable stretch of moorland pasture formerly attached to the farm of Valtos, the farmer having given it up, as it was surrounded by crofters, and he could make no use of it; and the result of the valuation, with the Valtos moor added, was a rise of rent of £11. There was also a deduction of rent given to the township of Limervag, in the same parish. I may say that I am at all times quite prepared to refer the rental of any township to the judgment of any two practical men. Angus Macarthur, the delegate from Kirkibost, Bernera, stated that Kirkibost was a very dear place, and that he understood that they were paying £30 more than the tacksman. Now that is *not* the case. In 1827 Kirkibost was let for £138, and it has not been let for less until it was given for £120 to the

crofters, who had, in addition, a right the tacksman of Kirkibost never had, namely, of grazing a certain number of stock on the mainland. One might also infer from that delegate's statement that they were forced to go to Kirkibost, but that is not the case. They applied for it, and did not consider it dear at the time. I have in other instances, where it could be done, added to the pasture of the crofters. When the farm of Aignish was out of lease, a portion of it was added to the township of Garrabost, another portion was given to Melbost and Branadine, and I also gave to Melbost a pasture park formerly held by John Macrae, a mason. I likewise added to the township of Holm pasture land, when the farm of Holm was out of lease. I added another portion of the same farm to Sandwickhill, and likewise a piece of Mossend farm and Jamesfield. George Macaulay, the delegate from Hacklete, stated that the township would not support more than half of the people now in it. Some of the crofters in Hacklete were once in Croir, and were removed from the latter place at their own request. There were something like ten crofters in Croir and as many cottars. Well, when these were removed to Hacklete, they considered that it was too big for them, and that it would accommodate more tenants, and accordingly four or six families were taken from the township of Jobson and placed with them. Had the people of Hacklete not expressed a desire to have those crofters in the township, the other four or six would not have been brought in. They only paid the rent charged when the former tacksman had it. Neil Maclennan, delegate from Breasclete Park, stated that they were formerly in Reef, that they had no arrears, and that there was no reason for their removal; now, the reason for the removal of the people of Reef was that the people *were* deeply in arrears, and that the soil was light and sandy, unfit for cultivation, but suitable for permanent pasture. For the same reason, viz., arrears of rent, the township of Carnish was also cleared. In fact, it may be said that *all* the townships cleared were so treated because of so many of the people being in arrears of rent, and because the land was unsuitable for crofters. It cannot be said with truth that any were forced to emigrate, for when it was arranged that a township was to be cleared, only those who were willing to go abroad were sent, the others were provided with crofts vacated in other parts of the island by parties emigrating. North Galston crofters applied for aid to emigrate, and a ship was engaged to take off a number of people in the township; but when it came to about the time for them to leave, many declined to go, and in order to fill up the ship which had been chartered, people were taken from other townships in the island. Those who did not emigrate from Galston had vacant crofts given them in other townships. It was likewise stated that some of those who emigrated were not well off. Now, I know that there were several letters sent from them to Sir James Matheson, thanking him for having sent them to America, and stating how comfortable they were. I believe that those letters are now in my office, though I could not lay my hands on them, but if I get them I will send them to the Commissioners. There were four tenants removed from Reef to Breasclete Park. There are now ten families there. Neil Maclennan, the delegate, was a son of one of those crofters, and the croft of his deceased father is now shared by three sons and their mother. This delegate is a shoemaker, and at first he applied for a site for a house in which to carry on his trade. When he got this, he and the other members of the family divided the croft among them. Murdoch Macdonald, the delegate from Jobson, said that a dyke was built between them and Bosta, where their burying place is, but that there is no gate on the road, and that they had to carry the dead over the wall. I have

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to say that the burying ground is *not* in Bosta, but in Little Bernera, and that there is a public road across the island to Croir, where they take ferry to Little Bernera. The public road is quite close to them, and there is no occasion for them crossing the dyke at all. But they think they should always go that way, because the fishermen in rough weather, when they land at Bosta, come over the wall for a short cut. Then as to the burying ground at Eye. The delegate from Steinish stated that the road to the burying ground at Aignish was closed up. Now, there never was a public road through the farm of Melbost to Aignish That is just another 'short cut' to take instead of going round by the ordinary road. Malcolm MacPhail, South Shawbost, stated that there were twice as many in that township paying rent to-day as there were when he first began to do so, and that people had been crowded in upon them from Dalibeg. Well, in 1849, Dalibeg was let on lease for £52, and South Shawboft was relotted and rented to thirty-seven tenants at the same time, at what it was considered worth. The boundaries and marches are still the same. In 1881 there were thirty-seven tenants and eighteen squatters in the township. As to the cow taken from him by the ground officer as overstock, for which he only got £2, though it was worth £6, I cannot, without the date, trace if there is such an entry in the books, but I am inclined to doubt the statement that at that time a crofter's cow would fetch £6. The crowding in this township arises from the subdivision of crofts by the crofters themselves, against the regulations of the estate. John Nicolson's statement about the woman and her house being pulled down is not correct in all its particulars. She, and her mother-in-law, it appears, could not agree, and her husband and she went to live in the barn. Her husband was warned not to occupy the barn as a dwelling house, but to live with his mother, but notwithstanding that the use of the barn was not discontinued. When the ground officer went to the place the woman was with her mother-in-law. The barn had the appearance of having been occupied. There was a fire in it, and there was communication between the main house and the barn. An outdoor had evidently been nearly closed up with turf, on learning that the ground officer was to be there. The fire was extinguished, and the parties were told that they must not occupy the barn, but the barn was not pulled down, and the man and his wife are there to-day. Many say that this system of squatting should and could be prevented, but when an attempt is made to enforce the rules of the estate a 'hue and cry' is immediately raised about the cruelty and oppression of evictions. It should be mentioned that the woman referred to was the delegate's own daughter. A delegate from one of the Shawbosts stated that a man in his township had to pay £5 for the arrears of the outgoing tenant. A man, Malcolm Maclean, was £25, 16s. 7d. in arrears, and was warned to remove. Kenneth MacPhail came forward and offered to pay £5 for the house and crop then on the ground if he got the lot. He accordingly did so on payment of £5, and the balance of arrears (£20, 16s. 7d.) was wiped off as irrecoverable. MacPhail thereafter built a house for himself and left MacLean to occupy the old house. In like manner Colin Macaulay in 1871 got Widow Catherine MacLean's croft, and for the house and crop laid down in the spring of 1871 he paid £3. Another case referred to was that of Donald Macdonald, Fevig (Bragor). This man and his step-mother, Widow Christina Macaulay, were joint-tenants on a croft rented at £3, and when his step-mother died there were £11, 8s. 2d. of arrears, for which as joint-tenants he was as much responsible as the widow. Macdonald became sole occupier of the lot, but it was arranged that instead of pressing for immediate payment, the man should pay it up by instalments of £1 annually. In

supplement of what I have said as to what Sir James did for the island, there are just one or two things more which I should like to mention. I forgot to mention, when speaking of the 'Mary Jane' and the 'Marquis 'of Stafford' steamers, that Sir James' loss by these was £15,000. Sir James was also the means of getting postal communication by steamer from Ullapool five times instead of twice a week. His loss by that contract was £16,800. He also endowed 'The Nicolson Educational Insti-'tution' with a sum sufficient to produce an annual income of £35, besides giving them a free site. I might also mention Lady Matheson's contribution of £1500 to the Ness harbour and £1500 to the destitution fund. I do not think it is worth while to take up the time of the Commission in seriously considering the statements made by Mr Morison, the Land League delegate here on Saturday.

16834. Have you anything further to add to that paper?—I may state that the total area of island, exclusive of foreshore and water, is 404,476 acres; deduct for forests, 34,747; deduct again for farms, arable and grazing, 124,763; glebes, 2573; parks, including home farm and round about and town here, 1559; leaves 240,834 acres in the possession of crofters. The rental of that is £8463, being at the rate of 8¼d. per acre. I have only to add further, that the public burdens in 1880—poor rates, school rates, sanitary and public health, county assessments, property and income tax, stipends, and so on—amounted to £5051; 1881, £4370 1882, £4623.

16835. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What were they in 1844?—Under £700.

16836. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have told us that the rent per acre of land under crofters is 8¼d., but you have not told us what is the rate per acre on the remaining 163,000?—I have not got that noted.

16837. Which is the most valuable land—the land represented by the 240,000 acres or the land represented by the 163,000?—Well, there is some good and some bad in both, but the larger proportion of what is under the grazing farms is not of great value.

16838. Is or is not the cream of the island outside the crofters' possessions?—Not on what I call sheep farms, apart from the arable farms about the town of Stornoway.

16839. How long have you been chamberlain?—Eight years.

16840. How long have you been a resident in the island?—Thirty-eight years.

16841. Have you been all that time connected with the estate?—With the exception of two or three years,—I mean that I was not in the chamberlain's office for two or three years.

16842. But for thirty-five years you have been either in the chamberlain's office or chamberlain?—Yes.

16843. You were there during the whole time of the late chamberlain, your predecessor, Mr Munro?—Yes.

16844. You have given us some extracts from the Statistical Account of 1796. Are you aware that there is a later edition?—Yes, I am aware of that.

16845. Did you compare the statements in the later edition with those in the former?—I had not time to do so.

16846. Are you aware that they vary very much,—I refer to the general statement for 1833 to 1842?—I did not read that one.

16847. You told us that the number of acres reclaimed and given to crofters amounted altogether over the island to 890 acres?—Not the whole of it.

16848. How much of the 890 acres of reclaimed land was given to crofters?—I cannot say.

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16849. The half of it?—Scarcely.

16850. Have you any idea what the average cost per acre would be of the reclamation so as to arrive at an approximation?—I have not made it up.

16851. Would it probably go from £10 to £20?—Some would, but a large proportion of it would be less.

16852. Would you said £15?—Yes.

16853. What I want to get at is this, what really has been expended, as it may be called, for benefit of the crofters? There has been £99,000 expended by Sir James altogether, but I want to arrive at what was the amount expended by the proprietor upon those lands that are now in the possession of the crofters?—£1500.

16854. That is for new townships?—New townships.

16855. Is that all?—Well, there is some done upon old townships, but not a great deal.

16856. Would there be as much again as other £1500 on the other townships?—It would not exceed that.

16857. You take credit for £25,000 having been spent by Sir James upon roads, but, according to the testimony of almost all the delegates, the sum of 5s. has been placed upon them for road money, which is paid to this day in the form of rent?—That is statute labour, but it is not included in the £25,000. They pay it either in labour or money.

16858. Upon what roads was that statute labour expended?—Principally in making township roads for the crofters.

16859. But surely that has expired long ago?—Not now.

16860. But you are charging them 5s.?—It is included in the rental.

16861. I must ask you some questions about the statistics you gave at Uig. I want to ascertain a point with regard to a road as to which a great complaint was made by the people, and also about the position of the school. What were the circumstances under which the school was placed where it is at Uig?—The first School Board had selected a site to the west of the church. The school was contracted for to be built there, and at the time of commencing operations it turned out that the site was upon the glebe, and it could not be built there. The board had to select another site. A committee of the board was appointed to select a site, and they did so by selecting a site some 200 or 300 yards to the east of the church.

16862. Is that the present site?—That is the present site.

16863. Was the board unanimous about the alteration?—They were not.

16864. Did this alteration postpone the building of the school for a considerable period?—I don't think it did.

16865. Did you lose a year's Government grant in consequence of the delay that took place?—No, the school was contracted for on the glebe site, and the board could not change the site—that is, to put it further from the road—without paying compensation to the contractor.

16866. About the constitution of the board; you are chairman, I believe, of all the boards?—Yes.

16867. And I think you stated at Uig that you did not think the representatives of the crofting interest in Uig were people who gave very much assistance in the conduct of the business of the board?—Yes.

16868. Are you aware that some of the present teachers in Uig are the children of crofters?—Yes, I know two of them who are.

16869. Is there a member of the School Board at present who cannot read or write?—I don't think there is.

16870. Do you not think that it would be an advantage to have on the

board some representative of the crofting interest who pay half at least, if not more, of the rates?—Well, I don't see they would do much good.

16871. Can you tell me the number of townships in the parish of Uig which have been depopulated and the crofters removed? Am I safe in saying there were forty townships?—Not in Sir James' day.

16872. But can you say there were forty townships once in existence and not there now?—I cannot say.

16873. How often are the paupers of Uig paid their allowances?—Every two months, I think.

16874. Are you sure it is not every three months?—It may be; some of the parishes are two months and some three.

16875. Have any complaints reached your ear about the doctor at Uig?—Not of late, but there were some time ago.

16876. Did you take means to put that right so far as you could?—I took this means, that I wished the people to put in a formal complaint to the board, but it never came.

16877. And you have not heard any complaint recently?—Not recently.

16878. There was a complaint made about a road. Will you explain how it was that you changed the road which had been at one time agreed to be made in Uig with some of the destitution money?—Well, the road is not made yet, but the difference between us is just as to the line of the road. Mr M'Iver, I believe, was for one line, and I was for another. That is all the difference, if it ever should be made.

16879. Did you yourself refuse any meal to people in the parish of Uig when they came to you on any occasion and under any circumstances?—I did.

16880. Will you explain why?—What is referred to, I suppose, is the township of Kneep. There is a large fence between the township of Kneep and the township of Reef, which was blown down partly by a gale. I sent men to repair it, but what was built during the day would be knocked down during the night. It continued so for some time. I offered these people who applied for meal that they should go and work at this dyke, and I would pay them for it, but till they did so I would not give them meal.

16881. Were you aware at the time that they were in absolute destitution?—No, I do not believe they were.

16882. You did not consider so at the time?—No.

16883. And you have not now been made aware that they were?—No, I have not.

16884. Was there any talk among those in authority who had the distribution of this destitution money that if it were paid back by the people it should be used for the purpose of emigration?—There was a talk as to what it should be applied to at the first public meeting, but the committee have not resolved upon anything. It has been left with the committee for future consideration as to what should be done with the money if any part of it is paid back.

16885. No resolution has been come to?—Not yet.

16886. Are you aware that a good deal of dissatisfaction has prevailed with regard to the way the money was distributed in the different parts of the island?—I quite believe that.

16887. You are the chairman of the fund?—Yes.

16888. You, of course, could not see to the personal application of it yourself?—I have seen to the distribution of it.

16889. Personally?—Yes.

16890. Did you refuse anybody at all?—I have refused many.

16891. Why?—Because I knew they did not require it at the time.

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I had the assistance of others. I had the assistance of the inspector of poor, and the ground officer of the district, and any member of the committee who liked to be present.

16892. Did you give as much as nine or ten bolls to single families?—I did.

16893. And many got nothing?—It is precious few who got nothing at all in the island.

16894. What is your opinion generally about the state of Uig? Do you consider that the people are very ill off there, or the reverse?—There are many very ill off there during this year.

16895. Are the rents pretty well paid?—Not so well as ordinarily.

16896. Are you aware that people have borrowed money to pay their rents?—I am not aware, but there may be such cases.

16897. Are your regulations so stringent about the payment of rent that people are obliged to resort to every shift to bring their rent?—Well, I must get in the rents.

16898. I suppose you have no such regulation as we have heard of in Skye, that no payment to account will be taken?—Oh, no; we are glad to take a payment to account.

16899. You have no farm yourself?—I never had an acre.

16900. May I take it for granted that you have no interest in any of the tacksmen?—No interest whatever.

16901. With regard to the present position of the property, it is liferented by Lady Matheson?—It is.

16902. With a destination to another individual?—Yes.

16903. Who pays for the expenditure of the estate or any improvements of a permanent character that need to be done, or is anything paid?—There is nothing paid unless Lady Matheson likes to do it.

16904. Then the position at this moment is that the liferentrix may draw all the rent, and is not responsible for any outgoing?—She is responsible for the ordinary upholding of the premises on the estate.

16905. But nothing can be expended?—She can expend what she likes.

16906. But there is no obligation or pressure of estate interests such as there is upon an ordinary proprietor?—No.

16907. And no power to enforce it?—No.

16908. Has the expenditure to a great extent ceased upon the property?—It has.

16909. Did Sir James use to expend the full rental on the estate?—Yes, and a great deal more.

16910. That is not so now?—No; I believe he never pocketed a penny apart from the occupancy of the castle and the home farm. He spent the whole rental and a great deal more. Even now Lady Matheson would not pocket a penny off the Lewis estates were it not for the shooting rents.

16911. Can you explain how it is that the burdens have risen so enormously from £700 to £4600? The rent is only doubled, so at the most the burdens should be under £2000?—There was no poor rate in 1844, no school rate, and no road assessment.

16912. And these have unfortunately turned out to be excessively high in all the parishes?—They have been excessively high during the years I have mentioned.

16913. With regard to your teachers, how is it that so few teachers who teach Gaelic have been appointed in your schools?—Because we are glad to get teachers whether they have Gaelic or not. It is very difficult to get teachers to come to this part.

16914. Do you put into your advertisements when you ask for teachers, what is very common, that Gaelic is an essential, or is considered a great qualification?—We generally put in that Gaelic would be a recommendation.

16915. But still you have not got any?—We have some teachers, I think, who have Gaelic.

16916. Can you say how many teachers in the island have got Gaelic?—No; there are some, but I cannot say how many.

16917. Have you Gaelic yourself?—A sort of it.

16918. Now, we are well aware of the great sums of money that have been laid out on the estate in one way or other, but I have not yet been able to get from you anything that has been done for the direct benefit of the crofters in the way of expenditure, except a sum of £1500 for new townships, and a similar sum given for old townships, and except the money spent on roads and bridges?—And schools, and storehouses at different places to enable the fish-curers to prosecute the fishing.

16919. But rent is paid for those curing stores?—Yes, but if there were no storehouses there would be no fishing.

16920. With regard to the schools that have now become sunk in the board schools, what may have been laid out on them,—on the buildings and on the teachers?—I would not like to give figures.

16921. Would there be £5000 laid out on the buildings?—Not so much as that.

16922. Would the annual allowances to the teachers amount to £300 a year?—About £200 or £250.

16923. And probably the teachers have got croftland around their schoolhouses?—Some of them have crofts, but not all.

16924. Are you not aware that the state of the Lewis generally in the eyes of the public is critical?—Yes.

16925. In fact, you have so stated in public?—Yes.

16926. And you have been obliged to go in consequence of that to seek aid from other quarters,—no doubt a most painful duty to you. Can you make any suggestion, whether agreeable or not to those who hear you?—Well, I ascribe the present destitute state of the island to squatting or subdivision of crofts, and for that I know no remedy but emigration, and quays and harbours in several parts of the islands.

16927. You want quays and harbours, and emigration. Are you in favour of giving the people a chance of enlarging their crofts on some of the tacks as the leases fall out?—Not enlarging the crofts, but enlarging the pastures. I don't believe they could pay for large crofts of arable land, or that they could work them.

16928. Would you like to see their pasture improved?—Yes, to increase their pasture.

16929. It was stated to us by Dr Macrae that he thought some land might be taken in on the west side of the road leading down to the Ness. What do you say to that idea?—A good deal has been done there by reclaiming land outside the township, but I consider it was a very great mistake. It interfered with the old crofters that were below the road. At one time there was no croft outside the road from Galston to the Butt on the right hand side going towards the Butt. They commenced to reclaim lands there, and placed squatters here in the old township. I think that was a mistake, in this respect, that it reduced the pasture of the original crofters, and placed these crofters between them and the moor pasture. Instead of reclaiming it for new crofters, it should have been reclaimed for the original crofters, so as to enlarge their lots.

16930. You think it would be a proper step to enlarge the crofts of

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those already there?—Only in that district, because they have horses and they plough the land, but there are many districts where no plough can ever be.

16931. Do you think that by doing that they would be enabled to leave out a portion under grass, so as to recover itself?—Well, they might do that.

16932. Is that one of the principal hardships or grievances they suffer under, that the land is running out through not having rest?—There is no doubt the land would be better of having a portion left out in grass.

16933. Is it not the fact that as you go along on the road to Knock, where there are now beautiful fields of grass, that was all bog at one time, or mostly so?—That was reclaimed long ago.

16934. But still it was originally bog land?—It is quite possible it was.

16935. Is there any reason why a great deal more of that should not be taken in by small crofters, who can do it much cheaper than the proprietor can?—Well, they could not do it without being paid for it. They could not do much of themselves.

16936. Don't you think that if the landlord or anybody else fenced it for them, they would do all the rest themselves?—I don't think they could do so at present, in their present circumstances.

16937. You were to give us a statement of the different points round the island where you think quays or harbours would be suitable. You have not prepared that yet?—No.

16938. *The Chairman.*—Have not the crofters spare time at a portion of the year? Do they fish between January and sowing time?—They fish in the spring, of course.

16939. Then they are at present occupied throughout the year, and have no odd time on their hands?—Not the fishermen.

16940. You have been speaking of an expenditure of £1500 on the crofts, but your paper makes the expenditure £8470; which is the correct figure, £8470 or £1500?—That was to 1853.

16941. Then up to 1853 £8400 had been expended on crofters?—Yes.

16942. And since then there has been more expended?—Yes, but not much.

16943. There has been a question about the representatives of the crofters on the School Board. Although there are not many of the crofter class on the board, are not the members representatives of the crofters? They have been elected in the usual way?—Yes.

16944. Have there been contests in the parishes?—There have been.

16945. Do the crofters form a majority of the electors?—They do in most parishes.

16946. Therefore, though the members are not crofters, they are in point of fact crofters' representatives?—Yes.

16947. With regard to Kneep, where you refused to give relief except in return for employment, if the crofters had accepted this employment, how long would they have had to go on working before they received relief?—If they were even three days working they would be paid for it.

16948. Therefore, the offer of employment was in point of fact equal to an offer of relief?—It was applied as a test.

16949. In the statistics which you have given us you have not referred to the arrears on this property. Can you state what the arrears of rent are at the present time?—The arrears of rent at 31st December last amounted to £6753.

16950. Can you tell me what they were twenty years ago?—I believe they would be a great deal more.

16951. Then the arrears are being gradually reduced?—Well, twenty years ago we were purging the roll, as it were.

16952. And the £6753 will stand as a sort of average, year after year now?—Yes.

16953. What is the average remission of arrears of rent?—It is not remitted every year, but perhaps every three years.

16954. Is it a growing quantity or a diminishing quantity?—Since I took charge, I think it has diminished.

16955. Are you applying more pressure to recover rents than used to be employed?—No, I am not. I mean that I have no more summonses, but I perhaps ask it oftener.

16956. They are not threatened with eviction more frequently than they used to be?—No, but they are told when they are two years past due, and third year running, that they must quit.

16957. Is it your practice to carry out that rule?—No, I have not carried it out.

16958. Then what I want to arrive at is this,—judging by their arrears of rent, do you think the circumstances of the people are improving or deteriorating?—I don't think they are improving. There are a greater number of poor people among them now than there used to be.

16959. *Mr Cameron.*—We have heard a good deal about evictions—not so much in evidence given before us as in the public newspapers; can you state anything with regard to evictions during the time of your connection with the estate?—Some have been deprived of land on account of arrears. For instance, when I began to take charge there was one tenant who had not paid a penny for twenty-five years.

16960. How many years is it generally the practice to allow arrears of rent to run before measures are taken to evict a tenant?—My instructions from Sir James were that when two years were past due, and the third year was running, the tenant must quit.

16961. Have any evictions taken place on a wholesale scale connected with the estate?—Not since I had to do with it—not for the last eight years.

16962. Has anything of that kind taken place during the last twenty years?—No, except the emigration from the townships that were cleared. A proportion of the people of these townships emigrated.

16963. What became of the remainder?—They were provided with bigger crofts in other parts—in this new land that was taken in.

16964. How were the people selected for emigration? Were they taken according to the age of the head of the family, or how?—I cannot speak about the townships that were cleared during Mr Munro Mackenzie's time, but the only township cleared during Mr Munro's time was that of North Galston or New Galston, and there was a petition from the people asking to be sent to America.

16965. Do you know whether that petition was largely signed or not?—I cannot say.

16966. But it was considered *bona fide* at the time?—It was.

16967. How were the people selected for emigration?—It was understood they were all to go, and a vessel was engaged to take them to America; but many of them latterly refused to go after agreeing to go, and they were taken from any township or any place. Any person who was willing to go was taken in order to fill up, and those who refused to go were placed in the crofts that were vacated.

16968. I gather from that statement that the emigration was purely voluntary?—It was voluntary at first, but no doubt every means was brought to bear upon them to go after they had agreed to go.

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16969. And this place was made a tack of?—It was added to the farm of Galston.

16970. Were there any other wholesale clearances during the time you remember? I think you stated that during your occupancy of the office of chamberlain there had been none at all?—That is so.

16971. But during the time you remember were there any others?—Yes, there were Reef, and Carinish, and North Tolsta.

16972. Do you think this clearance at Galston has had any effect in making the people unwilling to entertain the idea of emigration?—I don't think it.

16973. You are aware that there is a very strong feeling against emigration in the island?—I believe there is so amongst some; still, I believe, if there was free emigration, and people were assisted, they would emigrate. A number emigrated this same year.

16974. Don't you think there lingers in the mind of the people an idea that emigration means forced emigration, and that they do not draw a distinction between forced emigration and voluntary emigration?—I quite believe that.

16975. Do you consider that, provided an opportunity was offered to the crofters, with proper guarantees that they would be made secure in their holdings, they would be willing to improve waste land?—No, I don't think they would.

16976. It was stated by Dr Macrae, that if money was found from some source or another, and the crofters were given security in the possession of the land which they were to improve, they would be found willing and desirous to occupy their spare time in bringing the land into cultivation? Do you concur in that view?—Not at their own expense; if they were paid for it.

16977. You think that if they were paid for their labour,—that is to say, if they were encouraged to improve the land,—they would be found willing to accept any such offer?—What I mean to say is this,—if a man got payment for his labour on the land as he brought it in, without waiting for compensation.

16978. But if the land was improved by money found from outside sources, would the tenant be inclined to improve the land, and to pay interest on the money so expended?—I believe he would, but it would be ultimately a very high rent. The improvements made by Sir James cost more than the tenant could do for himself had he paid for it.

16979. I presume improvements made by the proprietor are always charged with interest?—I should think so, but there has been nothing done here on which interest has been charged for many years. Not since 1853.

16980. But if improvements are made, and no interest is charged, it ceases to be improvements in the ordinary sense of the word, and then becomes pure charity?—So it does.

16981. With regard to subdivision, the great evils of subdivision have been fully brought before us, and we have endeavoured to ascertain how these might be prevented in future. Have you any suggestion to make on that head?—In regard to this island, I do not see how it is possible to prevent it without free emigration.

16982. The regulations of the estate, I presume, prevent subdivision, or are intended to prevent it?—They forbid subdivision, but how are you to prevent it?

16983. I suppose a factor who endeavoured to enforce these regulations strictly, would be looked upon as very hard-hearted?—He would.

16984. Do you think the people themselves see the necessity of helping the factor and authorities in keeping the crofts of a size that would support

a family?—Some of the old men, when spoken to by themselves, admit the impropriety of it, but still they give their consent to it when sons and daughters get married.

16985. With reference to Lady Matheson's position in regard to the estate, I suppose there is no obligation on any ordinary proprietor to make improvements, whether he holds in fee simple or under entail?—No.

16986. You stated that Lady Matheson would derive no revenue from this estate, were it not for the rents from the shooting tenants. Can you tell us how the rates and public burdens are affected by the shootings?—The additional rate that would be required, if the shootings were not let, in the parish of Uig, would be 4s. 5d. per pound—2s. 2½d. on proprietors, and the same on tenants.

16987. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But that is presuming that no use whatever is made of the ground?—No, I am only deducting the shooting rental.

16988. Not the forest rental?—Forest and shootings. In the parish of Lochs it would necessitate an additional rate of 3s. 7¼d; in Barvas, an additional rate of 1s. 2¼d; and in the parish of Stornoway, 10¾d.

16989. Does that mean, if you strike off the total rent of shooting and forest?—Strike off the shooting and forest rent for the rental of the parish.

16990. But then don't you see that the deer forests might let as grazing?—But the rental would not be so large.

16991. *Mr Cameron.*—It comes to this, that you would have to add something for the value of the grazing of the forest, but with regard to the other shootings it would be all clean loss?—Yes.

16992. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has any one found fault, so far as you are aware, with the grouse shootings? The general public don't want to drive away the sportsmen?—I never heard any complaints.

16993. *Mr Cameron.*—You had brought under your notice a petition from the crofters of Lewis, and the third paragraph states that there are nine shootings and salmon fishings let to sportsmen who do not reside permanently on the island, and who pay rents ranging from £150 to £1000. You are aware that is one of the grievances?—I am not aware that the crofters ever made a grievance of it, but it is a great advantage so far as the rates are concerned.

16994. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say there are over 240,000 acres under crofts, and 158,000 acres under forests and farms. All over the island, so far as we have gone yet, having heard the claim made by those who have crofts for double and treble their sizes, and of those who have no crofts to get crofts, are you prepared to say that these forests and large farms, if relotted out, would not provide every one of the present population with a suitable size of croft?—No, I don't think it would afford crofts to the present population on which they could live comfortably.

16995. You stated you thought the policy of reclaiming the *cùl* and giving it to additional tenants a mistake, and that you thought it would not pay as an arable farm. Dr Macrae stated that he thought if it was enclosed it would pay as grazing, and that the increased grazing would recoup the expense, more or less?—To the present tenants who are tenants in any township, if they themselves brought it in, or if it was brought in for them, but not if additional crofters were placed upon it.

16996. I don't mean that additional crofters should be placed upon it. Do you think it would pay to reclaim it for grazing?—I have no doubt it would, but I would not place additional crofters upon it.

16997. You would rather undo what in that respect has been already done in cutting out new crofts?—That was a mistake.

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16998. And you would rather undo it?—What I say is that the land should be given to the original crofters, increasing the original crofts.

16999. One great grievance of the crofters was that this piece of pasture was taken from them, and no abatement made in the rent. Do you not consider that that was a grievance?—I admit that. I admit it was a mistake to put the original crofters there at all.

17000. According to their own statement, it worked in another way. The pasture was made less, the number of crofts was increased, the summing remained the same, and now the one who can afford it has perhaps the old summing on the grazing at the expense of his neighbour who has less stock, and they complain that the cattle and the sheep are very much worse. Don't you think it would be a very desirable thing that the summing, even supposing things remained the same, should be reduced to reasonable proportions, so that no man should keep except what his grazing would enable him adequately to support?—Well, the summing was reduced when the new regulations were issued. Formerly people were under the impression that they were entitled to have five Cheviot or seven blackfaced sheep *and* one cow and a follower. As the regulations were read, it was one cow and a follower *or* five Cheviot sheep.

17001. Don't you think in some places, whatever the regulations are, some of them keep the cow *and* the five sheep?—And some of them a great deal more.

17002. Then it is not a matter of making new regulations, but enforcing the existing regulations?—Yes.

17003. According to the present rules of the property, one is not deprived of his holding till he is three years in arrears, and you stated that even that is not carried into effect, so that practically, as matter of fact, there is the security that was asked for by legislation the other day, the statement being that it should be secured by statute that no man should be deprived of his croft till he was three or four or five years in arrear. The present rule is three years, and that is not even acted upon?—Yes.

17004. So you are better than the proposed law in that case?—Yes.

17005. Are you able to tell us the rent of the shooting that has no stock upon it except deer—where crofters are not allowed to put their stock?—Morsgiel is in the valuation roll at £950; Scaliscroft, £160; Arnish, a small place the grazing rental of which before was £50, and which is in the proprietor's hands; and Aline, £400.

17006. That is all under deer, and no other stock allowed upon it, and it gives a rental of about £2000 in the various parishes. How much rent would you expect to get for that land, supposing it were let for grazing purposes?—£550.

17007. You stated that so far as you were aware there was no extensive clearing made except either when the people were in arrear or except where the places were unsuitable for cultivation. Is it not the case that a considerable number of the large farms throughout the estate were cultivated as small crofts to advantage in former times?—I believe most of them had crofters at one time or other.

17008. And they could be cultivated to advantage yet in the same way?—Well, there are some of them in which there is very little arable land, or land which could be made arable. In others a considerable proportion might be cultivated.

17009. And others again have a considerable proportion of arable land that has been very much improved?—Yes.

17010. When you stated there was no forced emigration, I suppose you meant that the people were not removed through process of law?—Quite so.

17011. The people who remained of course stated that those who went away went sorely against their own will, but still there was no process of law?—The only emigration I saw was from Galston, and I know there was not even a summons.

17012. You stated that there were letters in your possession which described the position of those people after they went away. Are any of these letters of recent date?—They are principally from tenants who emigrated in 1851 and 1852.

17013. A gentleman stated on Saturday his belief that the present condition of those who went away thirty years ago is worse than the condition of their neighbours in the island of Lewis at the present moment. Have you any means of forming an opinion as to the accuracy of that?—It is inaccurate. I have seen many who returned from Canada to the island, and heard their statements as to their condition, and my opinion is that they are much better off than if they had remained in the Lewis.

17014. Have any of these returned permanently to the place?—There were two men I know who returned, but one of them left his family there.

17015. There was just one statement of an alleged grievance in connection with which your own name was quoted. At Breasclete some tenants stated they were removed to Dun of Carloway, and because of their former experience they wanted to have a written engagement that people should not be thrown in upon them, and that they should not be deprived of pasture land, and your own name was quoted as being aware of that written agreement which was afterwards lost?—I am not aware of there having been a written agreement, but I am aware of the factor for the time being saying to them that whoever would be placed into those parks would not have the right of pasture below the road, between them and the sea.

17016. Has that agreement been kept?—Yes, it has been keep for nineteen years. These have no pasture below the road. The whole township lies between the road and the sea, and the two who were placed into the parks have not been allowed to pasture between the crofts and the sea, but they are to have the privilege of pasturing their cow on the outside.

17017. You heard the statement of Dr Macrae on education, and his belief that to secure regular attendance it would be better to try rewards for those who did attend regularly than to punish the parents of those who did not. Are you prepared to accept that?—I am.

17018. Is that regulation as to punishing those parents by adding to their rent still in force?—No.

17019. I think you stated the other day that there was some money recovered under that process?—There was.

17020. What fund did it go to?—To the School Board.

17021. What would be done to any one who declined to pay that sum?—I don't know what we might do in that case.

17022. All those who were asked paid it?—Yes; but it was not for non-attendance that they were made to pay, but for withholding the children from the examination.

17023. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There was rather an extraordinary thing told us on Saturday about the destruction of the pier at Bayble. You heard what was said. Can you give any explanation of it?—The only explanation I can give is that the greater part of the pier was swept away many years ago. I saw that myself, and I have been speaking to some of the men since then, and they admitted that the outer end of it was swept away. The stones were strewn on the beach, and our clerk of works requiring some good stones took some of them off the beach, and that only improved the beach, because the stones might have injured the boats. He did not take any stones off the quay, but off the beach.

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17024. Was the quay built by Sir James?—Well, I know he paid something for it, and that he had a man working there. It was said here that every crew paid £1 to Mr Methven, the fish-curer. I cannot speak to that, but I know that Sir James paid a man for working there for a considerable time.

17025. Do you know how long the stones were so lying?—For many years. The work was done about 1845 or 1846. It was a slip for boats.

17026. Stones are scarce in that district?—Good stones are.

17027. So for the repair of the pier it would be difficult to get them anywhere else?—There is a good quarry at hand.

17028. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—All over the island we have had a very good account of you as chamberlain, but I am obliged to ask you this question?—Have you ever threatened to turn out a crofter for refusing to maintain a person whom he was not legally bound to support?—I cannot recollect of doing such a thing.

17029. The person is John Matheson, tenant at Aird, Uig, and the letter is as follows:—'*Chamberlain's Office, Stornoway, 12th May* 1881.—'Sir, The fact of your having made a claim against the Parochial Board 'of Uig, for the support and maintenance of your idiotic sister's illegitimate 'child, I made known to Lady Matheson, and she was so horrified at the 'very idea, of you and your father making such a claim, seeing you are 'in position to support this child. I was instructed to make an entry in 'our books, that on the death of your father, should you survive him, that 'you are not to be continued thereafter as tenant of the croft you now 'occupy at Aird Uig, jointly with your father, in the event of your 'persisting in this claim against the board. Though you may not be 'legally bound for the support of this child, yet, considering the unfortu-'nate circumstances connected therewith and your own and your father's 'ability to support the child, it was mean and unnatural to charge the 'board for the short period the child was left with its mother, and you 'should have been satisfied when the board relieved you of the child, which 'at first was all you wanted, not on the plea that you were not able to 'support the child, but that the child could not be left in charge of the 'mother, and there was no other person in the family who could take 'charge,—Yours truly, WM. MACKAY.—Mr John Matheson, Tenant, Aird 'Uig.'—That is quite correct. I think it was anything but right in these circumstances to the party that they should have thrown that child upon the board.

17030. You said, in answer to my inquiry about what was laid out in the Parish of Uig, that there was a shooting lodge built there, which gave some labour at the time. Is it the fact that that lodge was built on the ground of the crofters?—No, it was built on the ground of the tacksman.

17030*. And not on the ground of the crofters?—No, it was not.

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17031. *The Chairman.*—You have, I daresay, been following the evidence which has been taken in the Lewis?—Yes.

17032. Have you anything to state with reference to the circumstances which have brought about the appointment of this Royal Commission?—I have been about eleven years in the island, and have visited most of the islands, and there were three things that pained me exceedingly. One thing was to see places, large farms, that were previously occupied by

crofters, and where no crofter was to be seen when I passed through these places. One of them was Galston. I was very much pained when I saw Galston under sheep, knowing that crofters had been there. The second thing was the poverty of the people, and especially the want of comfort in their homes. I have been called upon frequently to engage in prayer, and in doing so I had to kneel, and I have often had to kneel, I might almost say in the mud—no floor to the houses, and some of them exceedingly wet—almost floods of mud. The third thing that has pained me is this,—that our young men in the country places who have no lots, as I understand, are prevented from marrying. Now, I have always been in favour of young men getting married; and I thiuk any country which is to prosper must give a yonng man the privilege of falling in love when he sees a worthy young woman, and marrying her if she is willing to accept his offer. After hearing the grievauces which have been stated, I have been thinking that there are remedies for the island. And the first remedy I would mention is this,—to have the whole island divided for the people of the island, be they crofters or farmers. I was just thinking how that could be done. I find in round numbers there are 404,000 acres in the island. These 404,000 acres, divided, into lots of 20 acres each would give a lot of 20 acres to each crofter among 21,200; or 10,600 crofters, to have 40 acres each. Allowing that these 20 acres to each crofter would be given for 5s. an acre, then the rental of the island would be £101,000 a year. If these lots were rented at 2s. 6d. per acre, the rental of the island would be £50,000. In the one case, allowing 5s. an acre for the lot of 20 acres, the rental would be £83,000 more than the present rental; or, allowing 2s. 6d. per acre, the rental of the island would be £32,500 more than the present rental. Then I have looked at the amount that was paid for the estate by Sir James, and I have been told that he paid about £190,000 for it. Suppose he paid £190,000 for the island, then, if my calculations are correct, I hold that two years' rental at 5s. per acre, supposing the island to be divided into 20 acre lots, would be as much as the whole amount that was paid for the estate; or taking 2s. 6d. per acre, the rental of the island would in four years amount to £200,000, or a little more than was paid for the estate. It may be asked how could the land be divided among the people, so that each crofter should have 20 acres? I would suggest that every man above eighteen years old should be allowed to take a croft if he wished, and not only that, but every woman above eighteen should also have the same privilege, so that a young man and a young maiden, if they wished, might take up crofts beside each other before they were married, and get married and join the two crofts into one. That was suggested to me, for instance, in other lands, such as Canada. In Manitoba the Government gives a croft of 160 acres, and every mau above eighteen, and every young woman, who likes, can take a croft, so that a young man and young woman who like to get these lots can go and take them and get married and join their lots. I may be asked what would be done with the large farmers. Well, I would suggest that the best thing would be, if they did not like to have their farms broken up, to emigrate to Canada, and there they would get farms as large as they wished, and I am confident they would be better off than they would be in this island. It may be asked, if the whole island is divided into small crofts, how can the crofters cultivate these lots, especially when some of these would be inland and moorland. I hold, from my knowledge of farming—and I have been about thirty-nine years in Canada, and know a good deal of farming—that a crofter having 20 acres, even inland on the moor, could cultivate these 20 acres with his family, so that he could have sufficient cows, sheep, and even a horse, if not two horses, and manure the 20 acres for himself

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independent of the sea. I am aware that the black land that covers a great deal of the island is difficult of removal, but there is a way of removing it. When many of the farmers entered Canada at first they had to take possession of grounds that were covered with wood, and they cleared those woods, took out the stumps, and removed the stones, and made first-class farms of those lands. Now, I cannot see why a crofter should not take possession of 20 acres, and, if need be, cut up the peat and burn it,—dry it, make piles of it, burn it, and scatter the ashes on the ground, leaving half a foot or a foot of the black soil over the gravel so as to mix it with the gravel. Another idea presents itself. It may be said it would be exceedingly difficult for poor crofters to work these small lots of 20 or 40 acres—that they could not do it without assistance from Government or some other party; but I believe they could. I believe that the men in this island, if they had the land for themselves, could work these small lots so as to bring them into a good state of cultivation, and be in a measure somewhat comfortable on these lots. Still, while holding these views, and thinking the island might be divided, I would not wish the Commissioners to understand that I believe the crofters would be then in clover. I don't believe that. I don't believe that this island is so rich in its soil that even when the land was subdivided it would support the people so that they would be in clover. Hence, I have a second remedy to propose, and that is voluntary emigration. At present the Government of Canada offers 160 acres free to every man or woman who wishes to settle in the country, and along with that the Government will sell 160 acres at two dollars an acre, making in all 320. Parties might be informed of the advantages in connection with Canada, so that they might emigrate and take up lands there and have them for their own. I have been in Manitoba. I went nearly 500 miles west of Winnipeg, and saw first-class farmers from the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, who took lands there for themselves and their sons, and I found out from them that the north-west was a remarkably good country, not only for pioneers, but even for old settlers. For instance, an Irishman about three years ago bought 640 acres at some distance from the city of Brandon. He paid parties to plough 400 acres the first year, and after sowing those 400 acres, and paying all expenses in connection with the working of the farm, he had 15,000 bushels of oats, besides wheat and other crops. The first crop was such, that after paying all expenses he had 100 per cent. of profit. I think parties wishing to emigrate should be assisted by Government, or in some other way to take advantage of those benefits. Of course, for the other crofters I mentioned—young men who are not able to get married—that would be the remedy, if they had land for themselves, or if they went to another country where they could have land.

17033. When you were in Canada, did you see any people who had come from Lewis?—Yes.

17034. In what sort of circumstances did you find them?—I may say that when I heard a statement made the other day that they were poorer than the crofters of this island, I at once said to myself that the gentleman who made the statement must have been misinformed. I am confident from my personal knowledge of the country—and I have travelled over a great part of Canada—that the crofters there, even the poorest, unless they are lazy men and persons who do not take care of themselves, are in comfortable circumstances; and from what I know, even if Lady Matheson offered to these people lots from the best of her land in the island, and to have their passages paid, my firm conviction is that they would not accept such an offer. If any one says in regard to Canada that parties who went there and got lands are not in more comfortable circumstances

than those in this island, he was misinformed, or did not know much, or did not keep his eyes open. Perhaps he was in a sleeping car when he passed through the country.

17035. You did not observe any who had come to poverty?—I did not hear of any.

17036. You don't mean to say that young men should marry without having some prospect of being able to maintain their families?—Oh no, but I hold that a young man should have room to make provision for himself and his wife. His country is not worth fighting for unless he can have room to make provision for himself and his wife.

17037. You are aware that the crofters at present have their lands at 8¼d. per acre. You propose the land should be let at 2s. 6d. per acre?—Yes.

17038. Don't you think they find 8¼d. heavy enough already?—I believe they find it heavier than they would find 2s. 6d. or 5s. if they had 20 acres.

17039. They have a great deal more than 20 acres?—But the common hill is not good pasturage. A few acres of good grass would be far better than a number of acres on the moor.

17040. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you carefully considered the statement you made, that you do not think it would be more expensive or more laborious to cut away the peat in the island of Lewis, than it would be for the emigrant to Canada to cut away the heavy timber on his land?—Yes, I have been considering it for years, and I know something about the clearing of bush land in Canada. I have cleared more than one acre when I was young, and I would undertake to clear off an acre of the land here—to clear away the peat—much easier than I could clear an acre of bush land in some lots in Canada.

17041. I suppose you are aware that in an ordinary peat-moss five, six, or seven feet deep, there is always good soil at the bottom?—I think there is. A good deal perhaps is gravel.

17042. But peat is the very thing for mixing with the gravel?—Yes, I think a mistake is made when most of the peat is taken away. It would be better to leave half a foot or a foot to mix with the gravel.

17043. That makes very good soil, and it is improved by time and cultivation?—Yes. I may state in connection with this, that I am aware there was an experiment on the island to try and bring in some of the moorland, and it did not turn out very well. I believe that arose from this,—that the crofters were not placed on that land so as to manure it well,—but if there was a large piece of land given to the crofters the result would be different.

17044. Peat land reclamation, in fact, is not suited for a big tack, but for small lots?—Yes.

17045. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you aware of the ordinary depth of peat in the island?—Yes. I think there are some places where it is seven, eight, or nine feet in depth.

17046. You are aware that an acre consists of 4800 square yards, so that to remove peat only three feet in depth would involve the removal of 4800 cubic yards, and if six feet deep it would involve the removal of about 9600 cubic yards?—Yes.

17047. Are you aware of the ordinary cost of trenching in this country?—No, but I am not in favour of trenching.

17048. Are you aware that trenching costs at the lowest rate about £8 per acre?—I was not aware of that.

17049. And in trenching, the usual depth that is gone to is not more than eighteen inches. Therefore, if it costs £8 per acre to remove

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eighteen inches by trenching, would not the removal of six feet of solid peat be rather beyond the means of any crofter?—I think not. A crofter who has a family could cut the peat, make small heaps of it after drying it, and set fire to it. He would not remove it to any distance, but simply make small heaps of it and burn it.

17050. But in the process of trenching the earth is not removed; it is only turned over?—But I would plough it.

17051. You could hardly plough six feet of peat?—I mean after the peat is burned, I would then employ horses to plough up the soil and mix the black ground with the gravel.

17052. I am talking of the cost of doing it. In order to burn it, you would require to remove it, and turn it to let the flame get through it. Would not the cost of that removal be beyond the means of the crofter if it costs £8 to turn up eighteen inches of soil?—He could do it for less than that. I understood this year that when some crofters got jobs near their places, they worked with their families, and were able to do in a day or two what several men could not do in a number of days; and I know farther, what I have seen in Canada, that when families went in together they could do things much cheaper and improve their farms without money.

17053. You said that a few acres of good land were better than any number of acres of moorland pasture, but I understood you to say also that in your division you divide the whole surface of the island into lots of twenty acres each. Don't you take the good with the bad there?—Yes.

17054. Rock and all?—Yes.

17055. Well, at present each family has sixty acres, the good with the bad, at 8½d. They complain first that that is too small, and secondly that it is too dear. How could they pay at five shillings an acre for twenty acres of that ground?—The land would pay itself.

17056. Why does it not pay now?—Because the arable land they have is so small.

17057. They can increase it?—I am not aware they can.

17058. There is moorland there?—But the moorland is not divided. What I propose is that the whole land should be ascertained and divided into small lots and marked, and parties would have these lots to themselves, and fence them and work them.

17059. Can you give me any idea what the cost of clearing an acre of forest land is?—When I was in Canada, about fourteen dollars, or a little over £3, would clear an acre.

17060. And you stated you thought that about the same amount would take away the peat, dry it, and burn it upon an acre of the bog land here?—Well, I was not looking so much to the amount paid for the clearing of the acre as to the labour of the family.

17061. Would it not come to the same thing calculated either way? Then, I suppose, in Canada, once you have the trees removed, you can just put in the plough?—No; the land can only be harrowed, because the stumps are numerous, and they sow the land between the stumps and harrow it, and it is only after some years that they get the stumps removed.

17062. But they are able to sow it when the trees are removed?—Yes.

17063. One can see here that, even supposing the peat to be removed, the ground could neither be harrowed nor ploughed. Do you think that any horses could go through tough gravel that has not been touched since the beginning of the world?—I think so, if they had ploughs for the

purpose. They have adopted a plan on the prairies where they only turn two inches at the first.

17064. Don't you think the prairie is easier turned than gravel that has lain under the weight of six, eight, or ten feet of moss for generations?—It may be easier, but they only turn two inches at first, and I think two inches of gravel could be turned.

17065. If the people were to emigrate voluntarily, and a number of them were to get the alternative, of twenty acres of this bog land, or of land in Canada with a free passage there, which would be the best bargain for the redundant population in the west of Scotland?—I would say at once that emigration was the best. If I were about to commence farming, and if Lady Matheson offered me 160 acres of her best arable land, I would prefer to take 160 acres of prairie land in Canada.

17066. The people themselves declare just now that their holdings are too small by one half. We find, if the holdings were doubled, there is no room for the whole population upon the island?—I think there is.

17067. They have 240,000 acres, and there are only 158,000 acres that could be given to them, rock and all?—I understood there were about 3000 crofters at present on the island.

17068. There are nearly 4000?—Divide the land among the 3000, and it would give them about 134 acres each.

17069. The statement submitted to us by the chamberlain is that the crofters have 240,000 acres just now, and that there are 158,000 acres besides between forests and large farms. From that I conclude that each croft in the island can not be doubled?—Not without giving them the whole island.

17070. Don't you see they have more than one half of the island as it is?—But I hold the moorland is of very little advantage to crofters in comparison with what arable land would be. Some only send their cattle a few months during the year to these moorlands.

17071. They have more than half the island just now, and they want more than double what they have?—But they only have it in this way. Some have three acres of arable land and several acres of moorland, but these acres of moorland are not worth much. They only support a few cattle, and they are not very good.

17072. You think the best bargain for the redundant portion of them would be to take advantage of the emigration scheme?—Yes, I think so.

17073. And in all cases, then, that the cleared land by that process should be added on to the crofts that remain, so as to make the people at home as comfortable as those who would go away?—Yes, but when I make that statement I remember that the people of this country are fond of their own land and their old associations, and might be unwilling to emigrate; but I am under the impression that if the advantages in connection with Canada were laid before them, and free passages given to them, there are a good many who would emigrate.

17074. I assume that none of us would ever suggest anything but what you call voluntary emigration, but emigration in your judgment would be to those people a better bargain than to attempt to reclaim upon your own scheme the boggy land at home?—Yes, I think so.

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DONALD SMITH, Fish-Curer (49)—examined.

Donald Smith.

17705. *The Chairman.*—You come as a representative of the town of Stornoway?—Yes.

17076. Have you any statement to make?—Yes; I intend to refer to the harbours around the island, but as the crofters and fishers are so much connected, I am obliged to refer a little to the crofters. The matter I mean chiefly to speak of very briefly is harbour accommodation in connection with our fisheries. Before entering upon the subject, permit me to refer shortly to the condition of our crofter population. There were so many witnesses already examined and evidence advanced, that it would appear superfluous in me referring to the subject. The old proverb, however, may stand true here: 'In the multitude of counsel, 'there is wisdom.' Within the present century, the whole of the island, with the exception of a few small farms, was in possession of the crofters. What is the case now? In the parish of Uig alone the following townships have been cleared, and are at present either sheep runs or deer forests, viz., Ardvig, Ardushor, Mulista, Mangersta, Carninish, Adruvil, Tymesgarry, Ballameille, Pabbay, Reiff, Strone, Scaliscrow, Earshade, Leordel, Vaiadhmbor, Cnockmagem, Kanholwick, Bosta, Croir. I am bound to say the above townships, with their moors, would accommodate and support comfortably as many crofters as there are at present paying rent in the parish. In the parish of Lochs there is the farm of Park, large enough to support with comfort from 200 to 300 crofters. Again, we have the Garanahine clearance, Dallbeg, Dunmore, and the two Gelstons in the parish of Ness, North Tolsta, Gress, and Egnis. These townships, I believe, would be sufficient to accommodate a good many tacksmen. What are the facts of the case? As the population increased, the lands as it were diminished,—township after township cleared,—the poor people obliged either to emigrate to the colonies, or be scattered over townships left. How does the case stand at present? The 26,000 human beings possess far less land than the original population had sixty or eighty years ago, and that only of the worst. The poverty of our crofter population is great. It is only those that come in contact, and do business with them, that know it. Take, for example, any of our large towns and cities, and apply the principle of restricting and diminishing the area of ground as the population increases, you would be inclined to say that any person propounding such theory was only fit for the asylum. This is the same law that was applied to our crofter population; the more they increased the less land they would get. I am not aware that there is anything of communism amongst our islanders. They are all prepared to pay full value for the land if they only get it. Surely it is not too much to expect from proprietors, when the lease of the farm is out, to put it into the market. Give the chance to the crofters to offer for it, and that they should get the prefereuce over strangers, so long as they paid it. I am aware that proprietors dread pauperism. What causes pauperism? Just overcrowding. Give the land of which there is sufficient to the surplus population, and I believe you can do away with the Poor Law Act. There are clergymen in our island who profess to be in good sympathy with the people; those gentlemen own very large glebes, one acre of which is worth half a dozen of the land the tenants possess. They strongly advocate to give more land to the poor crofters, but will not give them a foot of their own. They prefer either farming it themselves, or let it for grazing purposes to some of the large farmers. Their professed sympathy will fall flat, and go for nothing, until they first learn that charity begins at

home. If they cannot let the glebes for crofts, and I don't see why they shouldn't, let them give them to the crofters for grazing purposes at fair rents; then will we give them full credit for sympathy. I will now very briefly advert to the harbour question. Owing to the smallness of the crofts, and the great number that have no crofts, our crofter population are obliged to prosecute the fishing, which they do under very great disadvantages, often resulting in great loss of life and property. Once you leave the harbour of Stornoway round the Butt of Lewis, you will meet with no harbour to take refuge in until you come to Loch Roag,—all open bays and small creeks that can give no shelter. It is within this district that the whole of our herring fishing and ling and cod fishing is prosecuted. Hence the necessity of having a few small harbours scattered over the district, to which boats might run for shelter. For want of harbours to protect property and life, the fishermen are obliged to have only small open boats that can be hauled daily as the case requires. These boats are so small that they can only go to sea in fine weather. Consequently the fishing is not, and cannot be, efficiently prosecuted. If small harbours and piers would be built where they are urgently required, it would encourage fishermen to get larger boats, with which they could prosecute the fishing with confidence both summer and winter, as they do in the east coast of Scotland. If we get our mail communication with Strome Ferry, as we hope we will, the fish will be sent off fresh to the English markets, which will enable us to pay a much higher price to fishermen than we are doing at present. The following are places where I would recommend small harbours and piers to be built, viz., Bayble, Portnaguirin, Gress, Shawbost, Valtos, and Crowlistar. In all these places stones are abundant. I believe Portnaguirin, Gress, and Shawbost would be most expensive, say from £4000 to £5000 for each. The other harbours would not take up the half of this amount. If these harbours were built, it would give a great stimulus to the fishing, and thus mitigate to a great extent the often recurring distress amongst our fishing and crofter population.

17077. How many fishermen, with such an expenditure as you have mentioned, would probably fish from each station?—I believe that the fishing would increase immensely, provided they had shelter from the weather, but at present they cannot venture out except just with small boats. A number of the best fishermen do not attempt it, because it will not pay them.

17078. How many would there be to start with?—I should say that at Bayble (if that pier were built) they would very likely start a number of townships which are adjacent.

17079. Twenty crews?—More; thirty or forty.

17080. And Portnaguirin?—Fully more. All the Garabost district, and I have no doubt the townships of Knockaird and Sheader would congregate to Portnaguirin.

17081. And at Gress?—There would be a large number there.

17082. Thirty boats?—More; I should say, if Gress harbour were good, there would be at least fifty boats.

17083. And Shawbost?—Shawbost, so far as the fishing is concerned, is almost a blank for want of a harbour. There is a large population all along the coast about Shawbost.

17084. Do you think forty boats could start from there?—I would expect about thirty boats.

17085. Do you think £5000 would provide shelter at Shawbost?—I think it would.

17086. Then how many boats would there be from Valtos? It seems

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to me that that is a natural harbour, Valtos and Crowlista?—There is an island, but it is open at both sides.

17087. What they want is a landing place for their fish?—Yes, and that is what I mean,—a pier.

17088. And for Bayble?—Yes.

17089. *Mr Cameron.*—How would they get their fish to Stornoway?—They could not be easily got from Valtos, but at Carloway the distance is only twenty miles. We take fish forty miles to the terminus. We had a number of boats fishing at Cape Wrath, and we carried fresh turbot forty miles to Lairg, when the distance from Carloway to Stornoway would be only twenty to twenty-two miles.

17090. *The Chairman.*—How many boats do you think there would be at Valtos?—About twenty.

17091. And at Crowlista?—About half a dozen.

17092. Then altogether there are about 180 boats that would fish from these places?—Yes.

17093. How many of these would be new boats?—A great number; at Bayble I don't suppose there are more than fifteen boats—small boats.

17094. Would one half of these 180 be new?—Well, on this side, such as at Portnaguirin and Gress, I believe they would not haul their big boats. Whenever the herring fishing was over, they would work their boats as on the east coast, provided they had harbour accommodation, but at present they cannot risk that.

17095. Well, as to those who want new boats, how would they get them?—I suppose there is no way except for those who have money in the bank, or for the fish-curer to advance them.

17096. It is common for them to get boats from the fish-curers?—Quite; those who are not able to provide themselves with boats.

17097. What is the cost of a boat?—The boats we use on the Loch Roag side, with outfit, cost about £160.

17098. Are they able to pay that back and earn a living?—No; sometimes they never pay it back. Some do. I have given a boat to a crew at Loch Roag, and they paid it back in two years.

17099. What are your terms on these advances?—So much to be paid up every year.

17100. Are they bound to fish for you till it is paid?—They are.

17101. Do you make them other advances, such as meal, in the interval?—Yes.

17102. There have been complaints about the system of these advances. You do not advance them money?—We advance them money in advancing boats.

17103. And if they want food, you advance them food?—Yes.

17104. And you close your accounts with them at the end of the season, at Lammas or Martinmas?—Yes.

17105. Do they know what price they are to get for their fish beforehand, or the price of the meal?—Yes; we tell them before they get any article out of our store. The price is fixed before they get it.

17106. Is that customary among the curers?—I believe it is.

17107. We had the contrary fact stated by the men themselves?—There may be some seasons when they may not know the price of the fish, when it is not contracted for at the beginning; but so far as goods is concerned, they know the prices right off. As to the fish, there are very few seasons when the price is not fixed before they go to sea.

17108. Would it not be equally suitable to advance the money and let them buy meal wherever they found it cheapest?—It would be better if we could manage not to advance them at all. If there was any philanthropic

society got up to advance them boats and gear, we would be very glad to pay them in cash.

17109. Would it not give rise to fewer misgivings if you made your advances in cash and not in kind?—We do that in great measure. We advance them a good deal of cash at the beginning. Sometimes with a crew of six men we advance them £20, besides goods. It is a mistake when they say they do not get money in advance. There is scarcely a crew in a Lewis boat to whom we do not advance money months before they take a fish out of the sea, apart from meal or anything.

17110. How many crews have you fishing for yourself at one time?—A great number.

17111. Have you a hundred crews fishing?—I suppose there will be eighty crews.

17112. What percentage of these are clear, or have been usually clear, at the end of the season during the last half dozen years?—The last three or four seasons have been rather backward, and there were very few of the boats clear. I don't think we have had many clear since 1880, but in 1880 a great many were clear both in the ling and in the herring fisheries.

17113. Sometimes a good season comes and enables them to clear off?—Yes.

17114. How do you propose that money should be obtained to build these piers and harbours?—I do not see any way of it except by a Government grant.

17115. A full grant?—Yes.

17116. No interest payable?—I do not see how they could pay interest.

17117. Do you know any other instances in Scotland where such grants have been given?—Yes, grants have been given to Wick.

17118. Without any payment of interest?—Well, it is given, I suppose, on the understanding that interest should be paid, but I understand it has been cancelled.

17119. You would accept the money whether it was or was not to be paid?—I would accept it without that. The people are so poor that I know in very great measure it would mitigate the present distress among the fishing population.

17120. Would it enable the fishermen to do with those small crofts?—In a great measure it would; at any rate it would give us better fishermen. We have a number of good seamen on our island.

17121. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you supply the fishermen with anything but meal?—Yes.

17122. What other things?—Lines and hooks.

17123. But do you supply them with anything in the nature of provisions?—Principally meal; sometimes groceries, but not much. So far as provisions are concerned, it is almost altogether meal.

17124. Some of the delegates we saw here who were in favour of having harbours stated they were willing to pay a small rent for the use of them annually. Could they not afford, from the additional facilities given to them, to pay a small sum per annum?—I am not very sure; but after a time, if the fishing was really developed, it might come to that. At present it does not look very like it.

17125. But supposing they could go out twice as often as they do now and come in oftener, could they not afford to give something?—Oh yes.

17126. If they could do it they would he very willing?—Yes, I am satisfied of that.

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17127. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How do you expect the fishing to be developed by those quays?—They would enable the fishermen to have larger boats.

17128. At present they require to haul up the boats every night?—Yes.

17129. And they cannot have a boat which they cannot haul up?—They cannot, especially on the east side.

17130. Then they would prefer a harbour they could enter at all states of the tide?—Yes, and in which their boats would be safe afloat.

17131. At present they complain that they cannot go in and out often when they could work out on the sea, in the small boats they have, but you would enable them to work out on the sea on days when they cannot work just now by having bigger boats?—Yes.

17132. So the fishing would be improved in a variety of ways?—Yes.

17133. The ling and cod fishermen at the north end of the island complain very much that they are injured by the herring fishermen dragging their buoys?—I do not know whether I should say there is fault on both sides, but there are many cases in which neither party can help themselves. I have been examining into these cases over and over again, and really I could not make anything of it except that it was a necessity.

17134. Do you think that if they got these boats you talk of they could perhaps manage either to take separate strips of the ocean for the two kinds of fishing, or that the cod and ling fisheries should stop at the herring season and take herrings?—I do not think so. I think it is almost impossible to avoid accidents of this kind. There is one thing to be said in favour of the bigger boats. Perhaps the bigger boats could go outside the herring boats, and there is a chance of that.

17135. But you think that even with the improved boats a cod and ling man should keep to cod and ling?—Yes, I think so. We have a different class at cod and ling—quite different from herring.

17136. How many months in the year can they fish cod and ling with success?—They generally prepare in November and December, and continue till July if they have a favourable winter. Of course, our coast is very wild in winter.

17137. I suppose the herring fishing is far more productive during its short existence, than the cod and ling fishing is on the average?—I cannot say. Some years there is a failure of the herring, just as there is of the other fishing.

17138. Do you think that with improved boats they would make a fair price from year to year?—I believe there would be a larger price.

17139. And they could work a little even in winter?—Yes, there is no doubt about it.

17140. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you give any bonus to the boats whether they catch anything or not?—Yes.

17141. How much?—From £10 to £20.

17142. We heard that was the custom at Barra?—I am referring to the Barra fishing; they get £50, and at Stornoway they get £35.

17143. They get that whether successful or not?—Yes.

17144. Have you, in reference to your estimated cost for these harbours given merely your own idea?—Yes, merely a rough estimate.

17145. You have had no assistance in estimating the cost?—No.

17146. Has your attention been drawn to a new harbour which is being constructed at Ness?—Yes.

17147. Do you think it a successful experiment?—I think it will be a great benefit; I see no reason why it should not succeed.

17148. Do you think it large enough for the purpose?—I think it is sufficient for the district, which is the object for which it is being put up.

17149. Have you seen the plan of it?—I have not seen the plan, but I know the spot.

17150. Do you think it will contain a sufficient number of boats for the district?—I believe it will.

17151. Some of those harbours you have alluded to in other parts of Scotland have been often damaged by storms, have they not?—Yes.

17152. Would these places you mentioned be very liable to be damaged by storms?—The two places most exposed are Portnaguirin and Shawbost.

17153. You do not wish to have harbours erected on anything like the scale of Wick harbour?—No. There is another matter about our Stornoway harbour. We have been complaining that we were not very favourably treated by the Loan Commissioners. They are giving the money on interest to other harbours at 3½ or 3¼ per cent., and we have applied but without success, because they ask for 5 per cent., so we are obliged to go to companies from whom we have got £10,000 at 4½ per cent. On the old harbour we are paying 5 per cent. for what is unpaid of the original loan; and I believe we would need a further loan to remove the curing stations on the south beach, which should not be there, and to connect the island with the street that runs along the shore. If that was connected, the curing stations on the south beach could be removed there. If the Harbour Commissioners of Stornoway could get from £6000 to £10,000 at a cheap rate of interest, it would be a great boon to the town, and would give great facilities to boats in landing their fish. At present there are only a few boats that come to our wharves to land fish. They are obliged to come to anchor in the harbour, and employ small boats at a cost to the fishermen of £600 or £700. They have to pay £2 or £3 each boat per season for landing their fish, whereas if we had this additional breakwater, that would extend from the island to Newtown, all the fishermen could land their fish there, and save a good deal of money, as well as remove these from the south beach. We had no less than three serious accidents to children, who were run over during the last fortnight, from the want of accommodation for the traffic, and we do not see any way to get rid of it unless we can secure some place for the stations.

17154. That would add to the harbour dues?—Yes, but still I think the increase of traffic would pay it. The increase is very considerable.

17155. *The Chairman.*—Are you paying your interest here?—Yes, and reducing the principal.

JAMES M'COMBIE, Fish-Curer, Peterhead (42)—examined.

17156. *The Chairman.*—You come here prepared to make a statement?—I do.

17157. Will you be kind enough to make it?—I appear here as a delegate of the ratepayers and inhabitants of Stornoway, for the purpose of bringing before you the great necessity of extending the telegraphic system to the islands of the Hebrides, which is so much required for the proper conducting and development of the fisheries. I need not point out that the fish trade of the kingdom is the largest contributor to the telegraph revenue, and that being so, it proves of itself how much it is required for the conduct of the fisheries; and if I can bring before your notice places in the Hebrides which are yet without its advantages, I

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think you will see at once the great necessity of an extension to these parts. The fisheries of the Hebrides comprise the herring fishery—a very important fishery, the quality of which is superior to any in the kingdom except the small fishery at Loch Fyne. There is also the cod and ling fishery, a very important fishery of itself, but for the want of telegraph and other facilities for the market, it is confined to the salting instead of the fresh trade. This is a very important trade in its present state, but it cannot be utilised or taken advantage of. Then again we have the haddock fishery, a fishery which I am informed could be carried on with considerable advantage in this island; but for want of transit and of the telegraph system, it cannot be utilised or carried on. Again, we have the salmon, lobster, and oyster fisheries, all of which I am informed by competent persons could be carried out to a great extent, if they were only fostered as they should be, and as they are in other parts of the kingdom and in other countries. I produce a financial statement of the herring fisheries for the last ten years in the Stornoway section and Barra section, and also a statement of the cod and ling fisheries for the last ten years. It is as follows:—

STATEMENT showing the Number of Boats Fishing, and the Total Catch of Herrings at each Section of Stornoway District, in each year from 1873 to 1882.

Year.	STORNOWAY SECTION.			BARRA SECTION.		
	No. of Boats Fishing.	Total Crans of Herrings.	Estimated value.	No. of Boats Fishing.	Total Crans of Herrings.	Estimated Value.
1873	599	39,642	£99,105 0 0	435	35,258	£105,774 0 0
1874	656	36,383	90,957 10 0	670	27,900	83,700 0 0
1875	711	33,446	83,615 0 0	542	10,108	30,324 0 0
1896	803	7,434	18,585 0 0	268	7,911	23,733 0 0
1877	688	57,708	144,270 0 0	398	23,855	71,565 0 0
1878	581	53,743	134,357 10 0	290	11,360	34,080 0 0
1879	750	41,291	103,227 10 0	334	24,225	72,675 0 0
1880	832	65,088	162,720 0 0	549	36,758	110,274 0 0
1881	691	28,309	70,772 10 0	594	13,641	40,923 0 0
1882	691	42,996	107,490 0 0	609	2,984	8,952 0 0

STATEMENT showing the Total Number of Cod, Ling, and Hake landed in Stornoway District, with the Weight thereof Cured dried in Cwts. for each year from 1873 to 1882.

Year.	Number of Cod, Ling, &c.	Weight in Cwts.	Estimated valne.
1873	481,570	19,629	£24,536 5 0
1874	325,141	13,402	16,753 15 0
1875	471,611	20,116	25,145 0 0
1876	195,818	9,074	11,342 10 0
1877	484,811	20,381	25,476 5 0
1878	623,567	26,018	34,522 10 0
1879	829,807	28,489	35,611 5 0
1880	498,474	19,967	24,958 15 0
1881	304,230	12,978	16,222 10 0
1882	358,951	15,524	19,405 0 0

I may call your attention to the fact that in the Stornoway district the fishing has to a certain extent increased and developed; while in the Barra section, where we have not those facilities which we have at Stornoway, it is rather declining. I attribute that largely to the want of telegraphic facilities. I think, if you will look at the cod and ling statistics, instead of developing as the fishery should do, and as it is doing in other parts of the kingdom, you will find it is rather on the decrease instead of on the increase. This I do not attribute to the deficiency of cod and ling on the shores of the Hebrides, but to the want of proper prosecution, supported as it should be by proper assistance from telegraph and steam communication at the nearest point. The ports or stations to which I recommend the extension of the telegraph wire are Barra, embracing Castle Bay and Vatersay, two very important stations, and at Carloway on the west side of Lewis Ness on the north, and Portnaguirin on the east. I think that the extension of the telegraph to these stations would, in the first place, add greatly to the development of the fisheries, not only the herring, but all the other fisheries which I have enumerated; secondly, would enable Barra and Ness to be utilised as signal stations; and thirdly, it would afford an opportunity of establishing meteorological stations. We have now a report from Stornoway every day, and that proves that a report from this island is very important to the meteorological office; and I am strongly of opinion that if reports were obtained from Ness and Barra, it would be far more important. Again, the extension of the telegraph to the stations I have mentioned is of great importance to the conduct of the herring fishery; and I draw this remark not only from my own observations in this country, but from the result which has been obtained in Norway, where the Government has gone into the matter very exhaustively, and has placed stations at every point of the coast with a head office reporting where shoals of herring are to be seen, and thereby enabling the boats of a district to know where the shoals are, and to secure fish which would otherwise be untouched. Not later than last year at this island we had a very important and successful fishing going on in this district, while at Barra it proved almost a failure. Now, if we had had telegraphic communication to Castle Bay and Vatersay, boats might come here and secure the fishing, whereas they were obliged to remain there and do nothing. You will find from statistics that the fishing varies very much from year to year at particular places, and this is very much the case at Barra. Last year it was a comparative failure, and now we have a very successful fishing going on, so much so that certain of the fishermen have been considering whether they should not go from Stornoway to Barra, and complete the remainder of their time there instead of here. So much for the fluctuation of the fishing, and so much for the necessity of the extension of the telegraph wire in order to the proper conduct of the fisheries at this island. Then again we have a sort of telegraph system on this island. I do not speak as regards Stornoway, but as regards the middle part of the island from Lochmaddy and Lochboisdale. There they have a sham telegraph system. They have only the single needle instead of the Morse instrument, and it takes three or four hours before you can receive a message from these stations, apparently from the style which is carried on, there being that old and antiquated one of the single needle. In addition to that, a good many of the curers at Barra have arranged this season curers' messengers from Castle Bay to Lochboisdale, arriving there in the afternoon with probably twenty or thirty messages, and it often happens that it is not till eight o'clock or later, and often next morning, that we receive those messages. The consequence is that our arrangements are entirely useless, because we are

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unable to send a reply that night—the messenger leaving after eight o'clock. So while we have endeavoured to help ourselves, our endeavour has been entirely set aside by the inability of the offices there to undertake the work when brought to them. I have some messages here to prove what I have stated. Not later than Saturday a message arrives at Lochboisdale at 5.40, and is sent out at 8.37; another arrives at 5.40, and is sent out at 9.10. The consequence is that we are unable to send a reply on Saturday. Again I have to complain, as a representative of the trade, of a still greater grievance, namely, erroneous messages which are conveyed. These do immense harm to the fishing interest, because messages and reports are often sent which are not correct. One message was to the effect that there was a large heavy fishing, so much that the curers were not able to undertake it. That was not the case. It may have been that the boats were loaded, but the curers would have been glad to undertake all they had. That I account for by the telegraph being at such a distance from the station, and the party having imperfect knowledge of the case. I would refer now to the report of the Royal Commission of 1878, in which evidence is given in reference to the extension of the telegraph to Castle Bay. The recommendation of the Commission is upon pp. 51, 52, and 53. Again, in the report of the Select Committee of 1881, it is stated and recommended that the extension of the telegraph wires would be of great advantage and service to the fisheries. Though a report was given in 1878 and again in 1881, we are still in 1883 without this extension. The matter was brought before Parliament by Mr Barclay asking a question of the Lord Advocate as to the extension of the telegraph wire to Castle Bay and Barra, and to the Orkneys and Shetland. Various sums are mentioned for the various extensions, but at the same time it is stated that these cannot be carried out without the necessary guarantees. Now I ask, if you consider that Government is in possession at this moment of £40,000 of a direct tax on the fisheries, how can they ask that a guarantee should be given in connection with the extension of these wires so much required for the proper development and conduct of the fisheries? I think it is admitted that it is about that sum which stands at the credit of the fisheries drawn from the brand. If we contrast this with the interest that is taken by other nations, such as Norway and Sweden, where they give their best attention and encourage their best scientific men to study and help the fishings; if we take Germany, which of late years has expended a deal of money in encouraging the fisheries; if we take Holland and Belgium, where the Government gives the matter serious attention and assistance; if we take France, where it has received every assistance the Government can give; and again America, that gives it not only their attention but their assistance; we are inclined to ask, not only in the Hebrides but in the whole of Scotland, why is this injustice done to Scotland in asking guarantees at our hands, when at the same time they have funds in their possession, the proceeds of a direct tax drawn from the trade itself? It is high time that Government should see it their interest not to seek these guarantees when they have such a sum in their hands. It is also time that these recommendations should be given effect to, so that the fisheries may be properly developed and carried out. I may add, in conclusion, that in addition to the telegraph, the acceleration of the mails, the buoying of sunken rocks, and loans of money at interest to build fishermen's houses, would all contribute to the improvement of the fishings. In reference to the buoying of rocks, I may mention that representations have been made for a number of years back to have that very dangerous rock the Chicken Rock buoyed, but these have been taken no notice of. We have

also several rocks down in Castle Bay, in reference to which it took several years to bring the matter before them before it was done; and on one very important rock in Castle Bay, the beacon was washed down and remained so for three years, and I was only told a fortnight ago that they were now in the act of putting it up.

17158. *Mr Cameron.*—After the very full statement you have made, it is unnecessary to make further explanations on the subject of the telegraph, but we should like to know what you propose in reference to acceleration of the mails?—What I propose is that, starting the night mail from London at nine o'clock, it would arrive at Strome Ferry at half-past three, adding to the acceleration which is promised; and instead of the mail passing to Ullapool, the steamer should cross direct to Strome Ferry, and leave immediately with the mails and light goods. Giving it six hours to arrive here, we would have the mail at ten or eleven o'clock at night ready to be delivered next morning, instead of getting the letters at six or seven o'clock at night when business hours are over.

17159. You say that something has been promised: what has been promised?—Acceleration. I gather that from the evidence given by Mr Dougal.

17160. Has anything been promised in reference to the Ullapool route?—Nothing.

17161. That is, I presume, the chief thing you would like to get?—Yes.

17162. Have you made representations to the Postmaster-General?—I am not aware it was done, but there was a public meeting last week at which resolutions were carried and ordered to be forwarded.

17163. Would it suit you if the mail were to call at Portree on the route?—I do not see why it should not suit us, if they would not detain the steamer by working goods too much. My opinion is, that one boat would be sufficient to carry the mails and goods, and to convey fresh fish from here.

17164. Would it not be possible for the post office to carry out such a contract at a very moderate rate in consideration of the large amount which would be derived from the carriage of fish by the persons who took the contract?—I believe it would take a much less rate than at present.

17165. And you think the carriage of fish would continue almost all the year round?—I do.

17166. You talk of haddock: do they catch much haddock here?—No; they do not catch much, because they cannot get them despatched in time.

17167. We heard the other day at Ness that they used turbot for bait?—I believe they do.

17168. By this arrangement could turbot and haddock and such valuable fish be conveyed, packed in ice of course, to London?—Yes, quite safely.

17169. How do they catch the haddock?—With small lines.

17170. Do you believe there are plenty of haddock about?—I believe there are.

17171. Where is there any oyster fishing?—I believe there is oyster fishing in Loch Roag, though not properly cultivated. So far as my inquiries have gone, if carried out on the principle of farming, it would be a very important fishery, and I believe the oysters there are of a very improved quality.

17172. Is it East or West Loch Roag that you mean?—I do not know which part; my information is rather general.

17173. Do you believe that the deep sea herring fishing has any effect in preventing shoals of herring going inland, so as to injure the autumn

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fishing in the bays and creeks?—That is rather a puzzling question. In Norway, where the best men have been engaged upon it, they have not yet been able to arrive at the habits of the fish, and their habits are so peculiar that it is a very difficult matter to give an opinion.

17174. But the fishing on the mainland in the various arms of the sea has fallen off in late years, contemporaneously with the increase of the deep sea fishing?—Generally speaking, it has.

17175. You are not in a position to give an opinion as to the one being the cause of the other?—No; I am not prepared to give an opinion, though I have studied the question.

17176. *The Chairman.*—With regard to the influence of the telegraph in developing the cod fishery, would the price of cod be increased if the telegraph went to Barra and Carloway and those places?—Coupled with the acceleration of the railway, the prices would be increased 100 per cent. We could send the fish in fresh.

ALEXANDER MURRAY, Merchant, Stornoway (46)—examined.

Alexander Murray.

17177. *Mr Cameron.*—Whom do you represent?—Parties who have grazing lands outside the boundary of Stornoway.

17178. Have you any statement on the subject?—Yes.

17179. Will you kindly make it?—Under the Seaforth family the town had from 80 to 100 head of cattle and about two square miles of moorland to graze them on. This moorland extended almost in a straight line from the Stornoway mill to the Creed river, north and south of the Lochs road. That portion of the moorland to the south was used for wintering, and that to the north for summering. The rent was 10s. per head of cattle, always paid in advance. The townspeople had arable ground in Goat-hill rented to them in rigs or acres at from £2, 6s. to £3 sterling per Scotch acre. Dykes were made by the tenants. Some of the townspeople had three head of cattle, and a goodly number had two. These having lands used to have potatoes all the year round, grown on their own lands, besides some oat and barley meal. The people were comfortable and well to do. There was no poor rate, or its demoralising tendencies; good schools and good scholars, without an expensive and cumbersome School Board system; no police and no police rate; only one lawyer in the Lewis, and he not overburdened with work. Until recently, we always had a Gaelic-speaking sheriff. The Lewis under the Seaforths was happy and contented, —well fed, well clothed, and imported little if any meal or food of any kind. The old potatoes saw the new in; the surplus of grain they were able to sell was sufficient to keep a large distillery going in Stornoway and no small number of illicit stills, and every man made his own home-brewed nut-brown ale. The legal and illicit stills are gone long syne, and poverty has made the crofters forego their nut-brown ale. Tradesmen and crofters put aside each year their winter stock of beef and mutton. The crofters were able to sell in town their own butter. Neither butter nor cheese was imported, the island producing sufficient for its wants. They did not know what it was to want. In those days the few poor were as well fed and clothed as their neighbours, who from their own fulness supplied those who were indigent. There was no word in those days of the lazy Lewisman. They got sufficient land to keep them employed, and sufficient returns from it to keep them out of debt. No wonder that the past generation spoke of the Seaforth family with affectionate reverence. The late Sir James

Matheson bought the island of Lewis in June 1844, and in November of the same year deprived the townspeople of all their summer grazings, and began to enclose the same and to plant it with young wood. This portion is now called Lewis Castle policies. The town being now confined to their summer grazings, the inhabitants saw it was hopeless to keep on their stock, and gradually began to sell them off. A few years thereafter the Goat-hill lands were gradually taken from them, park by park, until about 1854 they had no arable land on Goat-hill. No compensation was given for dykes or improvements. All that the townspeople have now are two parks in Goat-hill for grazing. One park of about 5 acres paid a rent of £20, which this year was reduced to £15,—the other park, of 6½ acres, paying £22, 10s. The number of cattle on these parks is fifteen. The Goat-hill lands were attached to the Manor farm and to the Goat-hill farm. About 1869 the estate took Goat-hill farm into their own hands and turned it into a dairy farm, and shortly after raised the price of milk. The price of milk all the year round prior to 1869 was fourpence per half gallon. In 1869 the price was raised by the estate management to sixpence per half gallon from November to May, and back to fourpence from June to October. The milk supply comes now from the farms of Goat-hill, Melbost, Holm, and Stoneyfield. Goat-hill since 1869 is in the hands of a tenant. As regards evictions, the last of them occurred about five years ago in widow Park. I shall also ask leave to call attention to some remarks made on the crofting system, which has never been properly handled by any one.

17180. We do dot wish your own views of the crofting system, because we have not time to go into it. If any witness has stated facts which you wish to dispute you may do so?—The total area of the Lewis is 417,460 acres.

17181. We have evidence from the Ordnance Survey map, and we cannot go into that. If you will answer any question on the subject of want of milk, or the taking of pasture lands from Stornoway, we shall be satisfied. Who exactly are the people of Stornoway whom you represent?—The inhabitants of the town.

17182. They are not crofters?—They had these lands outside the town.

17183. Were they crofters?—Some of them were crofters in a sense of the word, others were tradesmen who had a bit of croft—two or three acres.

17184. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How did they make their living? Did they ever make their living by the land?—They were tradesmen, and the lands were a help to them; and they feel the want of them now.

17185. Then they were deprived of those lands by Sir James Matheson?—Yes.

17186. And he took the ground into his hands for the purpose of making a park?—For the purpose of making parks, and he lotted it into farms. Part was given to the Home farm, and part to the Goat-hill farm; the remaining three parts were given to the townspeople.

17187. Is Goat-hill let to a tacksman?—Part of the hill is attached to the Goat-hill farm, and part is attached to the manor farm. Three parks are held by parties in the town for grazing purposes—at least two for grazing purposes, and one is arable.

17188. Are they parties who had not any of these lands before?—They had not any of these lands before.

17189. Has the rent of the portion given to these three persons been increased?—Yes.

17190. Do they keep cows upon these parks?—Yes.

17191. And supply the town with milk?—Some families don't use all the milk; they sell the surplus.

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Alexander Murray.

17192. They are not dairy farmers?—No.

17193. Are there still a few people in the town who have grass for a cow?—There are fifteen cows belonging to the town in those parks.

17194. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I understand your grievance to be this, that the moment Sir James Matheson bought the property, some crofters and other people who were paying small rents outside the burgh boundaries for grass for their cows were dispossessed, and have thereby suffered very great inconvenience?—That is so.

17195. And not only so, but detriment to the younger members of their families in the want of milk?—Yes.

17196. Was any reason ever alleged for that act?—No reason alleged.

17197. Of course, the taking away of the ground and adding it to the policies may be some reason, but there was no reason for giving it to tacksmen?—There was no reason for taking it for the use of the policies, or giving it to the farmers. The ground was well tilled.

17198. Were remonstrances made at the time or at any other time?—I do not think there was much use in doing so.

17199. But under the present chamberlain, when any of those leases fall out, would it not be wise for the people to apply to him, and offer at least some rent?—It would be very wise, if there was any chance of getting it.

17200. And a wise thing for the landlord to consent to?—I think so.

17201. What is the value of this land, in respect of being in the neighbourhood of the town, for dairy purposes?—It used to be rented to the township at from 37s. to 48s. per imperial acre.

17202. What would be the value of it now, considering its situation in regard to the town, for dairy purposes?—As to the parks that are already let, one is let at £2 per acre, the other at about £3, 15s.

17203. What is done with the milk that is produced on those parks now?—It is mostly used by the family that owns the cow.

17204. Is there not enough of land to keep more than one cow for each family?—Some families have two cows.

17205. Supposing the chamberlain were willing to let the people of Stornoway or the crofters have moorland, where could that land be obtained?—It could be obtained on the ground which is in the hands of the estate.

17206. Which is on the home farm?—There is no moorland attached to the home farm.

17207. What becomes of the milk produced on the home farm?—There is no milk produced on the home farm for sale, so far as I am aware.

17208. Don't they keep cows?—Not that I am aware of. The Goathill farm is in the hands of another tenant. That farm still sends milk into the town.

17209. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many people were deprived of this privilege by Sir James?—I cannot tell.

17210. Was it a considerable number of inhabitants?—A considerable number.

MURDO MACLEOD, Agent of the British Linen Company's Bank (38)—examined.

Murdo Macleod.

17211. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make any short statement to us?—I did not expect to be called upon to give evidence, but I shall be glad to answer any questions that may be put to me. I would merely

say that I am inclined to confirm very generally the statements made by Dr Macrae. I think they embody pretty fully the ideas I entertain on the general question which has occupied the attention of the Commission, and I am also very much of opinion that the grievances which exist in the Lewis cannot be reached by any single means. I think any improvement that takes place must be the result of two or three lines,—that is to say improvement upon the land, and yet further development of the fishing, and also the extension of education, leading many of the people to turn their attention away from the Lewis to the cities, and also to our colonies. I concur very fully in the opinion expressed, that a good deal of improvement might be effected in the proper allotment of the lands in the island. I am of opinion that the most is not made of the island—*even what is now assigned for cropping purposes*—and also that a good deal of the waste land could be profitably utilised to give fresh crofts to men who are now without them.

17212. Have you been long on this island?—I was born in Stornoway, and have lived here all my life.

17213. With regard to the waste lands that could be utilised, on what portion of the island do these waste lands exist?—I consider in all parts of the island.

17214. Do you refer to land which is presently waste and may be cultivated, or do you refer to land which witnesses called waste, and which is under sheep?—I refer to land that is really not under cultivation at present—under peat moss, and also under townships.

17215. Do you consider that peat moss is capable of improvement?—Yes, when it is not very deep, and where it has been partially cut off for fuel purposes.

17216. You think it is quite as good as much of the land that has been already cultivated and made remunerative?—Yes.

17217. Do you attribute the same importance to fencing that Dr Macrae did?—Yes, I do; and it has always been very much neglected, to my mind.

17218. Do you agree with the evidence which has been given by Mr Smith and Mr M'Combie as to the development of the fishings?—Yes.

17219. And as to the improvement of the postal and telegraphic communication?—Yes, I am very much in sympathy with them.

17220. Probably you feel the want of that in your business?—Yes; but I feel it more as to how it affects the general population, because I consider that whatever is directly beneficial to the trade of Stornoway reaches in an indirect way the general population.

17221. What is your opinion as to the condition of the people in regard to material prosperity at the present moment, compared with what it was a few years back?—I am of opinion that there is a far greater amount of general comfort among the people, taken as a whole, than there used to be in former times. At the same time, I qualify that by saying that I think there is a greater number of paupers and poor people than there used to be, and that is very much the result of the subdividing of the land and the general impoverishment of those who look to the land alone for their living.

17222. Do you think the people are more heavily in debt now to merchants than they were at a former period?—Well, on an average, I do not think they are. The population is greater, and perhaps the aggregate of debt may be greater; but on an average, I do not think it is.

17223. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you aware that most of the people here are in favour of larger crofts?—Yes, that is the feeling of the people.

17224. Do you think it, in their circumstances, not an unreasonable wish?—I think it quite reasonable.

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17225. Do you believe, from your own knowledge of your countrymen, that if they had what they want they would set vigorously to work, and take in a great deal more land than there is at present?—Most emphatically I do. In my inquiries among them the feeling seems to be 'How little land we have,' and also those who have no land at all are discouraged to ask for it.

17226. Could a crofter reclaim land near his own place at a very much cheaper rate than a proprietor or outsider could do it?—Yes: a great part of the land of the Lewis has been so reclaimed just by the labour of the people. During a great part of the year their time is not of very great value, and if they had these waste lands to work upon they would have an inducement to work which they have not at present.

17227. *The Chairman.*—We are told they are employed during most of the year, and have practically no waste time?—That is not the case. As regards those who are connected with the fishing, there is always a good deal of unsuitable weather, and when the ground is near them they can give a few hours to it, when it might be unsuitable to go to sea.

17228. But are they not looking after their boats, and unsettled, and not disposed to go and trench the land?—Well, on account of the absence of harbours, they have their boats hauled up, and they just put them out when they need to go out to sea.

17229. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—In one part of the Isle of Skye we found that for some years there had been a great deal of business in the way of bills, which it was said has to a large extent brought the country into a state of poverty. Is there anything of that sort going on here among the crofter class? Do they do anything in the way of bills?—Very little, according to my experience. They do not seem to experience very great difficulty in providing the rent at all. They appear to me to pay the rent wonderfully well, because they will pinch themselves in every way, and perhaps neglect their debt, for the purpose of paying the rent. I think that, taken upon the whole, and considering the number of years the estate has been under management, the amount of outstanding bad debts must form a very small percentage. I question if any other trading in the Lewis could show such a favourable result.

17230. Generally, do you think there is a larger amount of debt to merchants for provisions and other things than there was a few years ago, apart from this particular year?—No, I think it is less. I think the relations between fishermen and curers are on a more favourable basis than they used to be.

DUNCAN MACKENZIE, Crofter, Melbost (69)—examined.

Duncan Mackenzie.

17231. *The Chairman.*—You expressed a wish to make a statement here to day; will you do so?—I have to say that there have been rights taken away from the township to which I belong which they possessed before. Thirty-four years ago our land was so much abridged that we have nothing outside the heads of our rigs, between us and the sea on the other side. We have no pasture ground at all. The little we had between us and the sea was taken away from us, and a wire fence was put up between us. I believe all through the bounds of this estate you would not see a boundary so disagreeable to look at as ours, and we are now every year obliged to keep up and pay for the cost of that wire fence.

Duncan Mackenzie.

17232. In whose time did you lose this land; was it in Sir James Matheson's time?—Yes.

17233. Was it the year he came to the place?—No; some years afterwards.

17234. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who got the place?—It was given to the person who has it to-day, Mr Houston, Goramclete.

17235. Were you in arrears of rent at the time?—No.

17236. Who was factor at the time?—Mr John Mackenzie.

17237. Did you get a deduction of rent?—Not a penny; it has been raised upon us since that time.

17238. Six shillings each?—More than £1.

17239. Was any land reclaimed after that?—Yes; there was a bit of land given to us for which we have £13, 10s. to pay; but it is now a thoroughfare for the cattle of the place, and all the sand that is used in and about the place is taken out of it, so that carts are constantly going up and down there.

17240. Did you complain at the time?—We did, but what was the good of that? If a complaint was made to the chamberlain, the chamberlain just raised his stick to the man who made it.

Angus Macleod, Crofter and Fish Merchant, Portnaguirin (44)—examined.

Angus Macleod.

17241. *The Chairman.*—You have given in a statement to the Commission?—Yes. 'I have been appointed to appear before the Royal 'Commission by the crofters and fishermen of this district to state their 'grievances. First, crofters are overcrowded. In many instances three 'families are in the same croft. The land is poor, and they have too little 'of it. Second, they suffer heavily for want of harbours to prosecute the 'fishing. Portnaguirin is one of the oldest and best fishing ports, and 'there is from 100 to 150 fishermen depending upon it for the most 'part of the year, and is still neglected and left in its natural state, 'consequently the fishermen have to load and unload from a ton or two 'tons of ballast, and then haul their boats from 50 to 100 yards every 'time they go to sea; and owing to the roughness of the shore and want 'of protection, the boats that ought to last them ten years, will only 'last them for three. There is no doubt if there was a harbour they 'would have larger and better boats, and could land twice the quantity 'of fish. Third, we suffer from want of telegraphic communication to 'the fishing ports, so that we cannot have ready communication with the 'southern markets, which now would be of great advantage to the fisher-'men.—Angus Macleod, delegate.'

17242. This is written by Mr Walter Rose, Secretary of the Lewis Highland Land Law Reform Association?—Yes.

17243. What you most complain of is a want of fishing accommodation, a pier or shelter for your boats?—Yes; even a pier would be better than nothing, but a harbour is much required.

17244. Would it be easy to make a harbour?—Not very easy.

17245. Portnaguirin is in Broad Bay?—Yes.

17246. Is it the best situation for forming a harbour?—That or Gress. Portnaguirin is a much more important fishing place.

17247. How many boats fish there?—Perhaps twenty to twenty-five, for cod, ling, and lobsters, during the year; and if there was a harbour there would be many more.

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DONALD M'CASKILL, Crofter and Fisherman, Sheshader (54)—examined.

Donald M'Caskill.

17248. *The Chairman.*—Were you sent by the people of Sheshader?—Yes.

17249. What is the population of Sheshader?—There are twenty-eight lots in the township, but there are many of them on which there are more than one family.

17250. Were they all present when you were chosen?—Yes.

17251. Why did you not come here on Friday?—We were told the meeting was to be in the Free Church of Garabost.

17252. Who told you that?—We heard it about a fortnight ago in the town here.

17253. What have you got to say on the part of the people of Sheshader?—I remember when the township was under twelve tenants. That is forty years ago. The rent was £42. There are now twenty-eight lots, and the rent is above £100; but a dyke was made round the arable land by orders of the proprietor, and a tax of 5s. was made on every lot, of which there were twenty-one at the time—thirty-four years ago. It was erected by the proprietor, and the people were paid for doing the work, but the crofters have had to keep it up ever since. A promise was made at the time that when the dyke was paid for they would be free from any further expense. It cost about £70, and already there has been £80 paid for it. Then there was a tax of 5s. put upon every crofter for the roads. The 5s. for the roads was then changed into hill money. Both these taxes are now included in the rent, and if anybody sends a cow to the hill he pays 2s. for the grass for a month or six weeks. When I became a family man, I built a house for myself close to my father's, and I was fined £5 by the chamberlain for it. I went to the chamberlain and told him I would rather go back to my father's house than pay that, but he would not let me off without paying the fine. There were other four of my father's family, and when they saw how things were going on under the chamberlain they fled away, with the exception of one. The boundaries of the township are now no larger than they were when they were paying £42. Instead of that, they lost something out of the back of the town.

DONALD MACLEOD, Crofter, Lower Bayble (60)—examined.

Donald Macleod.

17254. *The Chairman.*—Were you chosen by the people of Lower Bayble?—Yes.

17255. What have you to say?—When our land was allotted under the present proprietor it was done by Mr Scobie. At that time there were six families at the end of the township where I am, and my brother was on the lot which I now occupy. His rent was then £3, 10s. The land was taken from us at that time for a curing station, spreading places for nets, and accommodation for boats. There was a deduction of 5s. from our lots and some of the other lots on account of that for some time. But after Mr Scobie's time that 5s. was laid on us again, when the lots were next settled by Mr John Mackenzie, the rent of that ground which my brother had, and which I now occupy, was raised to £4, 19s., and to make my story short, I paid this year £7, 12s. 6d. for that same ground. Of that 19s. was paid on account of road money I had not been paying before. On the same ground, on which I remember my father and mother keeping five

cows, I keep two and another young beast, and I have difficulty in keeping them.

17256. What rent did you pay last year?—About £6.

17257. What is the bare rent without including road money or arrears?—When I came into possession of the land the bare rent was £4, 19s. Then there was 5s. added to that for road money. It is now part of the rent, and when I objected to that there was a fine of 7s. put upon me. I would get no receipts from Mr Munro until I paid that 7s.

17258. Was that 7s. arrears of rent from previous years?—It was Mr Munro who put that fine upon me. I held on for two years without paying it, and I would get no receipts till I paid it.

17259. Was the 7s. included in the receipt when you paid it?—No.

17260. Who got the 7s.?—The rulers of the estate know that; I do not.

17261. Then your rent now is £5, 4s.?—Yes, £5, 4s. is the bare rent now.

17262. How did you pay £6, 12s. last year?—[Witness banded in receipts.]

17263. There is grazing of cows and herding of sheep here in these receipts; did you know that?—Yes, that is for grazing which our fathers had for nothing.

17264. What stock do you keep for the £5, 4s.?—Two cows and a young beast and six ewes.

[ADJOURNED.]

KEOSE, LEWIS, TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, XLI. and XLV.*)

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

WILLIAM MACKAY, Chamberlain on the Lewis Estates—re-examined.

17265. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement to make to us?—I stated at Uig that no person who might come forward and state their grievances would suffer anything in consequence. I thought perhaps the Chairman would have mentioned it at Breasclete, and I did not do it there. I was not asked about it, neither was I asked at Barvas; but I gave such an assurance at Ness, and now I give it here. It was said at Stornoway that there were certain townlands taken from the townspeople. It is the case that they occupied land at one time—tradesmen, merchants, and others in the town of Stornoway—on which they grew potatoes. They also had a great number of cows. That was done away with. They began to give up the lands at that time on account of the failure of the potatoes; and I have to mention that in 1849, on account of these lands held by townspeople, there was £500 of irrecoverable arrears wiped off. Now, what was done with that land? A portion was added to the manor

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farm, and a portion made into parks round the town, still let to townspeople. A portion was converted into pleasure grounds, made over to Stornoway. Two of them are immediately behind Bay Head, and for the approach to the castle a portion had to be taken off a feu to the extent of 27 poles, for which £325 was paid. Then it was said the people were in doubt whether those removed from the Bay Head houses ever got compensation. I can say that they did,—those who came into the town,—and others were provided with new crofts outside the town. I wish to explain my own views with regard to this waste land outside townships, which we have been told is called cultivated. I have here a plan of a small place such as they described down at Bayble. A man stated it was taken from them. Now, it was only given to the existing tenants to extend their lots out into this back ground themselves. They did so, and the rest of the township immediately complained on account of the trouble it would give them to go round a certain piece with their cattle. There is a great deal of such land farther along, and complaint is made that the crofters are not allowed to get it. New tenants are not allowed to get it, but these old tenants are allowed to extend out there, and leave the lower portions of their lots under grass. I have just one other remark to make. I mentioned a good many things which Sir James Matheson did, and which I considered were for the benefit of the island, and I may mention some things which Lady Matheson has done. In addition to £1500 given to the destitution fund, she supplied potatoes to the extent of £100 privately to the people, of which no notice has hitherto been taken. She expends £58 for each parish in private charity—clothing and the like of that. She also sent the Volunteers at her own expense to the Review at Edinburgh. She kept the Reserve men while the Duke of Edinburgh was here; and she contributed to the boat disaster fund. I have not the amount. Lately she sent six men to the Fishery Exhibition at her own expense, to whom she paid wages at the rate of 20s. per week, and it cannot be said that she is behind with her subscriptions on any occasion. I have also to say that there has not been a case brought before you of a man not getting compensation for a house, or who was deprived of a house without getting compensation. Another thing I may mention is, that all the crofters, and tacksmen as well, are supplied with tiles for draining free.

17266. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You mentioned that there were some parks about Stornoway now at the disposal of the townspeople?—They are permanently let to the townspeople, and on these parks they have some cattle.

17267. How many are there?—I cannot tell just now.

17268. You do not know the total acreage?—No.

17269. Or the rent?—The rent of some of them is pretty high—perhaps as high as £2 per acre. It is good pasture.

17270. Could not the giving out of the grass parks be enlarged with advantage to the estate when a tack falls in?—It would not be enlarged unless they encroached upon the Goat-hill farm or the manor farm.

17271. Is the Goat-hill farm in the proprietor's hands?—No; it is let to a tenant.

17272. And that is the only part really that could be given off, if it were thought advisable to do so?—Yes.

17273. *Mr Cameron.*—The large farm of Park is now in Lady Matheson's hands?—Yes.

17274. How did it come to be in her hands?—The lease is out.

17275. Did she try to let it again?—Yes.

17276. Did you advertise it?—Yes.

17277. Did you get an offer for it?—Not as a farm.

17278. *The Chairman.*—I have heard it stated that small tenants applied for that farm?—They did.

17279. What did they offer for it?—There was not a formal offer made. They asked if they would get part of it.

17280. What is the rent of it?—The grazing rent of it is £850.

17281. Did they give you any reason to suppose that they would be able to pay such a rent?—We never came to question of rent at all.

17282. Why did you not come to question of rent?—Because we refused to let the place to crofters.

17283. You thought it would be inexpedient to put crofters there?—It was thought so.

17284. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Has Lady Matheson power to set a lease for a period of years?—For nineteen years.

17285. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was this the reason you did not entertain the crofter's offer, that the farm was not considered suitable for a crofting farm?—Yes, that was what was considered—that it was not suitable for crofters. There was not an offer; it was an application.

17286. But your reason for declining to entertain the application was that you did not consider the farm suitable for that class of tenants?—Yes, and that more could be got for it otherwise.

17287. You thought the question had not reached the stage of rent?—It did not.

17288. The consideration did not go to the extent of the question of rent at all?—No.

JOHN SMITH, Crofter, Balallan (75)—examined.

17289. *The Chairman.*—Were you elected by the township of Balallan?—Yes.

17290. Who called the Balallan people together to elect you?—Those who were going among the people from out of Stornoway.

17291. Who were those?—Those who were at the head of the Stornoway meetings.

17292. Was it Mr Morrison?—Mr Morrison and Rev. Mr Martin, and Mr Mackenzie, who is here present.

17293. Were there any strangers present?—No, they were all of the island.—'*Statement of Balallan People.* We beg to lay before the 'Commissioners the way in which Balallan has been so badly ruled. '1. About forty-four years ago, when Mr John Knox was chamberlain here, 'he took Kintarvay, or part of our hill pasture, from us, and joined it with 'sporting grounds of Aline. 2. Sixteen crofters were placed among us 'when the Park tenants were displaced. 3. Mr John Scoby, "Factor," 'formed the village of Arivruach, west from Balallan on our hill pasture, 'without allowing any discount in our rents. 4. When Mr John 'Mackenzie became factor he divided Balallan into sixty-four crofts, and 'increased the rents. 5. Mr Donald Munro also increased our rents. 6. 'When Mr William M'Kay became factor we got some hill pasture from 'him, and also a place to cut our peats in. 7. We now entreat that, by 'the favour of Lady Matheson and Mr William Mackay, all the squatters '(people without crofts, thirty-two in number) will be removed, or places 'given to them, as they are an entire burden on the tenants, as also high 'rents and taxes.—JOHN SMITH, senior, DONALD MARTIN, ALEXANDER M'KENZIE, JOHN MACLEOD, JOHN SMITH, junior.'

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17294. What was the rent of Balallan when you first remember?—£153.

17295. What is the rent to-day?—£215, 2s.

17296. Is that exclusive of rates and taxes?—Exclusive of taxes.

17297. Does it include the road money and the kain money?—Yes, it includes that.

17298. Is that the increase made by Mr Munro to which reference is here made?—That was the only permanent rise of rent that he imposed. There were temporary impositions. In one case the rent was doubled because one kept a married son.

17299. How many lots were there before the place was lotted under Mr John Mackenzie?—There were twenty-six lots when Sir James Matheson bought the property.

17300. How many families were living on the twenty-six lots?—There were a few of them that had two families upon them.

17301. There were not two families upon each?—No, only upon a few.

17302. Were these families brought in from other places after the lotting by Mr John Mackenzie?—No, there were none brought in from the outside since Mr Mackenzie lotted the place. There was a large number shortly before that, and there were additions made to the lots by Mr Mackenzie by giving lots to some of the people of the place.

17303. There were sixty-four families in the place when it was lotted out into sixty-four crofts?—Yes.

17304. Well, there are now thirty-two squatters in the place. Where have they come from?—They grew upon the place—the natural increase of the place.

17305. And there is not room in the place for them?—No, there is no place for them. They are a burden to the place, and they injure it very much.

17306. Have you any of your own family burdening the place?—Yes.

17307. Where do you want your family to be put that are burdening the place?—We don't know very well. We used to consider America as the place to go to, but now, through the favour of Lady Matheson and her representative Mr Mackay, we think that a place might be provided for them in the land of their birth.

17308. If they got assistance to go to America, with promise of some provision on their arrival there, would they be inclined still to go to America?—I don't think they would. There were many of our relatives who went to America, and we have not heard such favourable accounts of how they got on.

17309. Have any of them come home from America?—No; they had not the means to bring them home.

17310. Did they write letters to say so?—Yes. My father was the only one of my grandfather's family who did not emigrate, and the arrangement they made with him when they went away was—'Don't stir 'from where you are till we send for you,' and he never got a letter from them but the tenor of it was—'If you are as well off as you were when 'we left you, don't stir out of it.'

17311. How long is it since you last heard from them?—I heard from a son of my own not very long ago, and a sister of my own. There was an unmarried nephew of my own who came across here some years ago, and stayed with me for a while, and returned back again, and I heard from him too.

17312. Why did he return?—To support his father and mother. They had no means of support without him.

17313. Where were they living?—In Canada—I cannot specify further

—but he used to tell me this, that when people gathered together from all parts, the Highland people as they are here to-day, the burden of their conversation was the old homes they had left behind them, and they all used to say that if they could they would return back again.

17314. Had your relatives land of their own in Canada?—Yes.

17315. Were they not living comfortably upon that land?—Sometimes they might be pretty comfortable. I met with a trustworthy man who went away at the same time, John M'Leod by name, and when I asked him about my sister and her husband, his reply was that my sister and her husband did not get much satisfaction or comfort in America. They were but young at the time, and the proof of their discomfort he gave me was that their heads were as white as a seagull, mourning for the land they had left behind.

17316. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was your nephew born in America?—No, he was born at Kershader.

17317. How old was he when he left?—Fourteen or fifteen years of age.

17318. Is there much fishing in this loch now?—There used to be when herring came into it. There is very little fishing except when there are herring.

17319. Do you know the reason why the herring are not coming now?—Providence—the administration of the Creator.

17320. About sixteen families came from Park. What was the object of sending them out? Was it then created a tack for the first time, or was it an enlargement of a tack?—Clearing Park in order to place it under sheep.

17321. Who was the person who got the place?—Archibald and Alexander Stewart, two brothers.

17322. Were you yourself born in Balallan, or were you in Park at one time?—I was born in Park, in a place called Eesgin of Park.

17323. How old were you when you left?—About fifteen.

17324. Was your father one of those who were removed?—He was one of those who were sent away from the place.

17325. Was your father well off when he lived in Park?—Yes, as well as a crofter tenant might need to ask.

17326. Was it for his benefit to be removed?—Quite the contrary, but because of the oppression of the people—dealt with as a herd of sheep driven by dogs into a fank.

17327. Were the other people who were removed like your father in comfortable circumstances?—Yes. Nobody needed to leave the place from one year's end to another for anything the family required. If one family happened to be short of provisions, they had only to ask their neighbour, who could supply them.

17328. Had the removal of those families a prejudicial effect on their circumstances—tending to impoverish them?—Nobody stood it so well as my father did. He had means, and he got into a place until he was banished a second time.

17329. Where did he go the first time?—He came to another portion of Park called Cleater, over upon the other side of the loch from Balallan.

17330. How long was he there before he was removed?—He had Cleater to himself for nine years, and then another man was put in who got two-thirds of it, and my father for five years had one-third. He was fourteen years there altogether.

17331. What became of him then?—He was one of the sixteen who were removed to Balallan when Mr Scott became tenant of Park. This was before Sir James Matheson's day.

17332. They had to clear out of Park and go to Balallan?—Yes, those

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of them who were not sent off to America. Others of them were sent to Tongue, down near Stornoway.

17333. Is there a ground officer living here?—Yes.

17334. What land has he got?—He has not very much land—about two lots.

17335. Is it part of the township of Balallan?—Yes.

17336. Was that croft cut out of your township at that time?—It was made before he got it. It was cut out at the time Mr Mackenzie portioned out the place into lots.

17337. Was any allowance made to crofters for the cutting out of these two lots to the ground officer?—No; the arrangement was this, that the rent of the township was apportioned out among the lots, these two lots paying their share of the rent as well as ourselves.

17338. Does that so remain?—Yes.

17339. Has the ground officer any privilege over your township which none of the other crofters possess?—Nothing whatever; he is just as another neighbour.

JOHN M'LEOD, Crofter, Kershader (56)—examined.

John M'Leod.

17340. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there at Kershader?—Twenty families.

17341. Were you elected by the heads of these families?—Yes.

17342. Were they all present at the time?—The most of them were together.

17343. Will you state what they sent you here to say?—There are three townships there, very near connected to each other—Habost, Kershader, and Garivaid—small villages situated on the south side there, and I was appointed to speak on behalf of these. The main grievances which the people have there, are the smallness of their holdings and the badness of them as well, and that makes them dear—not dear according to the space may be that we possess, but according to the hard labour we have in connection with them and the badness of the soil, so that the ground would not yield crop now as it would before, because the places are peopled so much, and each family has so little of it. Besides that, we have a general grievance on the south side for the want of any bit of road. We have not an inch of road, and we are paying according to other tenants in the country the same road money that they are paying, to the best of my knowledge. Now, we have not an inch of road there, and I think there are several hundred families there on the south side. This same year we applied in some form or another to get a road there. That was refused. I cannot say who in fact was the author of refusing it, but one thing is, we are in want of it, and we are paying for it. Another thing they were anxious to state before the Commission, is a rise of rent that took place some years ago. There was 5s. charged upon each tenant for road money. Well, after a few years I think it was turned as moor pasture money upon the people, and the road money besides. To the best of our knowledge, this 5s. is included now in the present rent we pay, and the road money besides—so much per pound. Now, bad as the soil is, if the people had somewhat more of it, a little more than they have, they might, of course no doubt with hard labour, make a poor man's living of it—not very luxurious or easy—and I can prove that when a man goes there with a creel on his back all the days of his life, with his spade in his hand, working with the spade—and very often when I was a fisherman I had to go down with

my sea boots to the knee in the furrows of the rigs where I was putting a little seed, to turn it before I could put in seed there. Now, to-day I am cutting my peats in the rigs that I had twenty years back under cultivation, and to-day they will give no crop, and the best I can make out of them is to cut them in bits to burn. I am sure the worst grievance we have is that there are so many squatters there, and though the tenants suffer very much from that condition, the squatters suffer more. I don't know what life I could compare to a poor man's life squatting there, because to my great misfortune I was there for a long time myself, and I suffered for it and I suffer for it still, and I have no person to blame for it but myself, for I was a long time in that condition. Matters with us at present are not so very bad, no doubt, but still our taxes and everything of that sort are unbearable to the poor people. They cannot stand it. We had sea-weed there, and some of that was taken from us, and the rent was not reduced to my knowledge. I don't think that it was. The only remedy that they expect to get for that is if Lady Matheson kindly would think to give more land to these people that are distressed there. While we have to acknowledge Lady Matheson's kindness in every way,—as Mr Mackay referred to that we must acknowledge it, especially this year and other years,—but still the burden is upon the people in a way that they cannot bear. They cannot live in any way like a free kingdom's subjects. If they can, it is out of any of our knowledge how to do unless we get some more land. Now, the land next to us on the south side here is quite fit for poor people, and I will give you one instance. My grandfather was in Park before he was removed to make a place for sheep and deer. Well, one year he got £4 for twenty three-year-old wedders. The other people of the township were envying him for getting so much. I mention that as an example to show that the land is quite fit for a poor man to live in it, and to give more rent. As the first witness spoke about his nephew who went to America, I may say that the boy left our place, and the witness will excuse me when I say that he did not go back to help his father, but he was of necessity forced to go back to his father's house, for he joined the Hudson Bay Company's service as a hired man, and he did not succeed there, and then in the process of his way to Hudson Bay he had to go back to Canada to his father's house, and was not there but for a short time. That is a trustworthy man, Donald M'Leod, from the township of Kershader, and I had a letter from a neighbour there telling me of the poor condition of Donald M'Leod—a man we could believe as far as we could believe any man we ever saw, and many here who can testify the same. Now, we cannot think of going there in the face of all this. And now the fishing of the sea is taken away in the course of the providence of the Most High. We may acknowledge that our sins are the author of it, but for all that we are suffering on that account, and we earnestly wish not to blame any proprietor, or chamberlain, or ground officer; but we might mention, if it were necessary, many instances that could show that we were suffering in connection with these things. Perhaps it will be better for this present meeting not to enlarge upon them. But the remedy for the distress is the main thing we are asking, and that is the only remedy the people think would do them—to get a road there and to get more land—and I hope, whatever shall be the result, we shall not have to pay more or any longer for what we have not—I mean the road. About the sea-weed, I cannot exactly say how it was, but we got the moor pasture and the sea-weed in the rent before it was raised, and we possessed it up to a certain year; and 6s. or 5s. for each crofter was added to our rent, and we are paying that still. Lady Matheson no doubt gives money in charitable

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ways, but to the best of my knowledge not a penny was spent in the three small villages I have mentioned for houses or improvements yet. If there was, I will admit very soon that I was wrong; but only this, for which we sincerely thank her—we had a schoolhouse, and once or twice she gave us a little help in timber to keep up the schoolhouse. We acknowledged that, and still acknowledge it with gratitude.

17344. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far are you from the high road?—On the south side of this loch.

17345. How many miles is it before you get to the high road?—About 14 miles going round the loch.

17346. And there is no road?—Not an inch.

17347. *The Chairman.*—Is the nearest way to the high road 14 miles?—Yes; the ferry across will shorten it with us, but not with the rest of the district. There are several townships all round there where there is not an inch of road, nor is there a post-office on the south side, nor any civil benefit whatever, only we have got one church there, and one churchyard very lately.

17348. Do you remember the time before the road to Tarbert was made?—Yes.

17349. Was there a mail going then?—I think there was a postman going.

17350. Where were the letters for Kershader dropped?—They would be left on the south side with some person on the road, and all the townships there and I have to pay extra for all the letters we get.

17351. Where is the post-office now?—It is in Balallan, in the most inconvenient place for the parish that can be.

17352. Is there not a post-office opposite to you across the ferry?—No; it is in Balallan, in the furthest end of the loch; but there is another office at Crossbost that is accommodating the district.

17353. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How do you get your letters just now?—I must send for them, or pay extra to the man who would go for them.

17354. *Mr Cameron.*—How many cottars are there in the townships you represent?—About twenty.

17355. And you say they lead a very hard life?—I say so, and I can prove that.

17356. What do they work at?—They are away to the fishing to earn wages, and to any place where they can get a job.

17357. But where do they go to?—To the east coast and to the south, to Badenoch and to Glasgow, and any place where they can get work.

17358. How long do they stay away at one time?—They have no certain rule—as long as the party who employs them agrees.

17359. Do they sometimes stay away for a whole year?—Yes

17360. Do they send money to their families?—Yes, they do.

17361. Have they any cows grazing?—Most of them have.

17362. To whom do they pay rent?—Some pay it to the crofter whose ground they are on, and some pay no rent at all.

17363. Where do they come from?—Most of them have grown up in the place.

17364. The natural increase of the population?—Yes, the most of them.

17365. You say you could cut peat on your old arable land?—Yes, I do.

17366. Are you cultivating new land now?—Yes.

17367. Did you improve it yourself?—Yes.

17368. Is there much more of that land capable of improvement?—That same was not capable of improvement. I did my best to improve it since I had it, and it is not fit to yield any good crop.

17369. But it yields better crops than your old land did?—Yes, of course, but not according to the expense.

17370. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have referred to several townships on the south side of the loch that have not an inch of road. How many families may be in that position and how many souls?—I think between 300 and 400 families.

17371. What would be the population altogether?—I believe it is 1690.

17372. Without a single inch of road?—Yes; they have not the benefit of an inch of road.

17373. Are they in arrears in those towns?—There are some arrears in the townships I represent.

17374. You have paid your own road money, although you have not a road?—Yes.

17375. *The Chairman.*—Has your rent been raised since Sir James Matheson came, except the 6s.?—Yes, it was raised in the days of making the lots by Munro Mackenzie.

17376. The land was revalued at that time?—Yes.

17377. Are you a merchant?—Yes, for a short time. I was a fisherman, and my health failed.

GEORGE MACKENZIE, Crofter and formerly Fisherman, Laxay (63)—examined.

17378. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Laxay?—About forty-three.

17379. Were you elected by those forty-three families?—Yes.

17380. How long ago?—About a fortnight ago.

17381. Did they meet of themselves, or was it the gentlemen from Stornoway who asked them to do so?—We took steps upon our own part before the Stornoway gentlemen came.

17382. Was any other gentleman among them?—No.

17383. They had no other meetings?—Yes, after the election.

17384. Who take part in those meetings?—Mr Murdoch took part.

17385. Was this paper which you present written before Mr Murdoch came?—It was written after that meeting, but the paper was prepared before the meeting.

17386. Does it represent, so far as you know, the wishes of the people?—Yes.—'Right Honourable Gentlemen, Being called upon to narrate 'grievances from Laxay, the township in which I reside, I herewith take the 'liberty to say, in the first place, that my age is 63 years; that I came to 'Laxay at the age of eight, along with my father and other ten crofters, 'who were driven away with all their belongings from their thriving and 'agreeable holding at Aline and Park, in which they knew nothing beyond 'prosperity and happiness. Park, which nature seemed to mean for man, 'with all its arable lands, hill pasture, and bays of the sea, offering grand 'opportunities of comfort, as a reward to human industry, was quite 'unprecedentedly relieved of the inhabitant population of twenty-eight 'townships. To the perpetrators of such deeds the discontentment and 'bitter feelings of the fugitive inhabitants appeared as nothing at all 'compared to the peculiar pleasure they enjoyed from the fact that now the 'sheep and the fleet-footed deer could graze on the meadows and on heaths 'impiously depopulated. Some of these men were evicted to America,

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'others scattered here and there at home, on small patches of land in the 'less-thought-of districts. A crofter having the misfortune of falling under 'the displeasure of factor or ground officer, however innocent the poor man 'may be, has not the ghost of a chance of getting along uninterrupted. As 'an illustration of this, I can say I knew of a person, a crofter in this 'village, who was compelled to abandon three different holdings and three 'different new houses, which he built in the sweat of his brow, on three 'consecutive years, without even a kind word in the way of aid or com-'pensation for his labour, time, and expenses. There is another man, still 'living here, who underwent a similar disagreeable process. The deer and 'sheep began their chase upon him at three or more different places at 'Uig, drove him over to Carloway, and he had been no sooner there than 'the land was considered too good for man, at least for such as crofter 'population, and so to make room for sheep the poor man was turned out, 'and the said individual had to make another painful flitting. When we 'came to Laxay, as already referred to, we found seven crofters there. 'Then it was divided into seventeen crofts, at the rent of £80. Soon, 'however, £10 more was added to the rent of the village, and five shillings 'road money and one shilling for hens, which is looked now upon as 'natural rent. There are now twenty-nine crofts, the latest of which is 'placed in our pasture way. The land is now almost entirely exhausted 'by continual ploughing; this, with high rent and taxes in some cases, 'together with subdividings of crofts, make the prospects of the crofter 'very dark and hopeless. Mr M'Kay, the present chamberlain, has 'committed very gross injustice upon a sister of my own, who with 'peculiar industry kept her croft in good order and paid rent regularly, 'cruelly turned her out of the croft six years ago, and would not accept 'its rent from her. She was blind and helpless; they never inquired 'after her. I had to take her to myself when the land she had was given 'to another man.* It is high time Parliament should make an investiga-'tion as to the cause or causes of grievances amongst Her Majesty's most 'loyal subjects in the Highlands, and especially in Lewis, where factor 'and ground officers pretend to be in absolute and arbitrary power, and 'labour hard to keep people in perpetual awe of their own importance (not 'of course denying them their proper places). We herewith suggest, 'respectfully, some of the remedies necessary for our well-being and 'comfort. To obtain the arable land and hill pasture, now under sheep 'and deer, at fair rents, fixity of tenure, and compensation for improve-'ment. Park, which keeps 11,000 sheep and an innumerable amount of 'deer, would of itself, if given to our enormous number of cottars and 'others, meet a vast deal of what is needed.'

17387. You state that you were eight years old when you came to Laxay, and now you are 63, so, I suppose, the evictions of which you speak took place fifty-five years ago?—Yes; about that time.

17388. Did all the evictions take place at that period, or have any evictions taken place subsequently?—There were other townships that were cleared since that time within the farm of Park, Oronsay, Cleater, Stiomara, and Shealdinish. A voice from the crowd says forty-five townships, but I am not prepared to say there were more than twenty-eight.

17389. But have there been any evictions since the date at which these twenty-eight townships were cleared fifty-five years ago?—I can speak to four townships that have been cleared since that time, and that are now included in the farm of Park.

17390. Do you know how many families were removed from these four townsbips?—I lived far away, and I cannot give accurate information upon that matter, but there are many here who can.

* See Appendix A, XL.

17391. Do you know where they were removed to?—Some of them came to Crossbost, some to Grimshader, and some to Balallan.

17392. Were these people removed to places where there were already crofters, or to lands in the possession of tacksmen?—Crossbost was under a tacksman at the time. Balallan was under crofters. Grimshader was also under crofters. One of them was a large farm at the time, and the other two were under crofters.

17393. Were most of the people removed to land that was under tack or to land held by the crofters?—The greater portion of them went to the place that formed the large farm—Crossbost.

17394. Was the land to which they were removed greater in extent than the land from which they were taken?—The land to which they were removed was less in extent.

17395. Are you sure that the land to which they went was less in extent than that from which they came?—Quite sure.

17396. As to the quality of the land, which do you consider was the best quality?—I was not of age to judge as a tenant myself at the time, but the land that they left was roomy enough. It yielded good crops, and there was plenty of room for good stock.

17397. Are you acquainted with the land to which they were removed?—Yes.

17398. What is the quality of that land?—The land is good enough of its kind, but then it is so thickly peopled that it cannot do good as it is used.

17399. How many years ago was this?—Off and on about forty years ago.

17400. Have there been any removals since then?—Yes, I can remember of some tenants coming in upon ourselves where I lived from the other side of the country, over in Carloway, a place called Dallmore.

17401. Has the population of Laxay increased of late years?—Yes.

17402. From what cause has that increase arisen?—The increase is due partly to the natural increase of the place and partly to people coming in from the outside.

17403. Have any come in recently from the outside?—Probably about ten years ago was the last.

17404. Where did they come from?—From Balallan.

17405. Do you know why they left Balallan?—The man was not able to get a place there.

17406. There was only one man?—Yes.

17407. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you give us the names of the twenty-eight townships that you referred to us as having been cleared out of Park, or as many as you can?—There was a place called Lemora that was cleared and afterwards reconstituted with crofters; Oronsay, Stiomara, Eesgin, Bunish, Cean-loch-Alich. It is only one that would be particularly acquainted in that district that could recite all the names. Seaforth, Stromas, Sgealadale. I can scarcely give any more; I was but young at the time. John Smith, a previous witness, could give almost the whole of them.

17408. Have you any idea of the number of families that would be in those twenty-eight townships? Would they amount to over a hundred?—I cannot tell; people were not so numerous then as they are now. They were spread over the place.

17409. Would you say there were fifty families?—I should think there would be more than that.

17410. *The Chairman.*—You mention a case of a crofter in this village, I presume the village of Laxay, who was compelled to abandon

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three different holdings and three different new houses, which he built in three consecutive years, without getting any compensation. What was the name of that crofter?—Alexander M'Leod.

17411. Where was he when he built the first of these houses?—In Seaforth.

17412. Does M'Leod live in the village where you are?—He is not living now.

17413. Do you know anything of the history of his case?—Yes, he was in Seaforth first.

17414. How long is it since he was in Seaforth?—He was building a new house every year of the three, and Seaforth was the first.

17415. Don't you know how long he was in Seaforth?—Then the next year he was sent to Ardentrean.

17416. Do you know whether he was sent by the factor, or did he flit there as a squatter?—Yes; and he gave him a place there for a year.

17417. You are certain that he got leave to build a house?—Yes, he got leave to build a house.

17418. From whom did you hear this?—From himself.

17419. And he said he had leave to build in these places?—Yes.

17420. You say you know of a second case of a man who underwent a similar process. What is the name of that man?—Angus Morrison.

17421. Where is he living now?—In Laxay.

17422. How long is it since he was driven from Uig?—He came to our parish when Chamberlain Mackenzie lotted the place.

17423. Had he a place of his own at Carloway?—Yes.

17424. Did he build his own house there?—It was in Dallmore at Carloway that he built it.

17425. Did he get no compensation for the house that he built at Dallmore?—I cannot tell anything of that, but I know that he came into our place in room of some of those who went to America. It was by an act of high-handedness that he was removed from Dallmore.

17426. The rest of the people of Dallmore went to America, did they not?—Some of them did; some did not.

17427. And those that did not go to America took the places of those in other townships who did go to America?—There were some who did not get places, but were sent to Stornoway and elsewhere.

17428. Was this paper read to the people of Laxay who sent you here?—Yes, to those who came to hear it.

17429. Who wrote it?—A lad belonging to the place wrote it.

17430. Was it the lad who composed it?—It was myself and others who composed it.

17431. Who put in the fine English words that are in it?—The lad himself is responsible for the English.

17432. Is he a teacher?—Yes, he was for a while a student.

17433. About this injury to your sister—is she a married woman?—No, she is weak and blind.

17434. Was she so when the croft was taken from her?—She was able to keep up the place. She had a servant.

17435. Was she in arrear?—No, she was not. The rent was sent back to her, and she was driven out. She was not a penny in arrear.

17436. What was the reason given for depriving her of the croft?—Nothing, except that she was now growing old, and that it would not be left with her any longer.

17437. Was her land being properly worked?—Yes, like her neighbours'.

MURDO M'MILLAN, Crofter and Fisherman, Gravir (59)—examined.

17438. *The Chairman.*—What number of families are there in the township of Gravir?—Sixty-eight.

17439. Paying rent?—Forty-four paying rent.

17440. Were you freely elected to represent those sixty-eight families?—Yes.

17441. Were they all present?—Yes.

17442. Who called them together?—Themselves.

17443. Did they meet before the Stornoway gentlemen came down to them?—The Stornoway gentlemen did not come down to see us at all, but we met immediately when we heard of the appointment of the Commission, and that delegates were to be chosen.

17444. You present a long paper. Did they have a meeting to arrange the substance of that paper?—Yes, it was the people themselves who prepared that statement.

17445. Was the statement read to the people?—Yes, the writer read it to them.

17446. How many were present when it was read?—Probably about forty.

17447. Who was the writer?—A next door neighbour of my own who is a good scholar, and has a brother who is a master of arts. He is at present acting as schoolmaster in the place.

17448. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you complaining, where you are, of want of land?—Well we may, and we have for many a long day. That is one of our great complaints.

17449. Did the people petition Lady Matheson for a small portion of park some time ago?—Three times they sent a petition.

17450. Were they upon one occasion more than twelve months before they got an answer?—Yes.

17451. Did they send a reminder to her at the end of last year?—Yes.

17452. Did they get an answer then?—Yes.

17453. What was the purport of the answer?—I cannot give the purport, but the letter itself can be produced.

17454. Was it published in the newspapers at the time?—I cannot tell. If there was no land, the circumstances could be borne; but when the land is there, and the people do not get it, it is a great grievance.

[At this stage the following correspondence was handed in to the Commission, and was read:—'22*nd Nov.* 1881.—Unto Lady Matheson, 'liferent proprietrix of the island of Lewis, residing at Lewis Castle.—'We, the undersigned fishermen, labourers, and royal naval reserve men 'residing in the villages of Gravir, Calbost, and Marric, in the parish of 'Lochs, Lewis, understanding that the present lease of the farm of Park, 'Lochs, expires at Whitsunday 1883, would take the liberty of approaching your Ladyship on the subject. At present we are either squatters, 'or hold small patches of land from other crofters in these villages, all of 'which are quite inadequate for the support of ourselves and families; and 'unless some means are devised to extend our holdings, to enable us to 'support our families, we must either have to emigrate or become a burden 'to the estate; and that, in the opinion of the undersigned, were a portion 'of the land of Park farm, which comprises the low land adjacent to the 'sea, let to crofters and fishermen, the doing so would not militate 'against or depreciate the farm for shooting, sporting, and other purposes. 'The undersigned would therefore most respectfully solicit that the 'portions of the land of Park farm, known as Orinsay and Steamerra, on

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'the north side of Lochshell, which were at one time let to tenants, be 'set aside in order to be let to the undersigned in such lots or parts, and 'at such reasonable rents, as may be arranged under the management of 'your chamberlain or other officers. Should the prayer of the petitioners 'be granted, they will bind themselves to conform to and obey all the 'rules and regulations of the estate, and submit to any new rules that may 'be considered necessary; and further, so far as they themselves are con-'cerned, they bind themselves to do all they can to protect the interests of 'the proprietrix and the sporting tenant or tenants occupying the farm of 'Park and adjacent lands. Copy petition signed by thirty-two fishermen.' '*Calbost, Lochs, by Stornoway, 23rd December* 1882.—Lady Matheson 'of the Lews, Honoured Lady, On behalf of a number of fishermen re-'siding at Calbost, &c. Lochs, I beg leave most respectfully to send you 'herewith copy of a petition addressed by us to your Ladyship through Mr 'Mackay, chamberlain of Lewis last January, and to which we had no reply. 'May I take the liberty of asking that you be so good as let the petition-'ers know your own views regarding the matters contained in the petition. '—I have the honour to be, your Ladyship's obedient servant, KENNETH 'NICOLSON.'* '*Park, Parish of Lochs, 5th December* 1882.—William 'M'Kay, Esq., chamberlain of Lewis, Sir, Understanding last year that 'Mr P. Sellars' lease of the Park farm was on the eve of expiring, we ad-'dressed to you a petition, signed by thirty-two inhabitants of this part of 'the parish, with reference to that subject. We have patiently waited for the 'last twelve months for your reply, having called for the same at your 'office repeatedly to no purpose. We most respectfully request a reply in 'writing, so that we may consider what steps should be taken so as to se-'cure our object. We expect that the prayer of said petition has been 'favourably received by Lady Matheson and all concerned, and that our 'very distressing condition, which is becoming more and more serious, may 'induce you to give us an opportunity of earning an honest livelihood in 'our native island, specially when such a suitable opening occurs. Waiting 'your reply, in name and on behalf of said petitioners, we respectfully 'remain your obedient servants, KENNETH NICOLSON, KENNETH M'KAY, 'KENNETH M'LEOD, JOHN M'LEOD, RODERICK M'KENZIE, ANGUS MOR-'RISON, DONALD M'KENZIE, DONALD KENNEDY, ANGUS M'PHAIL, &c.† 'To certain of the fishermen, labourers, and royal naval reserve men re-'siding in the villages of Gravir, Calbost, and Maravich, in the parish of 'Lochs, Lews.—Lady Matheson regrets that the above named respectable 'class of Lewis men should have been led to address her on a subject of 'such importance as that contained in their petition by adding to it a 'letter which causes her to set aside their request, as Lady Matheson is too 'devoted to her Queen and the laws of which Her Gracious Majesty is the 'representative, to listen for one moment to a petition accompanied by a 'threat from them to infringe the laws by which all are governed, and by 'the support of which, as individuals, the well-being of the land and its 'communities at large can alone be promoted.—13 *Cleveland Row, St 'James's, London, 3rd January* 1883.']

17455. *Mr Cameron.*—Where is the letter containing the threat referred to by Lady Matheson?—So far as I understand, all the papers are there, and you yourselves can judge whether there is a threatening letter among them. I myself am of belief the people have not threatened. I am convinced they uttered no threats; but it may be put in this way, that if they did not get their request they might persist in asking it.*

17456. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh* [*to Mr Mackay*].—Have you a copy of

* The original letter, of which the above is a mutilated copy, will be found in Appendix A., No. XXXIX.

† See Appendix A, XLI.

the letter that was sent with the original reply?—*Mr Mackay.* No, I never saw the reply from Lady Matheson.

17457. But the paper says the original petition was sent to you?—I got more than one petition, and I sent them to Lady Matheson.

17458. Do you recollect ever seeing any letter or paper in the form of a threat?—No. There was a petition presented to me at one time which I sent to Lady Matheson—a second petition—and I remarked to the people that Lady Matheson had refused it already, and it was in vain to apply, but that I would send the petition. They remarked that they would have it, should they lose their blood.

17459. Was that by the word of mouth?—By word of mouth.

17460. [*To Witness*]. Do you know what has become of that portion of farm of Park?—*Witness.* Roderick Martin, tenant of Crobeg, who was formerly in Balallan, has it.

17461. Do you know what rent he is paying?—Crobeg is £50, and he tells us that he pays £80 for the other.

17462. Were you and the other petitioners in a position to put sufficient stock upon the place?—Yes, quite capable of putting suitable stock upon it.

17463. Would you have given as good a rent as Mr Martin?—Yes, by getting the same area that he has. He has some islands along with a bit of mainland that we wanted.

17464. I understand you were one of those who were removed from Park?—No.

17465. Can you give us the names of townships in that place which were cleared?—I can give the east side portion.

17466. Was Lemora one of the townships cleared?—There are people there just now. I saw it cleared, but it was peopled again.

17467. Do you know Cean-tigh-Shealig? Was that one of the places cleared?—Yes.

17468. Geararisa?—Yes.

17469. Ailtinish?—Yes.

17470. Molchageal?—Yes.

17471. Brolum?—Yes.

17472. Ceau-Chrionaig?—Yes.

17473. Valamus-beg and Valamus-more?—Yes; I cannot give any more.

17474. Have you any idea how many families were in those townships at the time they were removed?—No, but I know there were a good many, but the people were not so thickly planted then as now.

17475. *The Chairman.*—Have you any further statement of grievances?—All I have to say is in the paper.

17476. Can you not state it shortly, as the paper is very long?—I can give you the substance of the paper in a few words. The sum and substance of it is—Give the land to the people on such terms as they can live by it, under just administration, and without any oppression in any shape or form. The people will never attain to the comfortable condition in which I saw them unless they will get some relief in that way, and cease from being crowded upon one another as they are at present. There is another matter. We are within a quarter of a mile of the march of the tacksmen that have now occupied the place for forty years, and they have destroyed our stock—not only what the two shepherds at the march have done with two dogs each, but we also require ourselves to send forth one lad from each township. Everybody upon the south side of the loch knows that as well as I do. We require to send forth a man and to pay him, and this shepherd ruled over him as his master, the object attained being the destruction of our stock. They have no stock. I remember that when the township had forty-two tenants it had more stock than it has now with sixty-eight.

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We occupy a headland of the sea, and we are faced continually by shepherds and their dogs at the march, and of all the men that ever was thrown in upon us the last comer is the greatest scourge of them all. I have got land myself thirty-four years ago, and I have not seen an old sheep of my own; they all come to death before their time. The shepherds upon one side, and our own engaged herds upon the other, destroy them between them. There is a remedy. The land in which we live is not without suitable land for cultivation and suitable tenants to occupy it. Some people may say that Park is not suitable for tenantry, but I remember the men that left it. They were old men when I was a boy, and to the day of their death they used to mourn their removal from Park, and wished to go back to it; so that if the quite sufficient land there is fairly distributed among the people, and wisely distributed, there is plenty room for them to make a comfortable living in their own land.

17477. You say the land is not without suitable land and suitable tenants to occupy it. Well, the island is not without money and suitable people to use it. Why don't you claim a share of that money?—That was not ordained by ourselves, but the land which God created was ordered by Himself.

17478. From that point of view, don't you think you are entitled to a share of the land without paying rent for it?—Well, we would not ask it in that way. We would ask that those who are the actual possessors of it should live by it as well as we.

17479. But on the footing on which you place it, what title have those people to it?—They have the right of proprietorship, and it is their duty to administer it wisely.

17480. *Mr Cameron.*—Who was the tenant whose shepherd annoyed you, and was master over your herd?—Mr Sellar. There was a very bad thing that was done in connection with his tenancy too. There was a shepherd he had for twenty years, and though he had 7000 sheep himself, after his service this shepherd would not get a foothold upon the whole of his farm, but had to be sent in upon our township. He paid rent to the proprietor, and we paid rent to the township as well. His master would not even give him the site of a house. I have seen another case in our township. The land was divided into three bits, and a man was taken in from a neighbouring township, Maravaig, and given the one-third of this lot, and a rent of 30s. was put upon it, which this man had to pay, and the old tenant with two-thirds paid the same as he had paid for the whole holding.

17481. I think you stated that the farm of Park keeps 7000 sheep?—Yes, there were 7000 sheep on it.

17482. Are you sure?—I am certain; the manager told me so.

17483. The paper handed in by the last witness states that Park keeps 11,000 sheep. Do you think that accurate?—The manager told me 7000, but I myself believe that the place could carry more sheep than that, only of course they would not have the same grazing accommodation that the tacksmen would allow by keeping only 7000.

17484. What do you mean by saying that the shepherds on the other side and your own shepherds destroyed the sheep? Why did your own shepherds destroy the sheep?—Our own herd was obliged to do what the other shepherds on the other side of the march told him.

17485. What was that?—To help them to drive the crofters' sheep over the march, and to worry them as they please.

17486. Did all crofters' sheep go on to the land of the tacksman?—Yes, and his sheep crossed over to ours.

17487. Is not that the custom in every sheep farm, that the sheep go

on both sides of the march?—Yes, but in some places they use the stock better than in other places.

17488. But were the sheep of the tacksman driven back to the tacksman's land?—Yes, they would go for them at shearing time and at smearing time. I have seen them on our ground for six months on end, but no doubt they would be driving them back. We did not drive them back as a rule, neither did our herd.

17489. Did you allow the tacksman's sheep to pasture on your crofts without driving them back, or endeavouring by remonstrance to make the tacksman take them back?—Yes, we did not drive them back, and we did not make a remonstrance. We sometimes helped the shepherd to get them, or the like of that.

17490. Do you seriously say that the crofters allowed their sheep to be hashed by the tacksman, and when they had the opportunity of retaliating upon the tacksman at their own march they did not do so?—That is quite the case. We did not retaliate in any way, and the people here can testify to that.

17491. You stated that they wish the land to be given to the people without oppression. Do you refer by the term 'oppression' to the present condition of things or to the past?—I speak of the past, so far as the administration of the estate is concerned; but there is no question whatever, we were oppressed by this last incoming tenant. It is the greatest oppression we ever had.

17492. In point of fact, the only oppression under which you suffer now is from your neighbour, the tacksman?—Well, it is the greatest oppression we have got.

17493. What is his name?—Roderick Martin. I include in this oppression of which I speak the excessive crowding in together of the people in small holdings.

17494. But that refers to a past time, and not to the present administration?—Yes, that is also a thing of past administration, and not of to-day.

RODERICK FINLAYSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Maravaig (55)—examined.

17495. *The Chairman.*—What number of families are there at Maravaig?—Twenty-three families have land, and there are twelve in addition without land.

17496. Did these freely choose you to come here to-day?—Yes.

17497. Were they all present at the election?—Yes, except some who were at sea.

17498. Did they tell you what to state here to-day?—Yes.

17499. Then will you state it?—The one thing we want is relief from the present overcrowding; and if land could be got to those who have it not, that would relieve in a great measure those who at present possess it. If things continue as they are, it is my firm belief that we are on the verge of extinction through poverty.

17500. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Where did the twelve cottars come from?—They all belong to the place except one.

17501. What rent do you pay?—I pay £2, 6s. of bare rent, and taxes in addition.

17502. What do you pay for poor rates and school rates?- There was a piece taken off my croft when the schoolhouse was being built, and I have not got an adjustment of rent since then, so I am unable to say what the school rate is.

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17503. Why was that piece taken off?—The schoolhouse was built on my croft.

17504. Don't you know what the school rate of the parish is?—No.

17505. What stock can you keep?—Two cows, a stirk, and five sheep.

17506. Is your lot about the same size as those of most of the crofters at Maravaig?—Mine is rather above the average. There are a few larger, but there are a great many smaller.

17507. What is the highest rent paid in the place?—About £3.

17508. What is the lowest that you know?—About £1.

17509. Are there any of the crofters that have no cows?—Yes, without cow or sheep.

17510. How many?—There is one man in that condition.

17511. Have the cottars any cow or other stock?—Yes.

17512. Have all of them a cow?—I cannot say for all of them, but some of them certainly have.

17513. Are they all fishermen, both crofters and cottars?—Yes.

17514. Do they fish at home about the coasts and lochs?—Yes.

17515. What sort of fishing?—Cod and ling, and sometimes herring.

17516. Are they at the Stornoway fishing just now?—Yes.

17517. Have they any of the big boats like the east coast ones?—Most of them have big boats.

17518. How many men in each boat?—Five, and sometimes six.

17519. Do those boats belong to themselves?—There are some of them that are secured by the curers, others are swallowed up in debt; some of them are their own property.

17520. What is the cost of a boat of that size?—£200.

17521. With all the nets?—Without the nets. It is the boat with mast and sail, but without nets.

17522. Is it with the Stornoway curers that you deal?—From everywhere.

17523. Is there any one in Maravaig who takes the fish from you?—No, but they sometimes have a curing station for cod and ling. They used to have a curing station for herring, but the herring have left the place and they have withdrawn the station.

17524. What do you get for the fish?—8d. and 10d. for a ling and 4d. and 6d. for a cod.

17525. Do they know what price they are to get for fish when they begin the fishing?—Yes, we make our bargain at that time.

17526. Are they obliged to take meal or anything else instead of money from the curer?—The man who is able to make his own purchases independently of the curer can go where he pleases to purchase, and the curer pays him in money.

17527. What do those curers charge for a boll of meal?—I have not bought a boll of meal from the curers myself for a long time, but what I hear said is that the meal that is purchased for 20s. is given out on credit for 24s., and sometimes as high as 28s.

17528. Do the curers charge the same price ready money as other shops do?—Yes, they sell it for the same price as a shop for ready money.

17529. When do you know the price for the meal?—Some know the price at the time they take away the meal, and some do not.

17530. When do you settle generally?—There are different times at which these settlements are made. For the herring fishing they make a settlement before they go to the east coast fishing, but for the cod and ling fishing they very often make a settlement when they return from the east coast fishing, about the autumn.

17531. Do you keep pass-books?—Many of them do. Many of them

keep no account either of what they sell or buy. They have entirely to trust to the curer, only their own memory assists them more or less.

17532. Do they sometimes complain of mistakes being made?—They sometimes do.

17533. *The Chairman.*—Is there any land near which you could get to extend your present holdings?—Nothing nearer than the Park.

17534. Does Park march with you?—No, the townships of both Gravir and Garivard come in between us and the march with Park.

17535. Then all you want is that the cottars shall be removed, and a place found for them?—Even if that were done, the place would not be comfortable unless some of the crofters were removed as well.

17536. How many of the crofters would you like to see removed?—It would make perhaps twelve families comfortable.

17537. Then twenty-three would have to be removed?—Yes, that is quite the case, before those who remained would be comfortably off.

17538. How long is it since the population there rose above twelve families?—My memory does not go so far back; there were six lots originally.

17539. Were there not more than twelve families living on the place at the time of the allotment?—It was made into twenty-three lots. I believe when it was in six lots there were two families to every lot, and I believe there were even more.

17540. How long is it since the school was built on the land taken from you?—About four years ago.

17541. Have you lost that piece of your land for four years without having got a settlement about the rent?—There have been four years, and there has not been a complete settlement of rent since that time.

17542. Was £2, 6s. the rent before any land was taken away for the schoolhouse?—Yes.

17543. Do you think there has been any reduction made since that time?—I heard I got 5s. of reduction. I heard that from my neighbour, who got 5s. of abatement for a bit that he lost in connection with the building of the schoolhouse.

17544. Did you never ask the factor whether you were to get any reduction?—Well, the chamberlain and myself differed about the crops. I sowed the place after the site was marked out, because I did not know when the schoolhouse would be built, and I went with the rent and paid it, and I cropped it again, and I did not know that I was to be disturbed in any way until I could remove the crops from the ground. Then they came and cut down my crop. Well, I brought two constables to look at it, and they valued the damage at £4, 10s. This was within the fence. Well, the chamberlain would pay me no portion of this amount. I then went to the contractor who built the school. I asked him if he would pay me. He said it was the chamberlain who ought to pay that amount, —was I so blind as to think it was his business to pay it,—that it was his duty to pay for a school site for them? That was the cause of the difference with respect to the rent.

17545. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—With regard to the surplus people here, are they willing to pay a fair rent if they got a piece of the Park?—I don't think that anybody would expect anything else than to pay a reasonable rent.

17546. Would they expect the proprietor to do anything additional in the way of buildings or otherwise, if they got suitable places?—So far as I judge, I don't know that they have much expectation of that from the proprietrix.

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17547. Would they be willing to do that at their own cost if they got suitable places at a moderate rent?—Yes, they would.

17548. *The Chairman.* What do you mean by a reasonable rent? Do you mean such a rent as the sheep farmer pays?—So far as I have heard of the rents that the sheep farmers pay, I believe that the crofters would be willing to pay an equal rent.

17549. Would they consider it a reasonable rent?—I can only speak for myself in that matter. My own view would be to value the land, and have a reasonable rent placed upon it by people appointed by both the proprietor and Government.

17550. *Mr Cameron.*—What would you do with all the high land in the interior of the farm in that event?—I don't think that the people would covet it. They would leave it with the deer as they had it of old.

17551. Do you think the tacksman would covet it either if the low land was taken away?—Well, the fact is that I was myself for a long time in this Park, and I saw that the sheep and deer herded there together, and the people were paying their own rent in proportion to the amount of ground they occupied. [Question repeated.] I don't think the tacksman would covet the place without having the up-lands as well as the low land.

17552. But would he take the up-land without the low land?—I cannot say, but my opinion is that he would.

17553. But you said just now that you would not covet it?—It is he who would covet the hills if only he got low land as well.

17554. *The Chairman.*—How would you propose to utilise the high land if the crofters only took the low land?—The former tenants of Park were very well off when they had the up-land as well as the low land. Aldinish, of which you have spoken, was a small township. There were only three tenants in it, and when they left it they took away twenty-three cows each out of it.

17555. Then do you think the crofters would be willing to take the up-lands as well as the low lands at the present rent?—That is a hard question, but if once they got upon their feet they would be glad to do so; I mean if they got assistance.

17556. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—As you were in Park, can you give us the names of some of the cleared townships that have not been already enumerated? Do you know Caolas-an-eilan?—Yes.

17557. Smosivig?—Yes.

17558. Bunachoreavig?—Yes.

17559. Bagh?—Yes.

17560. Cean-na-voir?—I don't know the west side.

17561. Can you give any more names?—Glencloich.

17562. Gilavicphaig?—Yes.

17563. Sgealadale-vaig?—Yes.

17564. Sgealadale-more?—Yes.

17565. Amdh-Dhoill-chaim?—Yes.

17566. Ceanmore?—Yes.

17567. Chulcbreag?—Yes.

17568. Can you give us any more that were cleared?—The shepherd with whom I was employed would name at least thirty.

17569. Have you any idea what number of people were removed?—I have no idea.

17570. Would there be 100?—I believe there would be, but I have no knowledge whatever of the west side.

17571. Is there any person living who knows?—No.

17572. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have said that you went to the contractor who built the school and asked him if he would pay you, and

that he said it was the chamberlain who ought to pay you, and that it was not his (the contractor's), business to do so?—Yes.

17573. Now we understand from that evidence that the contractor gave you no money?—He gave me no money, and he said it was not he who ought to supply me with money.

17574. Do you say distinctly that you got no money for the crop from the contractor who built the school?—Nothing.

KENNETH M'DONALD, Crofter and Merchant, Leurbost (45)—examined.

17575. *The Chairman.*—How many people are there in Leurbost?—113 families in addition to paupers.

17576. How many paying rent?—Sixty.

17577. Did the township of Leurbost freely elect you to come here?—Yes.

17578. Were they all present at the time of election?—They were not all there. I was not there myself when I was chosen at the first meeting, but there was a large meeting there, and there was a second meeting at which I was present, and those that were not at the first were at the second, so that they agreed upon me.

17579. Who called those meetings?—The Stornoway Association.

17580. Who made out the paper which you present to us?—I have written it myself.

17581. Is it on behalf of the township or on behalf of yourself?—The one portion of it concerns the affairs of the township, and the other concerns a matter of my own in which I was not dealt with in a Christian fashion.

17582. Was the part that concerns the township read to all the people of the township?—I read it to a large number of them. I did not get them all gathered to read it.

17583. How many would there be gathered to hear it?—It was not read at a meeting, but to every one that met me. Some came to see it.

17584. Was the substance of it agreed to at the first or second meeting? Yes, they agreed upon it, one making one statement and one another, and the substance of what they stated is in the paper. There were some statements they wished me to put in which are not there, for fear of making the paper too large.

17585. Were there any outside people at your meetings helping you?—No, not at the meetings that were held in connection with this matter.

17586. What other meetings do you refer to?—I saw Mr Murdoch one day addressing the people.

17587. Did Mr Murdoch's address influence the people much?—The minds of the people before the arrival of Mr Murdoch were stirred up in some way, but until they heard him they did not even understand their own minds on this question so well as they did afterwards.

17588. We have not time to take up the individual grievances of persons throughout the Highlands, but we will hear the paper which refers to the township.—'Leurbost, sixty crofts, 113 families. Five of these 'crofts put in to make room for sheep farms; increase about rents thirty 'years ago, five shillings per croft. When the Road Act was passed five 'shillings was added to rents and hen money. Double renting commenced 'in 1870; fine for Cleas-cro plantation fence 1871; fine for Arnish deer

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'forest fence 1873; double poor rate paid in 1868. Petty fines, such as 'fining a man for a big lip. For instance, widow Esa MacIver, No. 21 'Leurbost, receipts can be produced to prove that she paid double poor rate 'in 1868. Fined for Cleas-cro plantation fence in 1871; fined for Arnish 'deer forest fence in 1873. Two girls and three boys from Leurbost have 'been taken to the fiscal's office under the control of a policeman for 'taking oysters out of the ebb in 1864; mussels and wilkies were taxed. 'Those taxes were collected by Donald MacLeod, crofter constable, 'Balallan. Some years ago miles dyke fence was levelled to the ground 'by the ground officer. John Martin, No. 23 Leurbost, receipts can be 'produced to prove that he paid double poor rates in 1868, and fined for 'Arnish deer forest fence in 1873.—KENNETH MACDONALD, delegate for 'the Leurbost crofters.'

17589. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are these all the things that the Leurbost people have to complain of?—They have other causes of complaint, but these were what they consider peculiarly hard and oppressive.

17590. The complaints here refer to particular individuals. Were those named the only persons to whom those things were done that are complained of?—I believe that the whole people were dealt with in that way, but these cases that are instanced are next door neighbours of my own, and have submitted their receipts.

17591. The paper states that there are sixty crofts and 113 families, Are there fifty-three families of cottars?—Some of them may have a share of a croft, but they are cottars.

17592. Are there any full crofts?—I can point out two. Then there are three new crofts that are rather small, one of which I occupy myself.

17593. When was the township divided into these sixty crofts?—About thirty years ago. There were fifty-seven people before that, and three new ones were added then.

17594. Do the additional families consist entirely of people that were born in the place?—Four families were brought into the township in connection with clearances about the Park farm. There was another that was removed in order to make a sheep farm in another place,—that is five. All the rest belonged to the place.

17595. What other farm was that?—Croirgarry. There was no additional land added to that tack by the removal of this man. He was either a crofter or cottar upon that tack before.

17596. Have these 113 families all houses?—They have each separate dwellings. We did not count those that lived in family with their parents.

17597. Is it not prohibited on the estate to build more than one house upon a croft?—Yes, that has been the regulation upon the estate for a long time back.

17598. But all these houses were built in spite of the regulation?—I saw one built in spite of the regulation. I don't know whether others may have done it, but this man was called to account for it.

17599. What was done to him?—His father-in-law was summoned out of the land. Mr Munro made the peace by compelling him to pay £5, and Mr Munro threw down the house next year, and the constable broke the furniture and everything that was there and scattered it over the place.

17600. Your paper states that the double renting commenced in 1870. Does that mean double rent for the whole township?—The meaning is that there were people who were charged double rent in those years by Mr Munro, and the practice of double renting then continued till Mr Munro got the management of the estate.

17601. How long have you lived there?—I was born there.

17602. What was your rent when you first took house?—£1.

17603. Has it been raised?—No; it was only a piece of peat land that I got.

17604. What is the highest rent that is paid at Leurbost?—£5, 3s. or thereabouts.

17605. That is for a full croft?—Yes. There are two families upon it but I believe that is the rent of a full croft.

17606. Have all the crofters cows?—I think they have all a cow this year. There are some years when they lose a cow, and are without one.

17607. How many of them have more than one cow?—There may be some that have three.

17608. What rent will a man pay that has three cows?—About £3 or £4.

17609. Have they sheep also?—There are some without a sheep.

17610. Do they consider their rents too high?—Some say they are; some again reclaimed bog land, moor land, and the crofters complain that these people have these places too cheap; and, on the other hand, those men have expended labour and picks and spades upon the reclaimed lots.

17611. Is that peaty ground that they have reclaimed?—Partly, and partly rocky and stony places.

17612. Is it now producing crops to satisfy their expectations?—It never yields such good crop when it is cropped every year, but when you got clay to mix with the peat upon these lands, and plenty manure in addition, it gives good crops.

17613. *The Chairman.*—Has the summing of their stock any relation to the amount of their rent?—Yes, the rent is in proportion to the stock. The rent was fixed long ago, and it was then fixed in connection with a certain amount of stock that was allotted to that lot.

17614. Are those tenants who have reclaimed crofts for themselves, and who hold them at cheap rents of £1, entitled only to keep a small stock in proportion to that £1 of rent?—I heard nothing to the contrary, but we might keep as much stock as the man who has a full croft at £5, if only we can keep that stock alive.

17615. Is that the reason why the tenants complain that some are too cheaply rented?—No, I did not hear them so much complain of the stock at all. They complain that their own rent is too high.

17616. How many people were double rented in 1870?—I know one of my own knowledge. I know another whose rent was increased by £1. I am not aware of any fault he ever committed, and this £1 is kept on to the present day.

17617. Was this double rent in the nature of a fine, or was it meant to be continuous rent?—The case was this. The ground officer and the tenant differed, and the tenant said to the ground officer that he would bring the matter before Sir James Matheson. That was the cause of doubling his rent, and the double rent was exacted for eleven years.

17618. From 1870 to 1881?—It was imposed in 1869, and perhaps not paid till 1870, and was exacted till Mr Mackay got the management of the property.

17619. Will you give the name of the man you know who was double rented?—Murdo Mackenzie. He is now dead. It is another Mackenzie who has come to his place.

17620. Is he the man who had a receipt in his possession for the double rent?—It is the poor rates I spoke of when I spoke of receipts.

17621. You have not seen a receipt for a double rent?—No, but I know the thing was right.

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Kenneth M'Donald.

17622. Did you bring the receipt for the double poor rate here?—Yes, I have got two. [Produces receipts.]

17623. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There appears to be one year's poor rates in 1867, 1s. 11d., and in 1868, 4s. 4d.; but there are arrears of 2s. 2d., and the poor rates of the year are 2s. 2d. as well.

17624. *The Chairman.*—What do you pay as a tax for gathering whelks?—There was a constable exacting 2s. 2d. per bushel. I paid that myself for a Stornoway merchant.

17625 Who paid the 2s. 2d. per bushel?—The man who shipped them.

17626. Were the people here bound to deliver their whelks to that man?—Not at that time, but matters changed afterwards, so that they were obliged to give up their whelks to one man. I had to cease purchasing them. The constable came to me with a written document telling me I was obliged to give them up.

17627. When was that?—In Mr Munro's time.

17628. Had the tax ceased at that time?—I don't know what the practice was at the time I was made to cease purchasing them. The men used to say then that they farmed the shores for gathering whelks.

GEORGE MACRAE, Crofter and Fisherman, Grimshader (49)—examined.

George Macrae.

17629. *The Chairman.*—What is the number of families in Grimshader?—Twenty-two.

17630. Do they all pay rent?—No.

17631. How many?—Fifteen; seven do not.

17632. Were you freely elected by the twenty-two families in Grimshader?—Yes.

17633. What did they ask you to say for them?—Specially, and in the first place, the high rent of our township, the bad soil, and because of many things in connection with the management of the estate that bear hard upon us, we are really not able to live in our place. Our first complaint is that a forest fence was set up, and that we were deprived of our moorland pasture.

17634. Did you put up that fence yourselves?—No, it was not we who put it up, but we had to pay for it. Then at the time our present chamberlain entered upon office, we got the promise that we would get the marches removed to the old boundaries. Then we really thought that we had the right to this moorland pasture, and when we were driving our stock out to the grazings in order to give rest to the home grazings, the gamekeepers met us and prevented us. They told us we had not the right without their permission—that we were not allowed to send our cattle whenever we pleased out upon these pastures, unless they gave us permission first. It was we also that paid for the herd that kept the fence there. Last year we did not pay him at all. Now, there has been a fence herd appointed recently to look after our stock; but we have very little stock now. The gamekeepers and the herd have drowned and destroyed both cattle and sheep. In order to find out whether this was gamekeeper law or chamberlain law, I was appointed to meet the gamekeepers here about a month ago. The head gamekeeper upon the whole estate told me he had full authority to do whatever he pleased in the matter, to which I replied that if he had such authority he might use it ill as he had already done. About the 29th of last month, when we were in the very hurry of the spring work, we saw the

fire set to the moor and approaching our place, so the constables were asked to go away and inquire who were the authors of this matter. We understood it was the gamekeepers. The constables refused to go. One of them went to Stornoway about the matter. He did not see Mr Mackay, but he saw the head clerk in the office about the matter, and what the head clerk told him was that the gamekeepers, by a written authority obtained from the estate office, might burn heather wherever they pleased. All I can say about it is that it is a most oppressive and terrible thing for us, because this very place that was burned was the place that kept alive our cattle during the winter in snow time. The fire came into our peat moss near our crofts, and some portion of the township was afraid even of their houses.

17635. Are you not in the habit of burning heather for your own purposes?—We would be burning places that we did not think of much use, but the place that kept our cattle alive in winter, in snow time, we would never think of burning.

17636. Do you consider long heather good for cattle?—Well, we have no grass, and there is only soft, boggy moorland without grass, and we think that unless the sheep are able to crop the heather during snow time they cannot live at all.

17637. Did you lose much grazing when the forest fence was put up?—More than half of our moorland pasture was taken from us.

17638. When was that?—Nineteen years ago.

17639. Was the place where you were driving your cattle when you were stopped by gamekeepers beyond this fence?—Yes, it was beyond the dyke. The thing occurred the year that Mr Mackay led us to understand that our old rights would be restored to us, but we never tried to send them over since then.

17640. Is the fence so broken that you can drive your cattle through it?—The fence is in such a condition that you can trace it, and that is all, and the gamekeepers keep our cattle on this side of that fence yet.

17641. Did you ever go to Mr Mackay and complain about the conduct of the gamekeepers?—We could not very well understand the matter. We were sending the constables there, and what occurred between them and the chamberlain we could not very well make out, but we were dissatisfied with the whole matter, and that is the reason we make it a foremost complaint here to-day.

17642. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the gamekeeper you refer to a servant on the estate, or a servant of the tenant?—He is the head gamekeeper in the service of the estate.

17643. Is the piece of ground you were prevented going upon cleared of sheep?—No, our own stock are endeavouring always to get at it, but there are no other stock.

17644. Is it part of the forest?—Yes, it is a deer forest—under deer.

17645. Who was paying rent for the grazing of that park?—I think it is we who pay for it. It belongs to the old rights of the township. That grazing was ours of old.

17646. Are you aware whether it is customary or usual to burn heather in the forest?—Yes, I think it is quite customary.

17647. What is the date, as near as may be, when the burning came close to your doors?—The 28th and 29th of May this year.

17648. Do you know that by the law of Scotland there is a period for burning, after which heather cannot be burned?—Yes, we got that in some of the estate regulations, that nobody could burn heather except upon certain days.

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George Macrae.

17649. Then a regulation is put upon the tenant which is not obeyed by the proprietor?—We obey the regulation.

17650. Does the proprietor obey his own regulation?—It looks as if they did not, for what they told us was that they would burn it whenever they pleased.

17651. Are not the regulations of the estate mutually binding upon both proprietor and tenant? *Is that not your understanding?*—We would understand that, if really it was adhered to.

17652. What is the name of the gamekeeper who was overriding the estate regulations?—The servant of the head gamekeeper.

17653. What is the name of the head gamekeeper who overrides the estate regulations?—Duncan is his first name; I don't know his surname. He is a stranger here.

17654. How long has he been here?—Between five and ten years.

17655. Do you think this gamekeeper ever saw the estate regulations?—I cannot tell. We thought, at all events, that he broke a regulation that we ought to get the protection of.

17656. Why did you not go direct to the chamberlain?—I have told already what happened when I was deputed myself to see the head gamekeeper in connection with another matter about a month ago, and at that interview that man behaved himself as though he was over every person connected with the administration,—so much so that I said to him it was time he should be looked after anyhow—that I myself, as representative of other people, was worthy of respect in my own position as much as he was in his.

17657. *Mr Cameron.*—Has the grass come up since the burning of the heather?—There is some of the place where the grass will never grow. It was of no use except for keeping alive the stock during snow-time. It was heather, not grass.

17658. How tall was the heather?—Some of it might be two feet long.

17659. Do you consider heather two feet long good for cattle even in snow?—Yes, where it keeps a green top the cattle can live by it in places where they can get no grass.

17660. After the heather is burned and the grass comes up, is it not your experience that cattle and sheep go to that place much more quickly than before?—Yes, that is quite true; but we knew that this place would never grow grass.

17661. Has it had time to grow grass?—There was another spot on the same piece burned fifteen years ago, and not a blade of grass has grown on it since. It is a black bog where the cattle go into it, and where they are very much injured by it. The long heather grows upon the portion of the pasture bordering upon the sea.

17662. Do you think this heather was burned from ignorance or from spite on the part of the gamekeeper?—They should have come to us and asked if it was of any use to us before they burned it.

17663. When did Mr Mackay promise you this bit of land to which you complain the gamekeepers would not allow you to send your cattle?—At the time of the first rent paid to him as chamberlain.

17664. Did he make a verbal promise to you?—Yes; I was one of two to whom he made the promise. There were three. One spoke, and I was one of the other two.

17665. Have you ever reminded him of his promise since?—I did not remind him of it myself, and I cannot be perfectly certain whether the constables did so or not.

17666. Have you had an opportunity of reminding him?—Yes, we

had an opportunity of reminding him of it, but these gamekeepers told us they were acting under the authority of the estate.

17667. Did it not occur to you that they might be mistaken, and that it would have been better to apply to the chamberlain?—Well, so far as regards complaints we had to bring to the estate office, we were not more satisfied with the treatment we got there than the treatment we got from the gamekeepers. We have four miles to travel without an inch of a road. I was upon a wild winter night, after being turned back by wind and tide, watching a boat and the provisions in it which I was not able for want of a road to bring to my dwelling. We pay all the assessments that the people who have road advantages pay, and we consider this a great hardship.

17668. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you hear a previous delegate state that a number of townships were without a road?—Yes, I heard part of that, but the greater portion of his evidence was given before I came in.

17669. We have already had evidence to that effect?—And now the deer come in upon us, and we have to watch by night ever since the corn comes in the ear until it is stacked in our stackyard to prevent the deer from utterly destroying it.

17670. *The Chairman.*—How long is it since the deer began to do this?—They commenced about five years ago, and they are getting worse every year.

DONALD MACKENZIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Crossbost (68)—examined.

17671. *The Chairman.*—What is the number of families in Crossbost?—There are thirty-one paying rent, and twenty other families that pay no rent.

17672. Were you freely elected by the people of Crossbost?—Yes.

17673. Were they all together at your election?—Yes.

17674. Tenants and cottars?—Yes.

17675. What have you to say on the part of the people you represent?—'*Crossbost, June* 11, 1883.—Gentlemen, Our first complaint was to 'be driven away from Lochshell forty years ago. The fire was drowned 'on the hearths by the officers of the estate. They were fined £50 'sterling for not leaving the villages on the appointed day. The 'people of the two villages were put to a smaller village than either of 'the two they were driven from. When the people came to Crossbost 'they had a small village five miles from Crossbost for herding; it was 'taken from them, and rented to another man, and nothing taken off the 'rent of the village for it. Another piece of ground was taken from us 'at the end of the village, rented for £5, 10s. and nothing taken off the 'rent of the village for that. Four new crofters were set at the end of 'the village, and paying rent to the estate, and nothing taken off the rent 'of the village.—Delegates for Crossbost, ALEXANDER MACKENZIE and 'DONALD MACKENZIE.'

17676. When you came from Lochshell forty years ago, how many were put into Crossbost?—Twenty-seven families.

17677. What was the rent of those twenty-seven?—The rent of the township was £50 before we came to it. There was only one man there before we came to it.

17678. And he paid £50 for it?—The rent was raised to £60 when we got it.

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Donald Mackenzie.

17679. Was that township very much smaller than the places you left?—Yes; none of it had ever been cultivated except a little spot in the middle, and there was only one house in the township when we came to it.

17680. What is the rent now of the whole township?—So far as I remember, it is £88.

17681. That includes the men who are mentioned in this paper, and who were thrown in upon the others and no rent taken off for them?—Yes.

17682. So that the place which one man had forty years ago for £50 is now divided among thirty-one tenants, and they pay £88 for it?—If I recollect rightly, that is so.

17683. The marches of the township are not changed?—No; a great deal of the rights of the township have been taken from us.

17684. You have not so much land now as the man who paid £50 had?—We have not.

17685. Were you yourself one of those who came from Lochshell?—Yes.

17686. What kind of place had you there?—A very good place. We had plenty cattle and sheep there, but it did not last long.

17687. Had you yourself a croft at that time, or had your father a croft?—I was in my father's house at the time.

17688. What was his croft rented at?—About 50s.

17689. What stock had he when you left it?—Four milk cows, several young beasts, and about fifty sheep.

17690. And you kept the whole of that stock in those days for £2, 10s. of rent?—Yes. The place was good. There was a good outrun or hack. I cannot keep one cow to-day, unless I pay for her food out of my pocket.

17691. What is your rent?—I paid 30s. formerly, and it is now as high as £2, 6s. including taxes.

17692. What stock are you allowed to keep upon your croft?—A cow with her followers for every £1 of rent is the summing.

17693. How many sheep are you allowed to keep?—Five or six or seven per £1 of rent.

17694. How many families do you think this place of Crossbost might be able to keep?—I think twenty families, and all its former rights should be restored, so that we could make something of a living out of it.

17695. Would it be easy to restore its former rights?—I don't know. They know that themselves.

17696. Would it be easy to restore the march if the proprietor were willing to do so?—Yes.

17697. How far is the place you left forty years ago from the place you are in now?—A very long way off. There is a ferry across the loch from here, and five miles to walk afterwards.

17698. Does it now form part of the farm of Park?—Yes.

17699. Who has it now?—Roderick Martin. It is part of the farm of Orousay.

17700. Would you like to get that back?—That is what we desire.

17701. If you got a good croft there, or at any other part of the farm of Park, would you be able to put stock upon it?—Yes, we would certainly try to do so.

17702. Are there many in your place that would do the same thing?—Yes; the place would soon stock itself if there were a few put upon it.

17703. If you are able to stock a new place, why do you not keep the

whole stock upon the place you have?—What is the good of keeping stock when if I have only one cow I have to buy food for it? There are two farms closing in upon us at the back, and we are shut in like sheep in a fank.

RODERICK ROSS, Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Edinburgh (42)—examined.

17704. *The Chairman.*—You are medical officer of the parish of Lochs?—Yes.

17705. How long have you been there?—Eight years next September.

17706. You are a native of the Lewis?—Yes, born in this township of Keose.

17707. You have heard what has been going on to-day, and you know the object of this Commission?—Yes.

17708. Can you make any statement which will assist the Commission?—I beg to submit a short statement as to my opinion of the condition of the people generally, and then I would state some disabilities which I think they are labouring under, and point out a few of the remedies that would be suitable to meet these. It is entirely my own opinion I give on any matter, and I am responsible for it. In any investigation into the condition of the population of the Highlands and Islands, the first point that has to be noted is that the people are in a state of transition as regards their habits, their education, and language. The people of the Long Island especially are in this condition. This should account for and explain many peculiarities and apparent deficiencies in the case of the people. It should also be an excuse for many shortcomings, whereas it is frequently made the occasion of bitter sarcasm and animadversion by journalists and others who pretend to enlighten the public, not with the truth, but with the hasty and imperfect impressions which superficial information convey. That a people be primitive and in a certain sense behind the age as regards their habits, customs, dwellings, and language, is certainly no excuse for despising and denouncing them, and even for disdainfully disowning them as if they belonged to an inferior and unimprovable race. Do the proud lords and ladies of England disown their relationship with their rude forefathers, because they lived in rooms and houses compared with which the present Lewisman's house is infinitely superior? Are they not proud to be named after the Saxon braves who actually littered their dwellings and sitting rooms in exactly the same fashion that a Lewisman litters his byre, laying on a fresh layer of straw each morning, and never think of removing the accumulation on account of its odours or its unsightliness, but only when it becomes inconvenient by its encroachment on the owner's space? In short, it is no reason for despising and abusing the poor inhabitants of these islands that they are somewhat primitive and simple in their ways and surroundings; it is rather a reason to sympathise with them and help them to improve their condition. In some things they are not behind, but even far ahead of the age. In the new Statistical Account of Scotland we find the Rev. Messrs M'Rae of Barvas and Finlayson of Lochs, men who were not natives, and so could not be suspected of partiality, and men whose power of observation and veracity could not be gainsaid, testify of the people of Lewis as follows:—'They are remarkable for 'sobriety and hospitality in their own sphere—possess vivacity of intellect, 'acuteness, and sagacity, and are tainted with few vices except what

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'poverty in similar circumstances begets. They are generally tolerably well 'versed in the Scriptures, and afford several examples of uprightness and 'piety. In their domestic economy they are frugal and moderate beyond 'conception; their simple cottages are abodes of happiness and content-'ment.' Of the people of this parish it is said—'They are sober, 'intelligent, quiet, tractable, and very hospitable, sensible of their 'ignorance, and eager to be instructed in temporal as well as in spiritual 'matters, and their good behaviour is such as might put many individuals 'more favoured than they are to the blush.' These statements were made about half a century ago, and an intimate and life-long acquaintance with the people enables me not only to repeat such evidence without any qualification, but to emphasise it as being equally true of the people at the present time. Indeed, there is abundance of evidence that they are not deficient in intellectual, moral, or physical qualities. Our public teachers, many of whom have taught in various parts of Scotland and England, invariably tell me that the Lewis children are the most docile and tractable they ever met. Only a few years ago a poor crofter's widow's son carried off the Senior Greek medal in Edinburgh, over a nephew of one of the best classical scholars in Edinburgh, who was especially coached by his uncle. Many other instances might be given of their intellectual powers. As regards the morality of the people, the return of our registrar as well as the records of our sheriff court show a highly satisfactory state of matters. Their hospitality is very great. Anything approaching serious crime has not been heard of at Lochs for years—a locked house door is rare. We have a police officer among us, of course. The commissioners, especially our Lord-Lieutenant, should be informed how he was appointed, and how he gets on since his appointment. A mainland farmer took a lease of a farm here once upon a time. I suppose some wag got him to believe that it would not be safe for him to trust himself or his sheep at Lochs without the protection of the gentleman in blue. So he took a novel and a highly ingenious method of getting one appointed. He got all the old stories he could collect about the plundering days of the good old Rob Roy times, when 'each one took who could,' and made out clearly to his own satisfaction and, a greater pity, to that of the county commissioners, that the Lewis was a dreadful place, and that Lochs especially was unsafe, so he got his policeman, but he has not got his thieves, and for all the officer gets to do here he might be far more beneficially employed for society taking observations on the top of Ben Nevis. As regards the physical qualities of the people, I am in a position to say that those are of a very high order. We can show in Lewis to-day a set of young men who cannot be surpassed on sea or land for activity, muscular power, courage, and powers of endurance—with, best of all, those qualities combined with a most orderly and well-behaved disposition. These people have been, and are, accused of indolence and want of spirit. I never heard a Lewis woman blamed on the same score even by a correspondent to the *Scotsman*. These women can carry a creel on their backs which would make many a Lowlander's knees bend under him. And besides they don't do it as a matter of hardship—they do it, as a rule, with a smile on their faces, or are very ready to it at least, and for fear of being accused of indolence by such snobs as the men we know, while carrying such burdens they at the same time ply their knitting wires as vigorously as if sitting on an ottoman. Well, it would be strange if such women were the mothers of lazy sons. So strange would the phenomenon be, that any person who could prove its reality deserves a high place among our modern discoverers. It ought to immortalise the *Scotsman* or 'any other man' were he to prove such an

anomaly—such a freak of nature. Of course, we all know that an irresponsible correspondent, nay, a prejudiced scribbler, can assert any nonsense that may please himself. Would that those fellows had even one day of the poor crofter's spring work, or one day or night of our fisherman's toil and dangers on our stormy shores! We would afterwards hear less of such nonsense. There were factors and others in Lewis who thought that they could get nothing out of Lewismen, and so they imported shepherds, drain-workers, ploughmen, and all sorts, to show how they could work. Well, what was the result? We had men here who could smear ten head of sheep a day, and who could fleece as many more above the best shepherd that could be imported. In drain-making we could find men who would take the heels of the readiest mattock worker if coming behind him. And as long as prizes were given for ploughing, we had a Lewisman who would beat the best of them. Now that these people are hardly used, and at times sorely pressed, cannot be concealed, and any means which could be devised to improve their condition would be welcomed as a great boon by themselves, and ought to be sought out and applied immediately by the Government of the country. I will now state the grievances of the people. The first is the overcrowding and subdivision of lots. In explanation of this, I may be allowed to say that this is the result of the natural growth of the population, and also the natural reluctance to remove from home, particularly in the case of an uneducated people who cannot talk English, and who do not like to go abroad that way, and also I must say that it has been partly due to the indulgence and kind-heartedness of our lady proprietor. Now the remedy I would propose for that overcrowding, is to relieve the pressure by enlarging the holdings to from five to ten acres of arable land, with leave to cultivate behind the townships, handing over the most suitable of the present sheep farms to crofters, erecting fishing villages, and offering facilities for emigration to any families anxious to emigrate. In connection with this, my plan would be that each crofter should have from five to ten acres to cultivate, and that certain sheep farms, when their leases expire, such as Park, in which there has been a splendid opportunity for relieving the congestion of population in this parish,—the low-lying part which does not interfere with the real forest,—should be given to these people, and I think that Lady Matheson has lost a splendid opportunity of doing good to her tenantry, and of doing her own family a credit, by refusing to let these poor men have it, and giving it to small tacksmen. Now, I would in such a case as this, be inclined to erect some pure fishing villages,—for instance at Ness, on the Carloway side, and in Lochs, and I would not have these to be crofters at all; I would give them just an acre to cultivate, and let them follow the fishing wherever it is to be found. I would strictly enforce the avoidance of subdividing any of these crofts. The second grievance is defective laws and management. This is certainly a grievance as regards the Highlands, and as regards this island in particular. There is a complaint of the uncertainty of the tenure of the crofters' possessions, and no doubt there have been cases of capricious removal. I know myself,—if I were allowed to enter into particulars,—I know the case of one man who at the last letting, about thirty years ago, got a piece of moss land, and cultivated and trenched it, and he was rewarded on account of his exertion by receiving a prize from Sir James. He was brought with some others to the castle of Stornoway, and was there treated to his dinner, and got some prizes in money, and in clothing as well. In the course of a few years his neighbours got envious of the good crop he was raising, and were making complaints about him. Unfortunately, these complaints were listened to, and the result was that the man was summoned out of his holding; and,

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to make a long story short, before the system of persecution ended, this man got five summonses, and his family and he had to pay 30s. for each summons he got, and besides that his rent was raised and part of his original croft taken off. That is a case that occurred in my own neighbourhood. I know other cases in which, in the case of outgoing tenants, the incoming tenants had, and were glad to pay the arrears of their predecessor. I know one case where it was £8, another £10, another £12, and another where it was as high as £16. These things, I am happy to say, did not happen since Mr Mackay became factor; but that they should happen under any factor in this nineteenth century is a disgrace not only to our laws but to our country. Of course, the remedy for these things is to give leases to the people, to be granted on favourable conditions, for twenty years, with a break at the tenth year, compensation to be insured, security to the sitting tenant against capricious removal at the termination of his lease, disputes to be submitted to arbitration or a special court, land to be valued by competent parties, and its rent fixed and revised by them. The third grievance is the defective harbour accommodation and defective traffic facilities. It is abundantly evident that in Lewis we have much need of harbours to accommodate our fishing boats, particularly on the more exposed parts of the coast, but not in this parish fortunately; and another thing we should have is roads to be constructed between these harbours and these towns,—if possible to lay down a track or a tram road, so that the fish could be taken fresh to town and forwarded to the market; and I think this is a thing that Government ought to do,—that is, to take an interest in the erection of these harbours and in the construction of roads between these harbours and the town. The fourth grievance is destructive fishing—fishing herring on this coast when the herring are in an immature condition, and when they are spawning. This has done a great deal of damage to this parish. I remember seven years ago one township in which there were six herring fishing stations, and now there is not a single fishing station in that village. The fishing is quite destroyed, and I have no doubt it is entirely owing to fishing at improper seasons. I would apply the same remedy to that which has been already applied to the protection of wild birds, and also to the protection of salmon and other fish out of condition at spawning season. The remedy is a close time, preventing the leaving of herring nets in the sea during daylight, and fishing while the fish are out of condition. The fifth thing I would mention as a grievance, is the unsuitable militia head-quarters. I would appeal to the Lord-Lieutenant of our county to look into this. We have a large number of our young lads, members of the militia, and they go to Fort-George to be drilled. They leave Stornoway by steamer, and proceed by rail from Strome Ferry, and unfortunately they behave very badly. These are young lads mostly from seventeen to eighteen years of age, and when they go away they think the proper thing is to have a spree, and behave as riotously and badly as possible. Worse than that, at Fort-George they come in contact, not with young lads like themselves, but with a great many of the lowest characters about the town, and from these they learn habits and vices which cling to them all their lives, and have been instrumental, not only in ruining the health of many of them, but in leading them into habits that they never get clear of. We were in the same position with regard to our own reserve men some years ago. They used to drill at Greenock, and the scenes witnessed in connection with the travelling of these reserve men became at last a public nuisance, and threatened to be very injurious. Now we have our reserve men drilled at Stornoway, and their order and behaviour there are remarkable. A very large number of them join the Temperance Society, and they behave very well; and we know, if our militia men were drilled in this country, they

would get to be a splendid regiment of Long Islanders, and we know that they would behave better, and that they would not learn a great amount of the vices that they learn at Fort-George. Another grievance and complaint in connection with this, as I may state from my own experience, is that there is not a year since I became medical officer of this parish, but these militia men have imported some epidemic disease into the place, necessitating, in several cases, the closing of our schools, and putting the ratepayers to considerable loss, besides causing the death of a great many children. Last year they brought two epidemics into Lewis—measles and scarlatina. Another grievance is our crushing taxation. The taxation here is simply crushing. When it comes to be a matter of about one-fourth of our rental for taxation, every body knows that must press hardly upon the people. Our poor rates last year were 3s. 10d. in the pound, our school rates 4s. 2d., and road money 1s.—that is, 9s., half payable by tenants and half by occupiers. There is one grievance we have in connection with our schools, and that is that we were compelled to build a large number of schools in this parish—about twelve, I think—and that we were compelled to build them in a certain fashion, which entailed a great deal of expense, and entailed upon us heavy debt. Our School Board pays over £300 a year in interest on the loans we had to borrow to erect these schools, and that is a tremendous burden on our ratepayers, and a burden that will continue, and what we would ask our members of Parliament, and particularly Lochiel, who had a clause with his name added to the Educational Bill, is that they would endeavour to get another clause, and that Government should relieve us of this annual debt; that is, what we pay for the loans, and for the interest on the loans. Another thing I would like to see is the abolition of the Poor Laws in this part of the world. They are quite unnecessary in such a place as Lewis. They involve the people in debt; and though I happen to be an official connected with the Parochial Board, still I would approve of their being abolished. The people are very heavily taxed to keep up their poor, and the poor only get a small share of it. Another thing I would mention is this, that there is among us a deep and growing spirit of uneasiness, discontentment, and fretfulness, owing to the way things are managed among us. There are several causes for this. I cannot but observe it. I take nothing to do with it personally. I wish to abstain from it, and discourage it as far as possible, but I cannot close my eyes to its existence, and I have no doubt it is a thing that will continue increasing till there is some remedy provided, and it is a thing I would seriously ask proprietors and our legislators not to delay in grappling with, for if the people don't get more consideration than they have got hitherto, there cannot be any doubt that worse will come of it. It has been asked here to-day why don't the people claim their share of the money in the island as they claim their share of the land of the island? The answer is simple and easy; they have not an equal right to the one that they have to the other. It may be inquired, who got the land? Was it the people or the proprietors that got the land? And with regard to the Lewis, it may be asked especially how did the Mackenzies of Seaforth acquire their right to the Lewis? That is a point which ought to be investigated, which will be investigated, and which in the agitation that is going on is sure to come up. We know very well how they got the Lewis. We know they got it by a process that cannot bear investigation, and cannot bear daylight; and we know the right they got to the Lewis is certainly more questionable than the right the Lewismen have to their share of it.

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KEOSE.

Rev. Ewan Campbell.

Rev. EWAN CAMPBELL (67)—examined.

17709. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been minister of this parish?—Twelve years. I have been nineteen years in this island.

17710. Will you state what you have to say?—I understand, gentlemen, your Commission to the Highlands is to investigate the condition of the crofters and their grievances, and to consider or suggest the remedy that is applicable to these grievances. To make my remarks as brief as possible, I shall confine myself to bare facts, to what I conceive to be relevant. There is not the least doubt that all the townships in this parish, as elsewhere, are very much crowded,—overcrowded indeed, and the question that would arise in connection with this crowding would be this, Who was instrumental in crowding these townships? It would be very wrong to throw the blame upon the proprietor. No doubt, the proprietor was a party to some of that crowding. But the people themselves—the crofters—are equally to blame, for here at Keose for instance, a few years ago, when the place was lotted, and every one got a croft, there were very few,—there was only one on each croft. As the sons grew up, as soon as they were out of the shell, they immediately married, and nothing would do but to settle down on a croft along with their parents. When you look at the state of things, and ask whether these crofts are overrented, I say they are not. The people have very severe grievances in the position in which they are placed; but the proprietor is not to blame in everything, neither is the proprietor, you would say, to suffer altogether in removing these grievances? The first remedy is to thin them out, but how are you going to do it? What is the surface you have on which to spread this population? I have read in the papers, and heard to-day, that there are plenty lands, plenty, but what are they? There is not a single acre of proper arable ground in the whole parish of Lochs. I know what arable land is perfectly well, and the extent of the area of the parish of Lochs is 144,700 acres. There are 6000 people in Lochs, and the last decade produced an increase of 1000; and if every decade goes on at the rate of 1000, I don't know how it will do. Where are you to stop? But to go back to the proposition of dividing the land among them. Give them twenty-four acres each, and every inch of these 144,000 acres will be occupied,—the hill tops, the bogs, and everything. Now you have come across here from Stornoway, and you have seen the extent of ground that is spread out there. Allot that extent of ground into lots. It would be far better and far more merciful towards those poor people to send for the 42nd, to shoot every mother's son of them that would be put there. As I said before, there is not a single acre of arable ground here, and the mystery is how in the world do people get any crop at all. It is merely spade culture after all, in ground that they till with a great deal of labour, and to heap up the ground with these lazy beds; and what have you in the insterstices? Nothing but the hardest gravel and rock. Speaking about draining and what not, if any one went there with a pickaxe, I would like to see him making any speed or benefiting himself. When Sir James was making a field opposite the Castle there, it cost him about £30 an acre to drain and trench it, and what is the result? There is not as much subsoil as you would lift up in your hand, as much as would fill a bucket. You have plenty peat over there. On most of that ground they would have perhaps eighteen or nineteen feet of depth in the moss; and though there was only one foot here, where there is a rock, you had only to go two feet to the other side, and you would go down fifteen or sixteen feet before you got to the bottom. This

being the case, why do people speak about the extent of land? No doubt, the people would require some extent of land, but where can they get it? They have extent of land in these bogs. Send them out in the summer time to graze their cattle, but what grazing have you in the winter? I have, I suppose, about 800 acres of a glebe here, and it is almost surrounded with water. My neighbours will not trouble me, and there is not a year but I lose a fifth or a sixth of the stock. Without going into my own losses, why, the place will not support a stock.

17711. What would you propose by way of remedy in the present state of things?—In the first place, what I would propose is to remove these cottars and give them what there is; and to allow these people to extend their tillage beyond their crofts into the moor. The people of Leurbost came to me five years ago, and I took down their numbers and names so as to represent their grievances to Mr Hugh Matheson. I did so, and stated them *seriatim*, and had a letter from Mr Matheson to the effect that he was very sorry, and that he would make every inquiry. The people there begun to ask a dyke just about their own holdings to preserve their ground, and that dyke was knocked down. They came to me, and I told them to put it up again. I wrote to the ground officer to put it up as quickly as possible, otherwise I would advise them to take ulterior steps, for I explained to Mr Hugh Matheson the way in which these farms were held by the people. They held most of them as commonty, and the rest as a croft, and hence they should be allowed to till their moor. Now they have not been allowed to till their moor. They were prevented from tilling it. There are the Leurbost and Crossbost people, and all those there,—I would allow them to till the moor so far as they can, going out upon their own common, for this is a benefit to the proprietor as well as to themselves; and try what other remedy you can think of to provide for these cottars. There is no doubt that, in making these farms, the people were hardly dealt with, and I have very little doubt it would have been more judicious to have given these poor people of Gravir that place they petitioned for and which was refused.

17712. And you think the whole farm of Park might have been given to the people of this parish with advantage?—Perhaps it would not be given with advantage to the proprietor,—far from it; and the whole of the farm of Park could not be so utilised by the people in this parish if they would have to pay the rent that is paid for it. And the farm of Park has not been paying had it not been for the deer that are on it, and Mr Sellar removed his young stock every winter. Still I would suggest that these poor people should be provided with a portion of that farm *ex adverso* of their own holdings.

JOHN SMITH—re-examined.

17713. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know how many families were removed from Park at different times?—Yes, 108.

17714. What would the average number of each family be?—Six persons.

[ADJOURNED.]

HARRIS.

TARBERT.

TARBERT, HARRIS, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 1883.

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

NORMAN M'DONALD, Crofter and Fisherman, Island of Scarp (50)—examined.

Norman M'Donald.

17715. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Scarp?—About forty.

17716. Do they all hold land?—There are sixteen names entered in the rent roll, and they have it split up into patches among one another, so that it has reduced them all to poverty.

17717. Have the whole of the forty some of these patches?—No, there are some of them without even a patch.

17718. Were you delegated to come here by these forty families?—Yes, by the whole of them.

17719. You have a paper to present on behalf of the people of Scarp?—Yes.

17720. Who put the paper together?—Some of the people of the place, to explain the condition of them.

17721. Was it read to the whole of them?—It was read in the presence of those who were connected with its composition.

17722. Not in the presence of all?—All the people were not about when it was being read.

17723. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Your paper is as follows:—'*Statements of the Scarp people.*—In the time of our forefathers we had several privileges which are now deprived from us, and for the want of which our present grievances greatly tend. The isle of Scarp was formerly in the possession of eight farmers, who could sustain themselves with comfort. They were allowed a wide range of hill pasture on the mainland opposite. Thither they sent their cattle in summer, and getting the island thus clear managed to bring most of the arable land under cultivation. About sixty years previous to this, thirteen villages, extending from the head of Loch Resort, and scattered along the west coast to Bunamhuin Eadara, were cleared of their inhabitants, and taken possession of by a certain tacksman, named Alexander Macrae. He deprived us of the hill pasture, then, setting apart a piece of boggy moor across the Harris border, to which heifers only were to be sent. When Lord Dunmore owned North Harris, he divided Scarp, seventeen years since, into sixteen crofts, which were further divided by the people among their families and friends. The number of people has greatly increased. About 200 souls live on the isle to-day. There are forty families. This increase, along with the consequent overcrowding on one another, the scantiness of land, and its inadequacy to maintain the people, have mostly led to the present poor circumstances. It may be said, for all the land yields, that the people wholly depend on the sea,

'and that in a manner specially precarious, owing to the rough coasts. We 'pay taxes for highway and doctor along with school and poor rates. The 'rent added to this comes up to £6, which we think too high. A distance 'of moor six miles long lies between this and Amhuinsuidhe, without any 'road made through it. We all bear testimony to the exceeding generosity 'of Sir Edward towards the people of the island. In our opinion, the best 'remedy is to get more land, and that most of the people be transferred 'from the island to work thereon.' Who has now got the land that was taken from the people by a man of the name of Alexander Macrae?—Sir Edward Scott has it.

17724. Is it a part of the forest?—Yes, it is a part of the forest now.

17725. Has the loss of that land been very prejudicial to the island ever since?—Undoubtedly it was. During the time of my ancestors, when the people had that pasture, they were in the habit of sending their horses and their cattle and sheep across to these summer grazings during the whole time the seed was in the ground. They had horses at the time.

17726. Was any compensation or reduction of rent given for the reduction of these pastures?—No, there was no abatement of rent; and at the present day it is higher than it was in the time of my ancestors.

17727. It is stated that the average rent at the present time is about £6, with taxes. What was the average rent when it was under the original eight crofters?—I know the rent my father paid. He did not pay direct to the proprietor, but to the tacksman of the place. He paid £3, 10s. to the tacksman for the land that now I pay for, but there were no taxes at that time as there are now.

17728. What tacksman are you referring to, to whom your father paid rent?—Alexander Macrae, Huishinish.

17729. You state in your paper, that thirteen small villages were all cleared of inhabitants and taken possession of. Who is in possession of the land of these thirteen small villages that are referred to?—It is all part of the forest now.

17730. You say that the people want more land. Have they any idea where they would like to get the land for the surplus population?—There is plenty of land vacant through the country,—forest land,—and the best part of the land.

17731. Will you indicate any place by a name that would be the most suitable for them?—I consider each of these thirteen townships about equally suitable, where people might make a comfortable livelihood out of it through the labour of their own hands.

17732. Is there a considerable part of those thirteen townships' land that was at one time under cultivation?—Yes there was arable land there. If these thirteen or fourteen townships were peopled by crofters, it would make forty families quite comfortable, but it is all in forest now.

17733. You speak of the distance of forest—six miles long—lying beyond this and island Suay, without any road made through it. What object have you in going to island Suay? Is it the first place where you strike the road?—We have to take all our provisions during the winter from this place here in Tarbert, and the sea is wild, and very often we have to turn into Loch Losebay through stress of weather, and then to carry these provisions upon our backs through the moor to the sound of Scarp, and very often at the sound of Scarp we are not able to cross, but have to remain there. We complain of the want of a road. At the present the road extends as far as island Suay; and then there are six miles of moor from that to the sound of Scarp, and if there was a road there it would be even upon our backs, far easier to carry our provisions.

17734. Where does the doctor reside?—At Tarbert.

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TARBERT.

Norman M'Donald.

17735. What tax is put upon you for the doctor?—Half-a-crown.

17736. Is he obliged to attend at Scarp? Yes, he is bound to go, but we do not often bother him. Sometimes he is not there from one year's end to another. Sometimes he may be called once or twice a year to the place.

17737. Do you give him a fee over and above?—No. The half-crown covers his whole charge. Our practice is, if the weather allows, to go for him to the West Loch Tarbert with a boat and bring him to our place, and lift him back again here. If the weather does not permit that, he either walks or drives to island Suay, but he makes no charge beyond the half-crown.

17738. Whether would you prefer to pay the doctor when you want him, or pay this half-crown a year?—I don't think it would be considered a hardship for any one that could manage it at all to pay the half-crown for the doctor. I would prefer to pay the half-crown, though I should never require his services at all, rather than make the other arrangement.

17739. Is there any work in the island that is given by the proprietor?—No, not in the island.

17740. Has he been in the habit of giving employment or labour on other parts of the estate to which the people of the island might go?—Works are carried on at his expense at island Suay, but we follow the fishing. Sometimes it is successful, and sometimes not.

17741. Have the people of the island made any formal application to the proprietor or his factor in reference to this overcrowding of the island?—We never laid the matter formally before the proprietor, but we spoke of it several times to the factor, and the reply we got was to go to America; and to make a journey to a strange land does not suit a poor man with a weak family and an empty hand. It would be as well for him to remain poor in the place where he was as to undertake such a journey.

17742. Is that your own position?—That is a description of my own condition. I have little means. I have some stock—as much as my place can support.

17743. Are you aware that the people in the island are much in arrear of rent or in any arrear?—There are some of them more in arrears than others.

17744. Are there any of them clear?—There are four or five of them that are only one year in arrear—the rest more.

17745. *Mr Cameron.*—This grazing on the main island was taken from the people, I understand, sixty years ago?—It is over sixty.

17746. And it was taken then by a tacksman named Alexander Macrae?—Yes, it was; but he got that along with a great deal more that is now forest. He had the whole of what is now forest.

17747. That was not a forest at the time, then?—No; it was in sheep then.

17748. Have you ever considered what the people of Scarp would be willing to pay if their grazings were restored to them?—We did not consider that matter mentioned in the least.

17749. Did the grazings you mention extend over the whole that is now forest, or only over a portion?—No, it did not cover by any means the whole range of the forest. There were fences, and the line of these fences can be traced to the present day.

17750. Do you consider that they would be able to pay for these grazings anything like the rent that is paid now or for which they are down in the valuation roll?—All I know is that the island cannot support its present population. It is more a pound or a fank than a habitation for them;

but if it were portioned out among the sixteen families that originally held it, with the old grazing rights restored to them that the island formerly possessed, they would be able to make a living.

17751. Do you consider that would involve any loss of rent to the proprietor?—I don't think it would be much actual loss to the proprietor, but he might feel the encroachment upon his forest.

17752. Was the present proprietor in any way to blame for the withdrawal of this hill pasture more than sixty years ago?—It was not his act at all. It was done long before his time.

17753. And it was not Lord Dunmore's act either?—Well, our grazing privileges were taken away from us in one Macleod's time, but it was Lord Dunmore who converted the grazings into forest.

17754. If the people lost the grazings, it would not matter, I suppose, whether these were converted into a deer forest, or whether they were kept under sheep by Mr Alexander Macrae?—Well, of course, as far as we were concerned, it mattered nothing when we lost it ourselves.

17755. It is stated here that the sixteen crofts into which Lord Dunmore divided the island were further increased by the people dividing it still more among their families and friends?—That is so. The father shared it with the son, and the brother shared with the brother.

17756. So that the increase of the population arose from their own act?—Yes.

17757. Do you think it fair that the present proprietor, who was not born when these grievances were created, should suffer from circumstances that arose out of an act of the people?—I cannot give a decided opinion upon that question, but of one thing I am certain, that the island is over-peopled; and what with cutting peats, and what with one thing and another, the overcrowding has brought the present population to a state of poverty.

17758. *The Chairman.*—What stock do you yourself keep?—Two cows. and a calf and fifteen sheep.

17759. And you pay £6 of rent and rates?—My two brothers are along with me in the lot, though it is my name that is entered in the rent roll.

17760. What stock do they keep besides what you have yourself?—They can only keep between them as much as I have.

17761. What is the total stock upon that croft for which about £6 is paid?—Three milk cows and two stirks. We have in addition forty-five sheep, but the croft can only carry thirty. The extra fifteen belong to my two brothers, and they pay to their neighbours for this overplus stock.

17762. What is the stock on the island?—I can tell the summing of it. I am not sure that I can give the actual stock. It could not maintain its summing. If they were not fed by provender purchased, they would die on the door steps. Our fathers settled it that the island could maintain 400 sheep and 64 milch cows without any young ones; but I remember the place for the last forty years, and it never had that amount of stock upon it at any one time.

17763. What is the rent of the island?—£80, bare rent.

17764. Are all the grown men in the island fishermen?—Yes, every one that can.

17765. Have they all shares in boats?—They have only small boats for long lines and lobsters; they have no herring boats.

17766. Where do they sell their lobsters?—In Tarbert chiefly.

17767. Are they always able to bring them up here in good time?—Not always.

17768. Where do they sell their cod and ling?—It is a man in the island that buys both cod and lobsters.

17769. One of themselves?—Yes.

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17770. What price does he give for ling and cod?—We have very few cod, but the ling ranges from 8d. to 10d.

17771. When is the price fixed?—At the commencement of the fishing each season.

17772. Do they get advances from the curer?—The people are pretty far in that man's debt.

17773. Is it money or food that he supplies them with?—It is meal chiefly that he supplies them with. The crops that are grown upon the island could not maintain its population for three months.

17774. What price is he charging for meal on credit now?—£1.

17775. On credit?—If there is three or four month's credit, it is one shilling extra.

17776. Is there anything that can be done to improve their position in regard to fishing?—The fishing of late years has deteriorated sadly.

17777. How do you account for that?—There have been three boats fishing ling for the last two months, and not one of them has fished 200 ling yet.

17778. If they had bigger boats, and went farther to sea, would they not be able to get better fishing?—The place is not suitable for heavy boats. The coast is very wild, and we can only use light boats. When we work at lobsters in winter, we have to launch the boats every morning, even supposing it were in frost or snow, and in launching them we have to wade through the surf up to the waist, and remain in that condition till night again. After all that is said and done, unless the people of the island of Scarp can get additional lands, there is no possible means of support for them. Their very life is in danger.

JOHN M'LEOD, Cottar and Fisherman, Ardhassaig (62)—examined.

John M'Leod.

17779. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Ardhassaig?—Fifteen families.

17780. Are they all cottars, or do any of them hold land?—Eleven hold land; four are without land.

17781. Do you represent the holders of land as well as the cottars?—Yes.

17782. What have you to say on behalf of the people of Ardhassaig?—They are very much hemmed and crowded in, but it is not an act of to-day. This overcrowding commenced seventy years ago, and since that time we have had no relief. We suffer in a variety of ways. When I lost my land myself thirty years ago, I turned my attention to the ocean to take my living out of the sea; but I found bounds set before me in the ocean, and I was not allowed to set a net with a smaller mesh than two inches within half a mile of any shore, or bay, or creek, without incurring the risk of punishment in Lochmaddy,—any bay or creek, or any place that could be approached by salmon or sea trout. But we have survived it all. We who are without land are a burden upon those who have a little of it; and if it were not that they accommodate us out of their little, by giving us potato ground, we had long ago starved in a heap. I would wish you to understand that I don't mean to blame in the least our present proprietor or present factor. We were put into an impoverished condition long before the proprietor ever came to the island, and if you would like to hear how our distress came about I can tell you. Donald Stewart was once factor under Macleod of Harris, and it was then our troubles commenced. He began to clear the land, and he began with Huishnish. He

cleared seven townships at one stroke. His next move was to turn his attention to Macleod himself, and devise how he could manage to make a fool of him, and he succeeded, because before the end came they used to call Macleod a beggar. Macleod was latterly, through his instrumentality, reduced to such a poor condition that he actually obtained his support in Donald Stewart's own house. I have seen Macleod in the market in this very place leading a horse by the bridle, and having no one that would wait upon him, while Donald Stewart was making his hundreds by his cattle upon this man's lands. It was the next factor—Macdonald—who succeeded him, that deprived me of my lands, and he was not a whit better. The end of it was that my family, when they grew up, scattered into all parts of the earth; and some of them are dead in a foreign land, and others I know not where they are,—and I am alone. Hundreds suffered equally with myself. There are at least twice as many both in North and South Harris without lands as there are that have land. I think it is a sad condition of affairs in this place. There is not a family in the whole of Harris where there are two sons but one of them at least is in the service of the Queen, perhaps two, and neither they nor their fathers can obtain a foot of the soil upon which they could live. It would appear that, when Britain becomes involved in a struggle with another nation in the future, they must send for the deer and sheep of Harris as well as its young men, and then they can see which is the best bargain.

17783. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How did you lose your land thirty years ago?—Thereby hangs a tale. There was a lady in Uist and a gentleman in Skye, and my brother had a vessel, and he came in the vessel with Donald Macdonald from Monkstadt, and he went to Balranald in order to remove from thence the young lady, whose parents were not willing that she should marry the young gentleman in the ordinary way. They wished her to marry the man who was at the time factor upon the estate; but this man took her away. The factor, Macdonald, had his revenge upon me and my two brothers for this act, though we were quite innocent of it. One of my brothers was at the time in Borv, and another in Scalpa, and I had a sister in West Tarbert. The four of us had lands at the time, and he deprived us of them all. One of my brothers went to Australia, where he is still. That is how I lost my land—the sole cause. I did not get lands since.

17784. Was it taken from you the next term after that romantic affair?—Yes.

17785. Were you in arrears at the time?—I was £6 in arrears at the time, but I had two cows and a quey, and I offered to the factor to allow the ground officer to come and take possession of these for the arrears, but he would not accept the offer.

17786. Have you applied for land since then?—I have never made application for land since. I turned my face to the sea, and for the last thirty years I have endeavoured to make a livelihood out of it with a small boat of sixteen feet keel. Then you have no land at all?—No, none whatever—except that I may occasionally get a patch from my neighbours.

17787. You cannot keep a cow, I suppose?—I have a cow, and I pay a little for it to a good man that is in the place. Were it not for that I would be without any.

17788. Are the other cottars in the same condition?—The same condition.

17789. Have they cows?—There is another cottar as well as myself, who has a cow.

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17790. Do they fish?—Occasionally.

17791. Do you fish with long lines for cod and ling?—Yes, we fish for anything that comes, but occasionally cod and ling, and in winter lobsters.

17792. When was the prohibition about your using the net with a small mesh put in force?—I cannot exactly give the date, but it would have been about that time—that is, thirty years ago.

17793. Did you not know that that was made to prevent the catching of young herring?—I never thought that was the reason. The reason I thought was that I was prevented from using a smaller mesh than two inches, in case I might catch a salmon or sea trout, and thus deprived any of the young sportsmen who came to fish of such a luxury. We don't think that God created fish for the benefit of one man more than another; and we would like to know by what right or title the one rather than the other can make a proper claim to that privilege.

17794. Were you ever forbidden to fish within a certain distance of the shore?—Yes, there was a man in Urga that was taken to Lochmaddy and imprisoned there for transgressing this rule by placing the nets within prescribed limits, and he told me, after he came back, that he would never recover from the effects of that confinement. They deprived him of his nets, and they have never been restored to his widow to this day.

17795. *The Chairman.*—Do you hear from your brother in Australia?—Yes.

17796. What sort of position is he in there now?—In a good position.

17797. Has he any land?—Yes.

17798. Are any of your own children in Australia?—I cannot tell where they are. They are scattered over the world.

17799. Were they not able to write letters themselves?—Yes, they can; I get letters from them now and again.

17800. Where from?—Sometimes from the East, sometimes from America, sometimes from Africa; they are sailors.

17801. Are all your family settled in foreign lands?—No.

17802. Did your brother never recommend you to go out to him?—Yes, he did; but my family did not wish to go.

17803. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where is Ardhassaig?—It is upon West Loch Tarbert, about 2½ miles from here.

17804. Is it now part of the forest?—No; I just live upon the march.

17805. You stated that one Stewart cleared seven townships, can you name them?—Leuachar, Deirisqir, Cravadal, Tuishnish, Govaig, Leosabay, Amhainsuidhe.

17806. Are all these townships part of the forest?—Yes.

17807. Did Stewart take these places into his own hand at the time?—No, a relative of his own from Loch Alsh, named Alexander Macrae, got them.

17808. Have you any idea how many families were in those seven townships?—In six of the townships there were thirteen families; as to Tuishnish, I cannot say very well. It could keep six comfortably. It was in the possession of one man, and he kept people upon it himself; but it would make comfortable six families.

17809. Did Stewart clear out any other places?—He cleared the whole of the west side of Harris, from Rodel to the head of Loch Eisort—a stretch of over forty miles of shore.

17810. What became of the people?—Some of them went to Lewis; some of them were sent to the other side of Harris; some to America,

some went to places never before occupied—along between here and Rodel, and if you could see some of these very places you would be surprised that even goats could live in them.

17811. Do you refer to Finsbay?—I mean Finsbay and places less inaccessible than Finsbay—Caolas Stocknish.

17812. Can you give us a rough estimate of the number of souls that were dispossessed by Stewart?—It is quite impossible for me to tell you the number of souls that were dispossessed by that man out of these lands.

17813. Would they amount to hundreds?—There would be hundreds.

17814. Who was Stewart?—He was a native of Appin, and he came first to this country as a shepherd to the Park in Lewis, and from the Park in Lewis he came here.

17815. Is he alive yet?—He is not living now.

17816. With regard to Macdonald, who succeeded him, what did he do in the way of dispossessing the people?—Macdonald cleared Pabbay where twenty-six families were. Some went to Australia, some of them were sent to the east side of Harris. Stewart first packed them into these places, and Mr Macdonlad repacked the places,—that is, filled up the interstices. He also cleared the half of Bernera, but I cannot tell how many families may have heen there.

17817. Who has got Bernera, and who has got Pabbay?—John Stewart has Pabbay and Ensay—the son of this Donald Stewart of whom I spoke before.

17818. Is he now proprietor of Pabbay?—He is proprietor of both Pabbay and Ensay.

17819. Has he the half of Bernera?—The portion of Bernera under tack is, I think, in the hands of a North Uist man. He also cleared Lingivra, Cuidinish, Deiricleit, Ceandevig. A large number of the people that left these places went to Australia and died upon the voyage. Some went to America, some to Caolas-Scalpa, and to the island of Scalpa itself, where they are now packed thick as herrings in a barrel.

17820. Who are now in those places that Macdonald cleared?—Deiricliet and Ceandevig are part of Lord Dunmore's forest. A native of this place—Donald M'Leod—is the tacksman of Cuidinish. Lingivra was added to the farm of Rodel.

17821. Is any of the laud that was cleared by Macdonald now in the possession of crofters?—No.

17822. Were you acquainted personally with several of those people that were so removed?—Yes, I knew some of them.

17823. Can you say generally that these people were in good circumstances?—Yes, in very good circumstances.

17824. Was there any reason for the dispossession of those people except for the aggrandisement of big farms?—I knew no reason, unless some of them may have been in arrears; but I know that a large number of them were not in arrears.

17825. There was no attempt made when the township was intended to be cleared to give it to the solvent crofters, and put out the other ones?—I never heard of such an attempt being made in this country.

17826. Had you ever anything to do with the transactions for which you suppose you and the various members of your family were put out of the country?—I did not know any such thing was heing done at all at the time.

17827. Did this Macdonald use his influence or authority as factor, or the authority of the estate, to pay off what he considered his own private

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wrong?—I do not think he consulted the proprietor in the matter. He used his own authority, and it was quite sufficient.

17828. Who was proprietor at that time?—The present Earl of Dunmore.

17829. Was he then a minor?—I think he was a minor.

17830. You do not blame the proprietor in any way for this?—No, in no respect.

17831. Was it talked of through the place at the time, and considered, that this removal of yourself and members of your family was owing to the circumstance that then occurred with regard to the elopement?—Yes, that was the belief in the place.

17832. Now that so many years have gone past since then, is it your firm belief that the reason you have stated was the correct one?—Yes, I believe it, and will believe to the day of my death that that was the sole reason why I lost my land.

17833. *Mr Cameron.*—You have given us some very interesting information about events which occurred at a period ranging from sixty to thirty years ago. I should like to know whether you have any grievance to complain of as to the present management of the estate, either in regard to evictions or clearances or other matters of that kind?—I have no complaint as regards eviction or arbitrary removals within recent time.

JOHN M'DIARMID, formerly Crofter and Fisherman, Scalpa (88)—examined.

John M'Diarmid.

17834. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Scalpa?—There are forty there paying rent and near sixty without any land at all.

17835. Are you sent here to represent all these?—Yes.

17836. Will you state what they wish you to say?—That the whole of these crofters and cottars are very very poor and very crowded, and have hard times of it. Of these forty who have land the utmost that can be said of their crops is that they would support them about two months in the year. The whole of the population—cottars and crofters—have to pursue the fishing, chiefly lobster fishing, and they have to be out summer, spring, and winter, at least eleven months in the year. They have to go often from home, and live in bothies, and sometimes as far as Uist. Then everybody that can go to the east coast fishing goes there,—to Wick. Immediately after their return from the east coast fishing they take to the home fishing. Some take to the long line fishing, and others of them, at the fall of the year, to the lobster fishing. And then, times are very hard. They have to go for manure to the Lewis shores, and sometimes across to the Shiant islands, near the mainland of Skye. Some of them go to the shores of Skye for the lobster fishing, and upon one occasion when a crew of them set up a tent on one of the islands in Loch Snizort, the tacksman to whom the place belonged came with his rifle, and they were preparing their food at the time, and he knocked down the pots and threw the food all over the place, and threatened that unless they left the place they would be shot. The cause of all this is the excessive population of the place. They have fished their own shore clean, and they have to pursue the lobster fishing at a distance. They also follow it up all the way to Lochmaddy. The island was formerly occupied by two or three tacksmen in succession, before it was crofted out, but these had to throw it up. When the

factor found out that the tacksmen could not live there, he settled it upon twenty crofters. When the twenty were there they were pretty nigh contented and able to make somewhat of a living out of it. Now, Lord Dunmore's commissioner, at the time, who had authority over the local factors, was a Captain Sitwell. He came officially to see the lands. This man, finding that this island was accessible by sea, thought it might be advisable to make it a fishing community, and so he added another twenty families upon the twenty who were there. When this second twenty was sent in, the original crofts were subdivided among the forty. Then they began to fall back when this second twenty were sent to the place. Then, when these forty were there, and commenced to prosecute the fishing, this man also thought proper that a curer should be sent there who would take all their fish from them, pretending that this would be a great advantage to the community. This arrangement only lasted for a year. By this time the families of the original settlers were growing up and having families of their own. Their families were sharing their own small portions of land with them. The practice grew apace, so that, to make a long story short, there are now, if not a full hundred, at least close upon a hundred families in the place, through its having increased as I have described. There seemed to be no way by which this population could make a livelihood out of it at all, but there was a native of the place who was able, through Providence, to set up a curing establishment, and he provided for the people necessities, and took from them the fish that they caught, and it may be said of him that he has kept them agoing for the last twenty-eight years since I came to the island. He provided them with boats and nets with which they were able to fish the Minch—the early herring fishing between here and Skye—before they went to the east coast fishing. For the last two years this early fishing has failed completely, and both curer and men suffered in consequence. Still, although these things were so, this man has provided for them so that although there was scarcely any expectation of any return, it could be said that none of them went to bed hungry. He acted so in the expectation that things might mend. The fishing is a complete failure this year again, and it is quite easy enough for you to understand that times must be hard in a small island with 500 souls upon the surface of it.

17837. How long is it since Scalpa was first settled with twenty settlers?—Nearly forty years.

17838. When did Captain Sitwell put on the second twenty?—About five years after the first twenty.

17839. Where did you come from yourself?—I was born and spent the greater part of my lifetime at Strain, near Rodel, so that I can give a perfectly intelligible account of the circumstances that brought about the poor condition of this island. I know it on every side, for my memory extends back over seventy-six years. I can remember before a complaint was ever heard from the island, and I have seen the commencement of this work, and its progress on every side through the whole island. The previous delegates spoke truly of what they themselves have seen and heard, but it is little in comparison with what fell—under my observation. I have known it all,—what was the cause of this poverty, and how it operated to the impoverishment of Harris.

17840. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many proprietors of Harris do you recollect?—The first was M'Leod of Bernera. The second was Hume, his son, who assumed the other name from his wife. The third was Alexander, who reassumed the name of Macleod. It was he who lost the property. It went to trustees, who sold it to the grandfather of the

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present Lord Dunmore. I meant to give three instances of the causes of the poverty of this place, but to save time I shall give you the third only. I will tell you how Rodel was cleared. There were 150 hearths in Rodel. Forty of these paid rent. When young Macleod came home with his newly-married wife to Rodel he went away to show his wife the place, and twenty of the women of Rodel came and met them and danced a reel before them, so glad were they to see them. By the time the year was out,—twelve months from that day, these twenty women were weeping and wailing; their houses being unroofed and their fires quenched by the orders of the estate. I could not say who was to blame, but before the year was out 150 fires were quenched. Some of the more capable of these tenants were sent to Bernera, and others were crowded into the Bays on the east side of Harris—small places that kept three families in comfort where now there are eight. Some of the cottars that were among these 150 were for a whole twelve months in the shielings before they were able to provide themselves with permanent residences. Others of them got, through the favour of Mrs Campbell of Strond, the site of a house upon the sea-shore upon places reclaimed by themselves.

MURDO MORRISON, Crofter, Caolas-Scalpa (50)—examined.

Murdo Morrison.

17841. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there at Caolas-Scalpa?—Over fifty.

17842. How many paying rent?—About thirty, perhaps.

17843. Are you sent here by the fifty families?—Yes.

17844. What have they asked you to say on their behalf?—We do not complain of the factor or proprietor of the present day. The present proprietor has been of service to us ever since he got the estate, and I could tell some of his good deeds if you please. In the first place, with the assistance of the people of the place themselves, he made five miles of the road between here and Caolas-Scalpa, in order to enable the people conveniently to attend church. Then in hard years he gives abatement of rent, and he gives assistance in seed, as he has done this year. And, when the husband dies, he allows the widow to sit upon the place free until her family grow up and are able to pay it. But, with all the advantages which the like of Sir Edward Scott or Lord Dunmore or any other liberal Highland proprietor can give to the people, they will be hard off for it till they get more land. Perhaps it may be unpleasant to some present to hear of how South Harris was ruled in the past, but it was the oppression that prevailed there that has brought our place of North Harris into the impoverished condition in which it is now. Pabbay was cleared and put under sheep. The half of Bernera was cleared and put under sheep. The people that were there were sent along with us to North Harris and to Scalpa. Then the sea-ware rights which the people of North Harris had at that time were taken from them and given to the Scalpa people when it was crofted out. The patches of land we have in North Harris are only peat, and will not yield any crop, unless they are manured with sea-ware year by year, so that we are obliged to go for the sea-ware to the Isle of Skye and to the Lewis. I go in the spring tides to the Isle of Skye for sea-ware in a small boat of twenty feet keel. When we load that boat with sea-ware in Skye I am filled with fear and hope—the hope of reaching the shore if the weather holds, the fear of being drowned if it breaks. Whenever I can land safely with cargo I

feel as pleased as other people would who might come laden with a cargo of gold—not because of the cargo and sea-ware, but because I have saved my life. When I arrive home by dusk, probably I may commence unloading the boat and putting the sea-ware up upon the land without waiting for shifting my clothes or even taking a particle of food. The next day is only a repetition of the previous day. There is no other way for it, and live. I am that way during the week of the spring tide. During the week of the neap tide I carry up on my back from the sea-shore, where I laid it, the sea-ware, that I brought home during the previous week, up the hill to the land. Our practice is to cultivate the ground every second week. The other week we gather sea-ware. This keeps us very much behind with our tillage. Some of my neighbours are tilling the ground to-day. It is impossible for us to have crops with such tillage as that, I have one of twenty-three lots in Caolas-Scalpa. My father had the eighth share of it, and the rent in my father's time was £16,—£2 each. The rent is between £60 and £80 to-day, and probably close upon £100 if you include taxes. There are seven cottars getting a share out of the small lot that I possess. Neither proprietor nor factor compels me to give him a bit of land, but the fear of a black eye perhaps before this time next year compels me to do so. A cottar here and a cottar there comes to ask me for a bit of land, and I must do it, otherwise how could they live? It is the kindness of those who have bits of land that keeps these people alive. So that any amount of injustice can be done in these remote places without people in high estate or the Government of the country being much the wiser for it. I remember, in the time of the wars of Boney, hearing from my father and grandfather how soldiers were drafted out from Harris. No doubt the same occurred in other places. There might not be murders, and there might not be thefts, but people might get ill-usage all the while I remember their telling me of four so drafted from the machar down which they commenced to clear to make room for sheep,—four who fought at the battle of Waterloo. Three fell on the field, and one of them died in hospital afterwards. Instead of the widows of these men being looked after, they were driven to the wild woods of Canada, and the lands they possessed were placed under sheep. That was the justice meted out to them.

17845. Have you any later instances of injustice to mention to us?—I know that what has brought the country to its impoverished condition is what happened in my own time,—the clearing away of the whole country and placing it under sheep. That was the great cause of it all, and everybody knows it. Our taxes are high, but of all the taxes the one we complain most of is the road assessment. My father paid road money, and I paid it after him, but until Sir Edward Scott made this bit of high road perhaps I might not step upon a bit of made road once in every ten years. The population of this estate is upon the east shore, and when one of us has to transact business it is where the people congregate. If I go the Rodel direction there is not a mile of road in the quarter. There are nine or ten dangerous rivers to cross without a bridge upon one of them, and children have to go to school and people have to go to church, and that not without danger from the want of bridges upon these rivers. People were drowned in these rivers of old times, and a companion of my own was swept away by the stream when he was going to school, and never a bridge was placed upon the river till Sir Edward Scott made the road recently.

17846. Have these fifty families in Caolas-Scalpa all grown up on the land there?—No, they do not belong to the place. The original

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inhabitants of the place were sent to America, and when Pabbay, Bernera, and these places were cleared, the people were sent out upon us.

17847. How long is that ago?—About forty years ago.

17848. Was it at the time the twenty-three lots were made?—Before the time the twenty-three lots were made, but it was at that time that two or three squatted upon the same place.

17849. Is there any sea-ware on the shores of Caolas-Scalpa?—The sea-ware privilege we had was taken from us. When Scalpa was under a grazier we had the privilege of cutting sea-ware on the shore of the island.

17850. Have you no sea-ware upon your own shore?—Not the 100th part of what is required.

17851. Is there no sea-ware round the island of Harris sufficient without going to Skye for sea-ware?—No. There is plenty in the Sound of Harris, but it is quite as easy for us to go to Skye as to go to that shore and to the islands in the Sound.

17852. And if you had more land, you would require to go still oftener to Skye for sea-weed?—No, we could not get more land without clearing away some of the people, and that would give more sea-ware room for us as well as more land room for us.

17853. Would there be less land under crop if these people were cleared away?—No, there would be quite as much land under crop, but there would be more sea-ware all the same. The cottars just now who get small patches of land are a burden upon the sea-ware. They will just before my eyes go and cut that sea-ware without leave asked.

17854. If the cottars were away, you would want sea-ware to manure the land that the cottars now manure, would you not?—No.

17855. If some of these people were to be sent away, where should they be sent to?—To the places that are now under sheep throughout the estate.

17856. Is there sea-ware on these places?—There are lands laid waste there that could yield crop three successive years without manure. My land requires manure every year.

17857. But at the end of the three years, would they not then require to begin manuring?—There is plenty of drift ware coming ashore upon the beaches, and they would cart it up with their own horse and cart.

17858. Why don't you do that just now instead of going to Skye?—It does not come ashore where we are. It is upon the west side of the island that the drift weed comes ashore. With us we have an exposed shore, and unless we put our cut ware on shore above high water mark it is washed away.

17859. Do you pay road assessment for repairs or only for new roads?—For the repair of roads. We do not see new roads being gone on with except the small bit that Sir Edward Scott made.

17860. The mails come over the main road; and are not you getting some advantage from that?—Yes; that indeed is the only advantage poor people here get from the main road.

17861. Would you be willing to pay a higher rate of assessment in order to construct new roads?—No, I think I pay quite enough already to make new roads and to keep up the old ones. Poor people cannot pay for everything.

17862. But you do not intend to say that the road assessment is mismanaged, do you?—No. What I mean is that there are plenty of places throughout the country where roads ought to be, and no roads are there, and there are rivers which ought to be spanned by bridges where there are no bridges.

17863. But how could you make these roads and bridges if people refuse to be taxed for them?—Well, it is a matter of surprise that road assessments are levied, and the roads are made not in the most convenient places for the people. In this country roads are made in the most convenient places for the tacksmen, but not for the comfort of the people. Where you find the poor people in this country, nobody thinks of putting a high road there.

17864. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If the surplus people were removed from Caolas-Scalpa, would the mode of cultivation not be improved?—The tillage could not be improved, but the people who would remain would be better off. It is not what is properly called arable land.

17865. Are they not obliged to crop the same land over and over again every year?—That is the case. Our land is cropped continually every year.

17866. So they cannot at present leave out any of it under grass?—Not the breadth of the sail of a boat that could be cultivated.

17867. Suppose the land was relieved of a proportion of its population, and part of the land laid out in grass, would they use as much sea-ware as they do now?—No.

17868. They do not require to put manure upon the grass?—No.

17869. You have mentioned the cases of four widows that your father spoke about. Can you give us the names of the four widows whose husbands were killed at Waterloo or died of their wounds?—Three of the men were James M'Leod, Malcolm Morrison, and Angus M'Gillespie.

17870. Do you know from what place the widows were removed?—Borv.

Rev. RODERICK MACKENZIE, Free Church Minister, Tarbert (45)—examined.

17871. *The Chairman.*—You are entered as one of the delegates for the village of Tarbert, and you also no doubt, represent the parish. Can you tell us anything about the destitution in the parish—particularly this year?—Well, I had no experience of destitution on the west coast till now, and so I cannot speak of it comparatively, and all I can say is that it was very harassing indeed.

17872. It was due this year to the failure of the crops particularly?—Yes, and to the failure of the early fishing last year.

17873. When you speak of the early fishing, do you mean the herring fishing?—The herring fishing.

17874. The fishing has been a failure for several successive years?—It has, in Harris.

17875. Has the consequence been that the people have been getting deeper into debt?—Very much so.

17876. And you think for more than one year the distress has been growing worse?—Yes, in consequence of the inability of the dealers to meet their own payments, and their inability to relieve the people as they were in the habit of doing.

17877. Have you received money from the south for the relief of the destitution here?—A great deal. First of all, Sir Edward Scott's good deeds this year can hardly be set forth. He spent, I may safely say, over £900 in relieving the distress this year, and that for about one-third of the population of Harris. From Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London we have had a great deal of money. From Glasgow Relief Committee we had

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£300, and from the Lord Mayor's fund £1104. In all, the money for relief this year to Harris has been considerably over £2000—about £2400.

17878. Has it all been spent already?—Not all quite spent. We are keeping a little in hand—knowing that our distress is not by any means at an end, and fearing that until the 12th of August, when we expect some new potatoes, there may not be an end of it. At present we have good reason to fear that the worst is before us.

17879. Has there been any difficulty in distributing this relief?—Well, the usual difficulties,—a good deal of complaint on the part of those who did not get as much as they thought they should have. We cannot avoid those difficulties.

17880. Notwithstanding the sum was large, you have been obliged to be very discriminating in giving relief?—We have had to be. With regard to seed, there was scarcely any discrimination required, for the simple reason that they all needed it, and if the money spent in providing seed were taken from their stock it would leave very little for paying the proprietor or the merchants' or dealers' accounts.

17881. Have you thought of any means by which in the future, such destitution might be provided against?—Well, the almost universal cry is for more land—that if the people had more land they would not be subject to such destitution it future; and I believe that cry is well founded Overcrowding is the chief, indeed the only, cause of complaint. In Harris we have no quarrel whatever, no grievance whatever to be traced to the conduct of the present proprietors or their agents; with one exception, however, and as I am here to represent Tarbert, perhaps you will let me read a paper which one of them prepared setting forth the grievances of the people of the village. With that single exception, we have no grievance whatever to be traced to the conduct of proprietor or agent. That grievance refers to the question of feu-charters or feu-duty. People have built, and after building they regret having done so. They have built on what they see to be foolishly short leases for thirty-eight years, and after thirty-eight years the building is to revert to the proprietor without any compensation.

17882. Is this a question which affects the trade of Tarbert—and consequently the condition of the population to some extent?—It must affect the trade, for it discourages all building of houses and affects the comfort of the people, for there is many a one who would build a nice little house for himself if he were not so heavily taxed for it. The price paid for the site is higher than anything I ever heard of in Scotland.

17883. Do you think it is a matter which affects the crofter population?—Indirectly it does. As to the paper, I never read it, and as little had I to do with the getting of it up. —'Our grievances are—(1) short period of 'lease; (2) No compensation on expiry of lease: (3) The high rate of feu-'duty. In 1840 the rate of feu-duty was 10s. and fifty-seven years lease, 'now we are charged £2 feu-duty and only thirty-eight years lease. 'Now we consider that £2 is full value for the site of our houses, which 'only measures 45 by 27 feet. Should we get compensation for 'our labour and expense on expiry of our leases, we are quite willing to 'pay £2 feu-duty, provided we be allowed compensation for our labour 'and expense when our leases expire, or get perpetual leases and respectable 'gardens attached to our houses. The land on which our houses are built 'was only £5 rent in 1840 and on that land we are now paying £14, 15s. 'feu-duty, and we think it would only be justice that as long as we paid '£5 for it we should have it, seeing that our houses are built thereon. 'We have not so much land with our houses on which to place poles for

'drying our clothes, unless we go to the shore with them, and we are 'indeed very sorry if the law of Scotland has deteriorated to such an extent 'as to compel us to pay the enormous rate of feu-duty complained of. The 'chief cause of the houses of this country being such miserable huts is, 'that should the people make better ones they will be so much burdened 'with taxes that they prefer not making any improvements at all. Those 'who have no land and consequently no straw, if they happen to put wooden 'roofs on their houses they are immediately heavily taxed on that account. 'I would consider it very fair profit for a merchant in the course of thirty-'eight years, besides supporting himself and family, to save £600 or £700. 'This our proprietor saves without any trouble whatever to himself. 'Owing to the poverty of the country, we are almost ruined with school 'and poor rates. In 1882 we paid 1s. 6d. per pound for poor rates, and '3s. per pound for school rates. This year we pay 2s. 11d. per pound for 'poor rates and 4s. 8d. per pound for school rates. The chief cause of these 'taxes being so heavy is the poverty of the country. The people are so 'crammed together on the top of rocks and bogs, and consequently so 'extremely poor that they are not able to provide clothing for their 'children to send them to school, and when the School Board compels the 'parents to send their children to school they can do nothing else in the 'circumstances they are placed in than apply to the Parochial Board to pro-'vide their children with what they are quite unable themselves to supply. 'If the people get no land we shall be getting worse from year to year 'because the people are getting so well versed in law that they bein, 'poor, know right well, if we want to send their children to school we 'must see them clothed in the event of them not being able to do it theme 'selves. If school and poor rates continue to increase in this way both 'tacksmen and crofters will be forced to throw up their lands. The 'herring fishing, which proved very remunerative here in former years, has 'been a complete failure for the past three years, and if fish is to be got it 'is not on the side of the island the people inhabit. If the people, 'however, got a sufficient portion of their native land to work they would 'not need to apply to any Parochial Board for getting their children 'clothed, because they could do it themselves and others besides. Let the 'people possess the land their ancestors possessed, and that at reasonable 'rents, compensation for improvements, and twenty or thirty years' lease, 'and I am sure there will be very little heard about destitution. The 'two meal "mills," in the island are sunk in debt to the amount of '£200, notwithstanding the fact that they were getting one-sixteenth part of 'the grain of Harris. Six years ago the mills required some repairs in 'slating, but the proprietor refused to expend any money on them as the 'one-sixteenth part of the grain of Harris would not evidently pay the 'aforesaid repairs. In my opinion, land is the only remedy for the 'poverty of the people. Government may exhaust all their resources in 'relieving the poverty of the Highlands, but their efforts will be all in 'vain until they give the land of the people to the people, and not to sheep 'and deer as is now the case.

17884. Do you agree in the main with what is stated here?—I do.

17885. Do you think there is any reason to suppose that the trade of Tarbert would increase if there were facilities given for building houses here?—I do not know if that would of course increase it, but it might be the means of encouraging some who may be disposed to come and build here.

17886. It mentions here that if the crofters erect better houses they are burdened with taxes?—I do not think that is the case. The writer of the paper seems to me to mean that if the cottars about here who now

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live in huts should think of improving their houses or building them in better style, they are at once taxed.

17887. That is if they have long leases?—Even without leases I think they have been taxed, though they merely built them, and are tenants at will.

17888. Do these cottars pay rent at all?—They do not in the village. They have free houses. The proprietor allows them to build, and does not charge them feu-duty. They have no lease whatever, and they are taxed meanwhile.

17889. 'The universal demand is for more land.' In what way would you propose by force of law to bring that about?—That is the problem the Commissioners or the Government have to solve. I suspect I can give them very little light upon it, only there are some corners here and there. The other day I was in the island of Taransay—a pretty large island—and the rental I take to be about £190. Now, I saw the arable land there in the island, and I should say it could easily accommodate forty comfortable tenants at the very reasonable rent of £5, which would make £200. The present tacksmen does not pay £200. Now, it may be said—'Why, these crofters would not pay—they get into arrears.' I believe the Harris arrears are very high indeed, but I suppose that would hardly be called a grievance anywhere. I am disposed to lay it down as one of the grievances the people are subjected to—want of punctuality, even strictness in collecting rents. It may look very like the opposite of a grievance, but to me it seems a grievance. When people are not kept up to the mark in this respect they are apt to fall into indolence and indifference with respect to the paying of their rents. I know a proprietor in Skye who has been very much spoken of for raising his rents. I believe he has raised them; but usually as he has raised them he has brought his people up to the mark in punctuality. He compels payment of rent, and does not allow arrears, and he has succeeded. I think there is a great deal in the power of the local gentleman or representative of the landlord in securing the regular payment of rents, and that we are backward in that respect in Harris. That is my own idea of the state of matters in Harris. I would not lay much stress on the non-payment of rent by the crofters if the people had land given to them. In too many instances I know the cause of the clearances has been to save the factor trouble. In Sutherlandshire they had a great deal of trouble in the collection of arrears, when there were large straths to be visited at collection time. Well, we know it is much easier to get rent from one tacksman, here and there, than have the bother of collecting it among so many. Now, I believe, that in many cases was the cause of the clearances in the Highlands. If local agents took greater pains their rent arrears would not be so much heard of.

17890. Do you think, generally speaking, the crofters could afford to pay as much rent for the land nominally as the tacksman does?—I have not sufficient experience to answer that, but I know some cases where it would be no loss to the proprietor, and I mention this case of Taransay. From my own knowledge of the ground, I venture to say the proprietor would be no loser, and there are other farms in Lewis where the same could be said.

17891. Have there been any instances of emigration in your time from your parish?—Not in my time. There were one or two individual cases, and they have done very well indeed.

17892. So far as you know, have these all done well?—They have. They had hardships at first, but as soon as they got over these they got on. I believe a liberally devised scheme of emigration would be a good idea in connection with a land bill. I would agitate for emigration if I

were pretty sure of those who were left being better in their circumstances. I am quite prepared to say I think they would succeed in getting on could money be given on those terms. I do not mean merely that they should be assisted to go, but that they should be looked after after going there,—that they should have something like a home provided for them, and secured from the risk of either starvation or too much hardship, before they got under weigh in their new place.

17893. You refer to a scheme of family emigration, I presume?—Yes, a scheme of family emigration.

17894. Do you think in connection with some scheme of land reform that would be taken advantage of?—I think so. But without the prospect of getting more land I think it would be a very unlikely thing to get them to emigrate of their own accord. Why, there are 280 crofts, I think, in the civil parish of Harris exclusive of Bernera, and in the same parish we have over 900 families living. That means 620 having no land living upon those 280 who have, and while that continues we can have nothing else but poverty. But I scarcely think it would be possible to give land to all these. However much the Government could do, however ready they might be to lay their hands on the property of those who have purchased those lands—which I do not think any Government could think of doing,—should they give us all the land in Harris we would need an emigration scheme. I do not think there is land in Harris for 620 families, and on that account, I would say, we would need a well-devised scheme of emigration in conjunction with a land bill—a land bill making it positively illegal to subdivide or sublet. Subdivision and subletting are the main causes of the poverty. Subdivision is forbidden on Sir Edward Scott's estate, but it is carried out in spite of the factor and laird.

17895. I suppose it is very difficult to carry out any restriction of that sort?—Very difficult.

17896. Have you any thing to mention on behalf of the people of Scalpa. We understand their grievances were not fully represented today?—There is very little difference from the rest of the people we have. It is the most crowded land we have. There are 40 lots and 100 families, and 60 of those families having no lots are a burden on those who have. The difficulties in Scalpa are just the same, with this exception, that if the fishing is prosperous the people of Scalpa do not depend so much on the land. I would be disposed to think, if some of them were exclusively fishermen in Scalpa, they would get on better.

17897. But their present rents are not so high as to be a burden upon them if they really devoted themselves to fishing?—I do not think any tenant in Harris has reason to complain of rent, but should they have the land for nothing they would still be poor. I intended to mention that, but for a branch of industry begun and carried on by Mrs Captain Thomas—I cannot say whether Mrs Captain Thomas or the Dowager Countess of Dunmore was first in the field,—but for her efforts in connection with Harris, destitution would be of more frequent occurrence than it is. That industry is web making and stocking making. From Mrs Thomas's web making, I believe the greater part of their living is derived. It has been far more remunerative than both land and fishing for the last three years. It would be unjust to Mrs Thomas not to mention her efforts, for she is prepared to live and die for the islands. On Monday last she very nearly risked her life going to Taransay in a small boat, and all from love to the people.

17898. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is this lady?—The wife of Commander Thomas of the Royal Navy—an English lady. To her we owe this Free Church Manse—to her we owe this Free Church, I may say,—

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and a great deal more than I can mention before the Commission. Harris, perhaps owes more to her than to anybody else.

17899. I presume you mean North and South Harris in the statement you have made?—Yes, my congregation extends to both.

17900. With regard to the question about the leases and the feu-duty, when was the period of thirty-eight years first introduced?—Just after Sir Edward came into possession.

17901. Did any Scotsman ever hear of such a building lease?—I believe it is an English custom. I do not believe Sir Edward was remonstrated with, and I thought he should have been spoken to of it before bringing it here. He is one of the best proprietors in the Highlands, and it is a great pity a syllable should be said here in any way to annoy him, for he is a generous English man of the highest type, and we should take care not to do anything to annoy him. I should be very sorry if this subject of leases, accepted by the parties who now complain of them, should be the means of giving him annoyance. However, he is too sensible a gentleman to be angry with people for making known their grievances.

17902. Will you explain this a little more fully? 'The chief cause of 'the houses of this country being so miserable is, that should the people, 'make better ones they will be so much burdened in taxes that they 'prefer not making any improvements at all.' Is the meaning of it this, that if the assessor sees a better house built he values it accordingly, and the taxes follow?—That is the case with cottars, but not with crofters. A crofter may build as respectable a house as he chooses, and not be taxed on any more than his rent.

17903. Have you ever seen the Valuation Roll of the county of Inverness?—I have seen it pretty often. I have not seen this year's roll.

17904. Do you observe that the proprietor is always put in for tenants under £4?—I see that.

17905. And I presume the proprietor exacts the proper proportion from the small tenant for taxes, though he is under £4?—Yes.

17906. Do you agree, in the main, with the statements that have been made here and elsewhere, as to the desirability of the holdings of the crofters being enlarged?—Certainly, but as to the possibility and practicability there is the difficulty. There is one thing I noted down, viz., the want of regular daily communication with a railway terminus to encourage the regular prosecution of the fishing. The post office department is to be blamed.

17907. What blame have you to find with the post office?—Instead of giving us the mails, sending them direct from Strome to Stornoway, they are sent to a very out-of-the-way corner where there is no trade,—to Ullapool. Now, for an expense of £3000 or £4000 a year, we could have a daily mail or a daily boat to all the fishing stations, and in that way the people would be encouraged to go to sea regularly. They would get their fish carried away as soon as they were caught. It is scarcely worth a poor man's while to go to sea to get only eight or nine cod and ling. They get 6d. or 1s. for them. If they could send away the fish fresh they would be worth double the money. The result is that men here do not think much of going to fish unless they get a large haul. The regular prosecution of the trade is what we want to be encouraged, and this I take to be one of the most likely means; and another good effect likely to arise from that regular communication would be this—the doing away with the ruinous credit system—ruinous especially when it descends to the truck system, which it almost invariably does.

17908. Have you anything of the kind in Tarbert?—Not directly, but there is a good deal of the nature of it.

17909. Then what you want is the mails brought by steamer daily?—All round those islands. There was a letter by Lord Colin Campbell to the *Times* expressive of what we require, and what the Government may well do in connection with the grievances in the Highlands. It is one of the most likely steps to improve our circumstances.

17910. You have a harbour here?—Yes, and there should be a good harbour on the west coast. The island of Taransay could be made a good harbour. There are only ten crofters there,—no cottars.

17911. Who is the tacksman of the island?—Mr Donald Macdonald, who is a farmer on the mainland as well.

17912. *Mr Cameron.*—It has been stated by one of the witnesses that there are twice as many people in North Harris without land as with it, and from your remarks I understand you coincide with that view?—It is not above the mark. I believe it holds true of North Harris as well as Harris generally.

17913. That cottar question is one of considerable difficulty in matters relating to land in the Highlands?—It is.

17914. What is your idea of the solution of the question?—I think I spoke of it already,—both emigration, and giving them more land,—cutting up some of the large farms where such can be done without very great injury to the proprietor, and my idea is that the proprietor would not suffer very severely.

17915. Supposing there were not many Taransays in the neighbourhood,—that is to say not much land which could be distributed among the crofters and cottars—not sufficient to enable all to have a portion,—with which would you commence,—with the crofters who have land, or cottars who have none?—I would give it, in the first instance, to those who were able to take it up—who had means of stocking it, and who had energy and perseverance to carry it on; and as to cottars who had no land, and could not get any, I would do all in my power to persuade them to go.

17916. Then, in all probability, you would have to dispose of the crofters first before the cottars were touched, because, I suppose, among the crofters would be found those who have means to enable them to take such land as may be available?—No, I think we could find among the cottars too a good many comfortable ones—pushing men with families, who are able to work well when they get it to do, who would be quite able with a little encouragement, and some who by their labour might already have made a little means to stock a small farm.

17917. Have you ever considered or obtained information from others with regard to places besides Taransay in this neighbourhood, which might be held by crofters or cottars?—I hear the people speak of all the west side and the north-west. There is a good deal of Sir Edward's estate on the coast, but it is not at all so probable or likely. I think nature seems to have intended Harris for a deer forest, except the patches along the sea. In South Harris, however, you have a great deal of good land capable of cultivation.

17918. The difficulty we have always met with has not been as to the patches of land on the mainland which may be cultivated, and of which there is a limited quantity, but what to do with the remaining hill land or hill pasture which is occupied by sheep and deer, and which it would be difficult to stock without available capital?—Yes.

17919. How would you meet that difficulty?—I can scarcely say very much as to that, further than the laying it out in connection with the shore ground,—giving them some of the hill pasture. I believe but that for our deer forests the rental could not be what it is now.

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17920. That would be a very obvious and pleasant solution of the difficulty; but what I want to know is how these high lands are to be stocked by any animals—cattle or sheep—without a certain amount of capital, which I am afraid the crofters do not possess?—I do not know that they are so destitute of capital as to be unable to take small lots. Of course, the proposal is that they should have Government advances. That might be desirable, but I do not think they could meet the interest. There are many who would make an effort to take and to stock them too.

17921. It has been suggested that, in the case of improving land, Government might be induced to advance money in the same way as they did at a former period—between 1846 and 1850—and that they would have the land always as security for the repayment of the money so advanced. Would there not be a difficulty in regard to advancing money for the purpose of buying stock, which does not afford an available security?—There would be a difficulty, no doubt.

17922. I do not quite understand what you mean by saying the daily steamers would do away with the credit system. Perhaps you would kindly follow it up and explain?—I mean there would be such a quick return for fish sent away that the dealers could afford to pay at once. As matters are now, the fish caught they have to cure, and it has to lie on their hands for months, and in that way they must have credit, as well as give it to the people; whereas if they got the money for lobsters and other fish sent away at once, they could pay the people with ready cash, and the people could buy where they liked.

17923. Should not you suppose that any loss which the post office might incur by transmitting the mails daily in the way you suggest would be more than made up by the quantity of fish that would be carried to Strome Ferry every day of the year?—Most certainly. I think it a financial mistake as well as an injustice to us.

17924. Are you aware whether any negotiations or proceedings have taken place, or how far they have gone, in regard to this matter, between the people of Stornoway and the post office authorities?—I notice in the newspapers there was a public meeting in Stornoway for the purpose of getting the mails direct to Stornoway. I do not know their petition contemplated what I mean, viz., getting the daily steamer to go round all those fishing stations. What they want is to make sure of Stornoway; but what we want is to get all the Outer Hebrides supplied, from Barra to the Butt of Lewis, including Loch Boisdale, Lochmaddy, and Tarbert.

17925. Taking Strome as the starting point?—They would need one steamer to go to Stornoway and another to come round the south end of Skye, and it might take the back of Skye, across to Loch Boisdale and go back, taking the islands.

17926. Unless there were two steamers, the Barra people would have to wait for the Stornoway post?—There must be two steamers at least, but the increase of traffic would make the loss to the Government less.

17927. But so far as you are concerned here, would you be satisfied with a steamer that left Strome daily, and called at Portree, Tarbert, and Stornoway?—Quite.

KENNETH MACDONALD, Scaristavore, Factor for North Harris (70)—re-examined.

Kenneth M'Donald.

17928. *The Chairman.* Have you any statement to make?—Well, I have been listening to some of the remarks made here to-day; and particular

stress was laid upon the suitability of some of the west side for farms to be given out to small tenants. In the year 1847 Captain Sitwell thought it would be a grand idea to cut up all the large farms and give portions of them to small tenants. This was experimented on in the year 1847 or 1848, and three townships were taken from the farm of Luscantire, and the very best and most comfortable tenantry were selected from all parts of Harris to occupy those three townships. They did stock them fully. In the year 1847 one of those new townships—Borvore—was ruined, and had to yield. Then Captain Sitwell, who had this idea in his head, said, 'We 'will carry on the other two townships.' They were carried on, but in the year 1853 they had to succumb, and were left all poor men. They came there quite comfortable,—as some may be here to-day,—and left it poor. So that even if these parts of Harris were partitioned I should not be very sanguine of the consequences, seeing by experience what happened to those three townships that were selected. That was during Lord Dunmore's minority. Another remark I may make with regard to the evidence of John M'Leod. He said his brother was forced to leave Harris. Nothing of the kind. Allan M'Leod was one of the best tenants we had—never falling into arrears. He left of his own free will, and he went to Australia, and now goes to church in his carriage. He was a most industrious man, and a man who never was in arrears. I should say that, even supposing this idea were granted, and that the people got the land they asked for, in twenty years hence these localities which might be set apart for them would be just as congested as the localities are now; and simply for this reason, because they never hive off. They never leave, and as a natural consequence when they do not hive off they must become congested. On any other part of the evidence I do not think I have any further remarks to make.

17929. This experiment of Captain Sitwell was an interesting one, and I should like to hear more about it. These township lands, to which the people were taken, had, I presume, no houses upon them, and the people had to build for themselves?—They all built houses for themselves, and they were taken off the farm of Luscantire.

17930. And the people were selected throughout the place?—Yes, the most comfortable of the lots were made from £8 to £13 each.

17931. Was there any arable land in these lots?—It was all arable land, such as it is.

17932. Was there no hill pasture?—Yes, they had the whole hill pasture.

17933. What stock had they?—I cannot answer that question. I think the summing of the place was four cows with their followers, and twenty sheep, if I remember well.

17934. And they paid £8 to £13?—They paid £8 to £13, but they had a large amount of arable land. They had the whole of these four townships—what is called the macher in Harris.

17935. And how was it they came to poverty?—Because they could not make the lands to pay them. That was the simple reason.

17936. You mean that they had not stock enough to pay a rent of £13?—They had stock enough. Times might not have been so good as they are now, but they put plenty stock on the lands every one of them.

17937. And did they turn the land?—Yes, they did.

17938. And crop it?—Crop it.

17939. What extent of crop had they been raising?—Well, I cannot tell. We are talking about sea-ware sometimes. We have what we call drift sea-ware which comes ashore, but unfortunately it comes in the end of April and beginning of May, when it is of little or no use whatever.

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If we could get it in winter then it would be of use, but it comes so very late in the season that it is of no use. Just now, between the beginning of May and the end of July it comes largely to the shore. There is an annual cast of sea-ware they call *bracir.*

17940. And you think these new townships were not able to gather sufficient sea-ware to manure their land properly?—Such is my idea. I can see no other reason why they came so very soon to grief. In 1851 one township was ruined, and in 1853 other two had to succumb.

17941. What became of these townships?—Some of them went to Australia; others were planted through the whole estate.

17942. Are any of them alive to this day?—Yes, there are.

17943. Are any of them here to-day?—I am not at all sure but there may be.

17944. Do you think the same state of things would happen again if people were taken to the lands on the other side,—do you think they would succeed?—I should be afraid, considering the former experience. I do not see why they should succeed now more than they did then.

17945. *Mr Cameron.*—I suppose you will admit that this system of farming did succeed in former times?—It did succeed. In former times we had very much greater returns from the land than we have now. The climate is so changed.

17946. But that would be a reason for increasing the holdings and reducing the rent?—Yes, and the land on the west side is not alluvial soil,—it is pure sand,—and we have such a continuation of rain in the winter that it drives the whole sap out of it.

17947. Then you attribute the failure more to the peculiar character of the place than to the fact that the holdings were too small?—Yes, I should say so. It is from the nature of the locality and the nature of the soil. If you increased their holdings three times, I do not think they would do.

17948. But if the arable land was good, and if a man were able to graze in summer four cows and followers and twenty sheep, do you not think he might do very well on that quantity of land?—Providing the land were good, he certainly ought to.

17949. Where were the two townships that succumbed in 1853?—They were all close together.

17950. How many families were on these crofts that were started as an experiment?—I cannot tell. There would be, I think, close upon twenty families in the three townships.

17951. What do you mean by their having succumbed?—Because they got so poor that they had nothing.

17952. What happened to them?—Some emigrated, and some were placed in other localities throughout the country.

17953. Were they very far back in arrears?—So far back that they had to sell everything they had. In fact, they became bankrupt.

17954. You heard the evidence given by Mr Mackenzie about the island of Taransay. Do you consider the land there is of good quality,—I remember Taransay when it was under tenantry.

17955. If it were put under tenantry again do you think they would be likely to succumb, or would they succeed?—That would depend entirely upon what the rent was.

17956. But at the rent which Mr Mackenzie stated he thought might be obtained, £200 a year?—Well, if the proprietor chooses to lose a part of his rent; he gets more than that for Taransay now.

17957. I understand for Taransay the present rent is £190?—The present rent is £210.

17958. Then, according to that, the proprietor can only lose £10 if Mr Mackenzie is right, and by putting two more crofters upon it he would not lose anything?—I should not at all be sanguine as to whether the tenantry of Taransay could pay even £200.

17959. I want you to compare for our information, with your experience, the land of Taransay with the land of this other place where the experiment was a failure?—It is very much the same. The middle of Taransay is the very same kind of ground sand. The extreme north end perhaps, is a little better, but it is all those little lazy beds,—hits here and there.

17960. But are not very fine crops grown along the west coast of the Long Island?—Sometimes they are, but that entirely depends on the weather. If we have a dry summer we have nothing because the crops are perfectly parched up, and if we have a wet summer then we have good here, but we can grow nothing else than poor small black oats.

17961. Is sand not very suitable for the cultivation of the potato?—Well, sometimes we get very good potatoes, but that also depends on the year. If it is a dry year our potatoes will go the same as the crops, but if we have a wet summer we will raise good bere and good potatoes, but nothing but small black oats.

17962. What is your opinion as to the financial condition of the crofters?—Do you think many of them or any of them are in position to take larger holdings—supposing these could be provided for them?—Well, on some parts of North Harris there are a good many who could, but in those congested localities I fear they are not in a position to take more land. For instance, at Scarp, I do not see how these people can by any possibility think of stocking, because there are some of them five years in arrears, and not only that, but the proprietor is obliged to give them seed, oats, potatoes, and barley, and sometimes a bull, but still they are sunk in arrears, and giving them charity notwithstanding.

17963. Then do you think there would be as many people able to take land as there is land capable of being given to them in Harris?—Well, I do not see where the lands are to be given them in North Harris.

17964. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you know the whole particulars of Captain Sitwell's experiments?—Yes, for I was assistant factor at the time.

17965. Don't you think the real reason of the thing failing was bad prices?—Partly, unmistakably; but these bad prices may come always.

17966. No doubt they may?—If there was a guarantee for good prices, possibly enough we could get the people through; but who is to give this guarantee of good prices and good seasons?

17967. But according to your own statement, the first township that succumbed was only three years in possession of the place. Now, if they were in comfortable circumstances when they entered, three years was a very short time to give up a croft if there were no exceptional cause?—I could see no exceptional cause,—simply that they could not get the rent paid, and were obliged to sell the stock.

17968. Did the proprietor give them houses?—No, not he.

17969. Did he give them any help at all?—Not that I am aware of.

17970. Do you not think that was a very serious inroad upon the little capital they had—that they should have to go and build their houses?—Well, it might be, but I do not think the inroad would be very great, because they all had houses, and building up the walls of a thatched house did not cost much, and they had the roofs of their former houses,—so I do not see that could be a very serious part of the affair.

17971. Did they pay their rents punctually?—For the first year they

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did, but not for the second or third. Some of them, I think, were £40 if not more in arrears.

17972. Was it not pressure, so far as you are aware, for paying up their arrears, that made them succumb?—Well, when the proprietor saw he was gaining nothing, he had to sell a part of the stock to enable him to get something in the shape of rent.

17973. Then the proprietor only gave the poor people three years chance after the first let?—What could he do? They had no stock.

17974. You are now factor for North Harris?—Yes.

17975. It is fair you should be allowed to state what has been done on the estate. Does Sir Edward Scott derive anything from the estate since he got it?—I am sorry to say he puts a great deal more out of his pocket. The whole rental is £780, and some years he spends £6000.

17976. What is Sir Edward Scott entered in the valuation roll for the forest in his own occupation.—£1350 for the deer forest.

17977. If you add the £780 of rental that is about £2000, and some years he spends £6000?—Yes.

17978. Does that give a good deal of employment to the people?—It must.

17979. Are most of those employed inhabitants of North Harris?—They are, and we make no distinction between crofters and cottars. The cottars get employment as well as the crofters.

17980. What wages do you allow for an able-bodied man?—2s. 6d. sometimes; and sometimes 3s. In my first recollection it was 9d. and 1s.

17981. Is there any employment given to females?—Yes, we employ women to work at peats and among the cattle, and at the castle and so on. Another remark I have to make is that Mr Mackenzie talked about the Countess Dowager of Dunmore, and Mrs Thomas encouraging web-making. Now, the Countess Dowager was manufacturing webs before Mrs Captain Thomas was known in this part of the world.

17982. You reside in South Harris?—Yes.

17983. It is a fact that there was once a very large population residing at Scarista-veg and all about the place now called Northtown?—Not in Northtown in my day; but in Scarista-veg, and Mid Borv, and Little Borv, and Shellabost, and Craigo, there were tenants in my day.

17984. Were they not so industrious as to cultivate the land almost up to the mountain top?—Yes, and they were very comfortable tenants.

17985. Was it usual, in old times, to have the church in the midst or very near where the people were?—Yes.

17986. How many families are within six or seven miles of the parish church of Harris?—Not very many.

17987. Are there ten families?—Oh yes, ten and more. All the old people are within seven miles, and we have a great many more than ten even on our west side. I think I have nine cottars upon my own farm.

17988. And how many are upon Scarista-veg?—I am not sure, but there is one.

17989. And on the glebe?—I believe there are two on the glebe.

17990. Where are the others you refer to?—On Mid and Little Borv.

17991. How many miles will you go now, coming from Obbe in Harris, before you meet a house after passing a place where there is a little shop at a bridge?—Two miles, and then not a quarter-mile before I meet the Scarista people.

17992. How many houses will you see from the public road, from the time you pass this bridge until you come to Scarista-veg?—There are three at Nishishee, which is within two miles; there is one at Scarista-

veg—that is the grieve; two on the Glebe; and five at Scarista-vore, at the march, and then there is one between that and my house—that is twelve.

17993. How many miles are there from the bridge to your house?—Less than seven miles.

17994. In coming from Scarista-vore to Tarbert here, you see a great number of funeral cairns?—Yes.

17995. I believe they may be counted by hundreds?—Yes.

17996. Who erected those cairns?—It is supposed to be people going to funerals. It is an old superstition. They built the cairns in memory of the parties whom they were going to bury, and a party was left there to make up a cairn for this man and a cairn for the other.

17997. Do those cairns not show there was a very large population about there once?—I do not see how they can, because in my early recollection there were none of them.

17998. But must they not have been of old?—No, they are all of very recent origin,—perhaps one of them has been made up to-day.

17999. These are not old cairns?—No.

18000. After you leave Luscantire to come into Tarbert how many miles is it?—Six miles.

18001. How many houses are there on that road?—No house at all. It is not a place for a Christian to build in between the head of the sand of Luscantire and Tarbert.

18002. When you are coming from Luscantire, are there not a great many remains of old houses?—Yes, on the opposite side at Shellabost and Craigo.

18003. Are you a native of this part of Harris?—No, I am from the mainland.

18004. How long have you been here?—I have been fifty-one years.

18005. Speaking from your earliest recollection, will you give your opinion as to the general condition of the people?—I cannot see how they could be worse off than they were. Of course in those congested localities we must always have distress, but otherwise, I see a material difference in the clothing of the people and their general appearance. There is a great difference between what they were in my first recollection and to-day. Better—I should say very much.

18006. Do you consider it better, when you yourself make all your own cloth?—Why not?

18007. Why do you stick to your own cloth when you find all the other people do not make their own clothing?—Because if they do not choose to stick to their own cloth, it is because they want something finer and more expensive. They could make cloth as well, if not better, than any other people in Scotland, and they make a vast deal of money by that cloth; but sometimes they consider it not fine enough for themselves, and all the other grand things they get cannot be got without money.

18008. Many of them have told us that if they had sheep, and could afford to shear them regularly, they would prefer their own home made clothing. Is this consistent with your observation?—That certainly is not, because there is not a township in North Harris but that has sheep enough to make clothes for themselves. I could tell you the enormous stock of sheep they have. They could manufacture their own clothes, and have plenty wool to do it. In the island of Scarp there are 507 sheep, and how is it possible for people to say they could not get wool enough to manufacture their own clothing, when there are 500 head of sheep on the island among sixteen crofters.

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18009. Where did you get these numbers?—I took them the other day.

18010. Did you count them yourself?—No, but the ground officer counted them.

18011. It has been given in evidence to-day by Norman Macdonald, of Scarp, that the summing is 400, but that he never saw that number on the island?—There are these on the island this very day.

18012. Are you counting hoggs?—Yes. The summing for the island is 320, and there is more than the summing to-day. They are actually on it.

18013. Give us the figures for the island of Scarp altogether?—Seventy-three cattle.

18014. What is the summing?—We do not go very minutely into the summing of the cattle.

18015. You will admit, no doubt, the very serious state of Scarp as shown by its state of congestion. Are you prepared to submit now what is, in your opinion, the best remedy for it?—The only remedy I can possibly see is emigration. Suppose, now, more lands were given; in ten or fifteen years those places would be as congested as the other localities are now, because they never hive off, and the only remedy I see is emigration.

18016. But if they are left as they are, and supposing you do emigrate them, the same thing will occur in fifteen years?—That is possible, but I verily believe that now, as education is advancing, that will be the first means of causing the young people to leave and go where they can better themselves. I think that will be the first move in the right direction.

18017. Some delegates have told us that if they got larger crofts they would be prepared to make it illegal to subdivide. Do you think it could be done?—Well, we have been trying that, but with no effect. There are sixteen tenants in Scarp on the rent roll, but without leave asked or obtained, the father gives his son a bit of the croft, and the brother gives his brother a bit of the croft, entirely against the rules of the estate. The same thing will occur again—not the least doubt of it.

18018. And you are not able to suggest anything but emigration?—I certainly am not. That is what I consider the only remedy to drive away from Harris the chronic distress that every year occurs in our congested country.

18019. Is the best part of Harris in the hands of crofters?—Certainly not; I will not say that.

18020. And it is in the hands of a very few people?—Very few people.

18021. *The Chairman.*—What are the names of the three townships that were established as an experiment?—Big Borv, Middle Borv, and Little Borv.

18022. Are they now in Luscantire?—No, I have a part, and another tacksman has Little Borv.

18023. *Sheriff Nicolson*—Are there any men in the Naval Reserve from Harris?—Yes, but I cannot give the numbers.

ANGUS CAMPBELL, Crofter and Fisherman, Blocropool (59)—examined.

Angus Campbell.

18024. *The Chairman.*—Who chose you to come here?—I am here to represent seven townships.

18025. How many people will there be in those townships?—There are sixty-seven families in the whole of these places. When I took land there thirty-two years ago there were only twenty-two.

18026. Were you freely elected a representative of these sixty-seven families?—Yes.

18027. What have you got to say on their behalf?—I have to say that they are very poor, and that the one half of them injure the other half. Also that of the twenty-two crofts—there are only three which are not subdivided. The people who occupy these three are certainly better off than the rest of the people, the inference from which is that it is want of land that is impoverishing them all. I have to say that some of the crofts upon which there was only one family when I came there, have now five families upon them. I have nine of a family myself of whom four are sons, ranging from twenty-nine to twenty years of age, and in a very short time, through the operation of the same cause that impoverished my neighbours, I expect to be worse off than any of them. It was mentioned here to-day that some people were taking their sea-ware from Skye and Uist, and other places far away. I have a boat of seven tons' weight, and with my four sons I take the sea-ware from these places and further off. When I am able to bring this manure home early in the season I can sow my crops in better time than my neighbours, who have not the same advantages in this respect that I have, are able to do. If it were not for the kindness of the people towards one another, both in allowing those who are not able to take sea-ware from a distance, to gather what comes upon the shore at home, and also in giving them patches of ground to cover up with sea-ware so as to make use of it, I don't know what might become of them at all. I tried various pursuits in order to make a livelihood, within the last thirty-two years, but among them all I have not been able to find one equal to cultivating,—that is to taking my livelihood out of the land. I have of such land as is going a sufficient amount to maintain myself, and my family are springing up, and there is nothing left to distribute among them. A month ago my fourth son left the island without being too communicative with me about the matter; but he took some of the neighbours into his confidence, and I got a letter from Glasgow, and he is now upon his way to Queensland. His letter was, that when the oldest—Alexander—was to settle down he could get a portion of the croft, and when the second was to settle down—Murdoch—he was to get a share, but what was to remain to him in the land of his birth, and therefore, he would require to go away. Where we live man's physical strength holds not forth long. When we make our creels for carrying up this sea-ware from the boats to the crofts, we must make them of different sizes according to the strength of the person who has to carry them, for they all must take a share in it. I once cut peats where I now grow crops, and by continual working at it during the winter,—draining it,—I have been able to take some reasonable crop out of it, but my bodily strength cannot improve it more. When I came to the place first, if I had a barrel of potatoes to sell I could sell it for 2s. but now if it could be sold at all, such is the overcrowding and scarcity of potatoes that it costs 5s. There is no need to talk much longer of the matter. I don't wish to blame either factor or proprietor in the least for bringing about the state of matters that exist. The main cause has been the squatting of the people of the place, and not one of them getting an opportunity of removing elsewhere. The people of the Bays in Harris have no wool of their own, but they purchase wool elsewhere, and their wives through the night manufacture it into cloth. I myself get it for them,—as much as 500 stones in one year, from tacksmen through Uist and elsewhere, at prices ranging from 14s. to 26s. per stone. This enterprise was carried on through the kindness of the Dowager Countess and Mrs Thomas, and except for the proceeds of this manufacture, I do not know how these people could live

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at all. The people are quite accustomed to work bad land. There is no good land for them. The little good there is, they were driven out of it. So much am I accustomed to this that I could not work good land if I had it now. It is needless to expatiate upon it. Suppose I should go on till to-morrow morning the burden of it would be that the only remedy is additional land for the people. I, along with my family, am able to keep a fishing boat agoing, but fish there is none. Fish is failing. And even supposing they were to leave the country, they would have to take away with them for their subsistence the little they might have made, because they might not get before them what would support them by fishing, and of course those who have not this means of support are still worse off. Then I have paid road assessments since I was seventeen years of age. The only thing I asked them finally, in return for these assessments, was to put a bridge over the river Luskin upon the road leading to the churchyard, for I have seen the coffins carried upon our shoulders dragged through the flood—six men strung together, and following the course of the stream in order to keep themselves from being swept away with the bier upon their shoulders. I was a young man in South Harris at Obbe, and there was a miller there, and I remember two boats laden with grain going to Stornoway distillery, and sold at 1s. a peck, as the export of the district beyond what was necessary for the support of the inhabitants. I also know that when my father had plenty of land, such was the comfortable mode in which we lived, that I myself as a young lad was throwing the old potatoes out into the sea in order to find a place in which to store up the new potatoes in the beginning of autumn. I believe that if the township on which I live was occupied by one man instead of six, as it is, the same thing might occur again.

18028. Are you aware that potatoes nowhere grow so well as they did before 1847?—They cannot grow so well as to supply potatoes to all the people of the place. I do not want a single rig of land for myself. I have quite sufficient for my own personal purposes. But if my family would wish to follow the same pursuit, there is no land for them, and if I were to share with them the small portion I have myself, I would be worse off than ever I was before. It is the want of land that ruins them. I have paid rent to five factors, and I never owed a shilling upon rent collection day; but instead of having a whole lot, if I had only half a lot, I might now have been probably £10 behind.

JOHN M'LEOD, Cottar, Tarbert (70)—examined.

John M'Leod.

18029. *The Chairman.*—Do you remember the time when your father's father was sent to Borv in 1846?—Yes.

18030. Where was your father's family before that time?—In Pabbay.

18031. Was he in good circumstances there?—Yes. They were able to support themselves, and to sell some when they were there.

18032. Do you know what stock they took with them to Borv?—I cannot tell.

18033. Had they sufficient stock for the place?—We had not much when we went there, but our stock was increasing. We had a great deal of stock when we left it.

18034. What rent did they pay for the croft they got at Borv?—£11, 5s. or £11, 15s.

18035. How long was your father at Borv?—In the first place we went to we were allowed to remain three years.

18036. What was the name of the place?—Big Borv.
18037. Were you then removed?—Yes.
18038. Where to?—Little Borv.
18039. How long did you stay there?—Two years.
18040. Why did you leave?—We were put out of it.
18041. Why were you put out?—Well, they did not wish us to remain there.
18042. Had you paid your rents?—Not the whole of it. Some of the rent was unpaid. When the people were summoned out of this Little Borv, the factor told them that if they got security they would pay £100 at the next market, they would not be disturbed that year. The minister that was at Scarista at the time—the present minister of South Uist—offered to become security for the required amount, but they would not accept the security.
18043. Why were they removed in the first place from Big Borv?—They wanted to add Big Borv to the tack of Scarista-vore.
18044. Were the tenants of Big Borv in arrears at that time?—I believe they were behind with their rent. The years were very bad, and there was no price for cattle. The prices rose the very year they left, and never fell to the same point since.
18045. Had they any other debts on the stock besides the rent?—I do not think they were in debt for which the stock could be called upon to pay.
18046. At the time they were removed from Little Borv, had all the tenants the full stock?—The minister said at the time they were sent away, that the poorest man in the country might become security for them, because they had sufficient stock to meet the demands upon them.
18047. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When you speak of the minister of Scarista, do you mean the parish minister of Harris?—Yes.
18048. Was he a man in perfectly good credit and substance?—Well, he said himself that it was through the factor that he received his stipend, and that his stipend might be good for the sum.
18049. Who was the factor who carried this out?—M'Donald of Rodel.
18050. Was he factor at the time this first settlement was made when they were taken out of Pabbay?—Yes; it was the same factor.
18051. Had Captain Sitwell been removed by the time they were put away from Borv?—I cannot tell. It was Captain Sitwell who arranged they should be sent there.
18052. Were all the arrears that were due by your father paid at the time they were summoned out before they were allowed to remove the little stock that remained?—I believe not.
18053. Where did your father go after leaving Borv?—Ardhassaig, West Loch Tarbert.
18054. Did your father build a house when he went first to Big Borv?—Yes, where there was not a stone upon the ground,—both house and barn.
18055. Did it necessarily involve a great expenditure to your father?—There was not much in the outlay. The family assisted to build it.
18056. Did they get any value for the houses when they went to Little Borv?—Not a shilling.
18057. Then did you find the houses at Little Borv ready for you?—There were the walls of the house.
18058. But you had to make it fit for habitation?—Yes.

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18059. Did you get compensation when they left Little Borv?—No; but we removed the roof of it when we went away.

18060. Was it with your father's will or the will of the other tenants that they were finally removed from Little Borv?—No; it was against their will.

18061. Did they ever get a fair chance there of getting on in the world, with these three shiftings in the course of five years?—The very opposite. At Ardhassaig again, after we were shifted, we were there a year without land at all. The man into whose land we came had himself cropped it that year, and so we had no crop, and that threw the family back very much.

18062. When you went to Big Borv, what time did you go to it?—In the beginning of summer.

18063. Was there crop or house or anything there?—Nothing; we dwelt in a bothy till we were able to build a house.

18064. When was the first rent due?—I cannot tell.

18065. Did they pay from the very moment of entering?—We were paying certainly. I know the first settlement we went to we were paying £17, but I cannot tell what was paid after that.

18066. How often were the rents uplifted?—Twice a year. It was taken from them at any time.

18067. Do you recollect your father going to the rent collection at Martinmas that year?—I do not remember that he did.

ANGUS FERGUSON, Cottar and Fisherman, Taransay (48)—examined

Angus Ferguson.

18068. *The Chairman.*—How many cottars are there in Taransay?—Ten families.

18069. Were you chosen by these ten families to represent them here?—Yes.

18070. What do you wish to say on their behalf?—I wish to speak of the poor condition of the people ever since I first remember them. When I first remember the place my father had a holding there. The third part of the island was under crofts. There were fourteen families upon that portion. These crofts were removed when I was nine years of age, and the island was cleared for John M'Donald. The whole fourteen families were removed from the island in all directions. Some went to the south-west of Harris, some to Lewis, and others elsewhere. My father was allowed to remain by the tacksman in the place where we were when we had a croft, and that accounts for our being in the island. Ever since we lost that land we have not been able to get a holding of land since. We had nothing but to be cottars under the tacksman, and to be dealt with just as he pleased; and the arrangement between him and us, which subsisted while he was in life, was this,—we worked the land for him, and we gave him half the produce. He allowed us to keep a cow and eight sheep. His son succeeded him, and he made a different arrangement with us. We had not cow or sheep since that time. At that time we had to take to the lobster fishing and such work as goes on in the place. This tacksman gave us potato ground to the extent of four or five barrels, upon condition that we would give him in return farm service any day of the year he wished us. And now because we were in a very remote corner of the world, where few advantages could be got, we were obliged to accept these conditions, although we felt them hard. We are not allowed to sow either oats or barley, but only potatoes;

and we are obliged to fish the whole year, summer and winter, autumn and spring, in order to enable us to obtain a livelihood, for this amount of potatoes does little to support us. I have been head of a family for the last twenty-six years, and during that time I have neither had cow nor sheep, and I did not earn sixpence on Taransay ever since. I have obtained my livelihood by braving many a danger upon the wild shore through the spring and winter months, where a stranger could scarcely expect that a boat would live.

18071. It is said by some people that the land is not big enough, without the help of fishing, to support all the population, and that it would be desirable to make some of them entirely fishermen. Do you think Taransay is a good station for fishermen?—It is a suitable fishing station, but the coast is wild and exposed, and during the winter months it may be two months, and it may be five or six weeks, before a boat could leave the shore.

18072. If they had better boats, with proper landing places, would they be able to fish more regularly?—It is only small boats that we have, and the fishing we prosecute does not require heavy boats, neither does the shore upon which we land them. They must be boats of such weight as we can haul ashore.

18073. Do you get any wages from the tacksman for your services, beyond the potato ground?—Nothing.

18074. Are you obliged to stop at home to do that service whenever it is called for?—Well, upon certain days we must remain at home from our own fishing,—such days as when we have to ferry heavy cattle between the shore and the island, and such work as that, that requires people in order to carry it out.

18075. How many days on the average in the year are you employed in Mr Macdonald's service?—We work very irregularly—a bit of a day now and a bit of a day again,—but I believe, if they were all strung together, they would make about sixty full days in the year.

18076. Then how many days, broken and unbroken, are you called away from your employment by Mr Macdonald? Will it be twice a week on an average?—Perhaps some weeks we might be called twice, and others not.

18077. Did you hear Mr Mackenzie say he thought the island would support forty families paying a rent of £5 each?—We had suggested information to that effect to Mr Mackenzie ourselves.

18078. Then you believe forty crofters could afford to pay £5 a piece for it?—I would think they might be inclined to pay £5 each for it. It would certainly support forty families.

18079. What would you think a fair rent for each?—I could give no information upon that matter.

18080. What would you yourself be inclined to give for a fortieth share of the island?—A fortieth of it would be worth £4 or £5 at least.

18081. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does Mr Macdonald live on the island?—Yes, sometimes. His principal dwelling is at Scaristaveg.

18082. How many farms has he got?—Two.

18083. What stock has he on Taransay?—The shepherd can tell; I do not know.

18084. Are there a good number of cows?—Yes, there are a lot of cattle.

18085. You have no sheep or cattle?—No.

18086. Why are you not allowed to keep a cow or a sheep?—The will of the tacksman.

18087. Would it do very much injury to the farm if each of the cottars had a cow?—I don't think it would.

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18088. Where do you get milk?—We get no milk at all, unless from some of the neighbours when they come ashore from the mainland.

18089. Are all the children of those cottars deprived of milk except what they get from the mainland?—They are.

18090. How many children, roughly speaking, may there be among those families of cottars?—There are seventy-six inhabitants on the island. I do not know the number of children.

18091. And, old and young, they are entirely destitute of milk?—It is only one of these that has milk— a servant of Taransay.

18092. You say you may work sixty days in the course of the year. Are we to understand and suppose you only get a wage of 1s. per day? You pay £3 for the privilege of planting five barrels of potatoes?—That is the case, considering the calculation I have made of the days of the week.

18093. Is this labour of sixty days exacted only from the head of the family, or are the women obliged to contribute to it?—The head of the family does it, the women do it, and the children do it, accordingly as one is more handy when the work is needed.

18094. But there is only one member of each family bound to do it?—Only one.

RONALD MACDONALD, Taransay (48)—examined.

Ronald Macdonald.

18095. *The Chairman.*—You are brother of the tacksman of Taransay?—Yes.

18096. Have you any statement to make to us in reference to your brother's farm?—I don't think that we call upon the services of these men except when we have work to do of such a kind that it needs more strength of hand than we can supply out of our own hired servants, and when we have to call upon any one of them, if the head of the family or the strong one is not able to reply to the call, we have just to take the one that is handy and ready, even though the weakest. Whenever they are working they feed along with our own servants; and, with scarcely any exception, if they get an opportunity of fishing or of earning money elsewhere, we will be quite willing to take the services of the weaker member of the family, so as not to prejudice the ease of the older and stronger in any way whatever. Last autumn, to the best of my recollection, the whole of our crops were cut with the scythe. I do not think that we called upon a man of the place to do any work beyond ferrying cattle, casting peats, and digging potatoes. In respect of kindness to the people in the event of their being in want, we would not have for ourselves without giving it to them; and in so far as milk is concerned, I am perfectly able to testify that choppins of warm milk from the cow are sent to the weak and sickly, often without one penny being ever asked for it. I am not aware that any of them ever came in want and asked for anything that was within our house without them getting a share of it. The reason why the cow and the sheep were taken from them I am unable to speak of. The tacksman is ready to give evidence if the question is put to him. So far as the readjustment of the land question is concerned, I would personally be very willing to see it adjusted upon equitable terms towards the poor. I have myself taken their part to my own loss, as they know. But so far as the land that is at present in the possession of the tacksmen of Harris is concerned, I am convinced that the present rent of it is so heavy that crofters would be quite unable to pay that amount for it. I

believe that when the information you are now collecting among the people of these places is put together, prepared, and laid before Parliament, as is meet, it is a very desirable thing that there should be a land act to adjust equitably the relations between landlord and tenant and tacksman, and that competent men, sworn valuators, should be appointed to value the land, and where necessary to reduce the rent, and where necessary to increase it. And as former evidence has been led to the effect that in any readjustment that might be made, there should be only one family upon each croft, even supposing it were done, such is the natural increase of the population that in a very short time things would be just as they are—one croft subdivided among three or four families,—and just as I considered it desirable that there should be a land act that would adjust equitably the land question by fixing a reasonable rent,—a rent reasonable to both landlord and tenant,—I also consider another act, and recommend it, under which an inquiry should be made not only into the circumstances of the people, but into the capabilities of the land, with a view to set up mills and factories in order to manufacture the produce of the land, so that what the land might yield could be manufactured and utilised within the land itself, and so provide work for those people for whom no land can be provided. The people might then have their choice either of getting suitable work here in that way, or to those who prefer it, there should be a scheme to enable them to emigrate elsewhere if they so desired. If there should be such an act that would inquire into the circumstances of the people both in town and country, and inquire into the relationship between master and servant, and the way the one uses the other, I believe there would be fewer inmates of our poorhouses and police offices.

18097. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is it a fact that none of the families inhabiting Taransay, except the tacksman's, have any cows?—So far as I am aware, they have not any just now.

18098. Do you consider that they are sufficiently supplied with milk for children from your brother's house?—If they require milk for sickness, we are ready to supply it gratis.

18099. Do not healthy ones require it also?—We supply it when they are delicate, both children and grown-up people.

18100. Do you think children can be brought up healthily without milk?—I cannot say either young or old can be brought up so healthily without as with it.

18101. Was the statement which the previous witness made correct as to the days they had to work for your brother,—sixty days?—As far as I am aware, it is three or four days they make in the way of ferrying, and a week at peats, and about a fortnight or twenty days at taking up the potatoes, and a very few days, if any, at cutting corn.

18102. Does that employment seriously interfere with their fishing and other employment?—If they say they have any call of their own to attend to, that it would be a great loss to them, we take the youngest member, if he is able to do the work, and allow the oldest to go to his own work.

18103. What is the rent of Taransay?—I am not certain, but so far as I am aware it is over £200,—£220.

18104. Do you know what it was before, when there were crofters there?—It was not so much, and the former rent was £250,—a rent we never got out of the island, though we had been a very sober family.

18105. Does your brother's stock consist of both cattle and sheep?—And horses.

18106. You breed horses?—We do.

18107. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you been in the room all to-day?—Yes.

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18108. Have you heard the evidence given by the various delegates of the crofters?—Yes.

18109. You heard the evidence given by the crofters as to their poverty and general want of comfort?—Yes.

18110. Do you believe that those statements are true?—Well, I believe they are. I attribute the whole of that to the increase of the population.

18111. Have you heard any of the crofters to-day complain that their rents are excessive?—I do not think I have.

18112. You have not heard any crofter, under these circumstances of extreme poverty and want of comfort, ask any thing in the shape of a sworn valuation of rent?—No, so far as I remember, I did not.

18113. Then do I understand that your remedy for the grievances complained of by the crofters is that there should be sworn valuators to indicate what should be paid by the great tacksmen to the landlord?—I do so, because I consider the tacksmen are paying the highest rent, and that they have been paying a rent that the crofters could not get out of their farms.

18114. But do you consider that the grievances felt by the big tacksmen are in any way comparable to those felt by the crofters?—Well, I do not, if it be of the least comfort to them.

18115. Do you think it natural or fair that the big tacksmen should ask such a strong measure from Government or Parliament, while the crofters, who are admittedly suffering great hardships, and labour under considerable grievances, have not to-day asked any thing of that kind?—We do not blame the proprietors for the highness of the farm rents; we have to blame themselves, because the one is going over the other and giving a higher offer. When a farm is advertised they will over-bid each other, and when they are ruined they must give up their farm, and then the proprietor may lose a good deal by arrears, unless he recovers it out of the stock on the farm. If a land act were passed in such a way that there were so many Commissioners sworn on the side of the inhabitants, and so many on the side of the proprietor, and a judge between them, so that if there was a farm below its proper rental they could put it up in favour of the proprietor, and if it were above its proper rental they could take it down. But that the proprietor would have the option of taking any tenant who might apply.

18116. But why do you think that privilege, and that rather extraordinary step, should be taken in favour of the tacksmen, whereas you admit that to-day the crofters have not asked it for themselves?—The small tenants would not refuse it if it were offered to them. I do not want it for the big tacksmen any more than for the other people. I should like to get the same law for the poor and for the rich.

DONALD M'DONALD, Crofter, Grosaway (74)—examined.

Donald M'Donald.

18117. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there in Grosaway?—Nineteen.

18118. Do you come here to represent them?—Yes.

18119. Were you chosen by them?—Yes.

18120. What have you got to say on their behalf?—The place was occupied by two men formerly. The rent was £15. Now there are eight crofters, and there is not one of them without cattle and sheep except one.

18121. What do they pay for each of the eight crofts?—About £4, 12s.

18122. Are there eleven cottars?—Yes, there are eleven families without land, and these are a great burden upon us; for we cannot see them allowed to go without any land at all. There are three without any children of school age, and these have to pay school rates, when it is those with plenty of children—the cottars—who reap the advantage of it. Now, this is a great source and injury. Then there are others who would be very glad to get land if they only got it, and who would be more able to take it than many who have it, and who sorely need it. That is what left our place so poor. I myself was born in Rodel. I saw my mother with her youngest child taken out of the house in a blanket and laid down by the side of a dyke, and the place pulled down. My mother was in child-bed at the time. The child was only born the previous night, and my father asked M'Leod, who was proprietor at the time, whether he would not allow them to remain in the house for a few days, but permission was not given, only he came to the dykeside where she lay and asked what this was, and when he was told he asked him to lift her up and remove her to an empty barn, and it was there she was put. If these cottars were to get land, the crofters who are on the rent roll would be very much better off, for these cottars without land are of no benefit to the proprietor or crofter or anybody else—rather the reverse.

18123. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many families were turned out at the time you refer to in speaking about your mother?—Nearly forty families. The half of it was under gentlemen tacksmen. It was the clearing of that place that destroyed the country, when they were sent up to the east side.

18124. Who got the place that these forty families were removed from?—It was M'Leod himself that took the place and kept it for two years, and afterwards he gave it to Stewart.

18125. How long did Stewart have it?—I cannot tell. It is about sixty-six or sixty-seven years since it was cleared.

18126. And it is now in the proprietor's own hands?—The proprietor has it now.

18127. *The Chairman.*—Where did the six tenants come from that made them up to eight?—An uncle of mine came there first. These two men had it, and there were three or four subdivisions of their own. Then, when the place was cleared that I spoke of, other two were brought in.

18128. Where did the cottars come from?—They belonged to the place. Some of them lost the land that they had—others sprang up there. These are able to take land now if they got it,—some of them more able than those who have land.

LACHLAN CAMPBELL, Crofter, Scadabay (43)—examined.

18129. *The Chairman.*—How many families are there at Scadabay?—Eighteen.

18130. How many paying rent?—Six are in the rent-roll.

18131. Are you sent here on behalf of the whole eighteen?—Yes.

18132. What have you got to say for them?—The same story which they all have, and the same complaint. My father came to Scadabay forty years ago, and then there were six in the place. They were quite well off, and quite independent, when these six had the place. Then the families

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increased, and they must needs marry, and they married; and when a man married he required to get a house, and there was no place for him to build it except upon his father's lot. And so the town is now swelled up to eighteen families. The eighteen are making their living on the place; that is to say, each of them has a bit of the land that there is. They are each taking a share in the cultivation of the place, and so far taking a living out of it. Now this has reduced the whole of them to the same impoverished condition, and if they fall back during the next fifteen years to the same extent that they have done during the last forty, they will all be on the poor roll. Some whose names are upon the rent roll have only two sheep and two cows.

18133. Has the rent of the township been changed in the last forty years?—I am not aware that it has.

18134. Has the extent of land been diminished?—No.

18135. Have any families been brought into the township?—No.

18136. And forty years ago they were comfortable?—Yes.

18137. What rent are you paying?—£4, 12s., without taxes.

18138. What stock do you keep?—Three milk cows, three young ones, and twenty-five head of sheep, excluding lambs.

18139. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Whose estate are you on?—Lord Dunmore's.

18140. Is there any land near you that you could get?—No, we are tacked on together—a crofter population. It is crofters that adjoin us.

18141. What is the nearest place in the proprietor's lands, or in the hands of the big tacksmen?—Cuidinish, Deirecleit, and Ceandevig.

18142. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—There is no cause, then, for the crowding of the people of Scadabay in the place, except that they insisted on marrying when they were young?—No other reason; but what else could they do, if they could get no additional place to occupy?

18143. Were they not getting work in the south?—Yes, they need that, but cannot take much out of it. Every person cannot bring home money from the south by his earnings.

18144. Would it not be better for a young man to go and try his fortune away from home, than to sit, and marry, and beget children, on a miserable bit of land here?—It would be better to have a good comfortable living at home, than to risk the chance of straying abroad. It is not every man who could make a comfortable living by shifting about in that way.

18145. Then, I suppose, no young man ever leaves Harris with any inteution of staying out of it?—Not of their own will, if they have a place to which to return.

18146. Do you not know that noblemen and gentlemen are obliged to send away their sons wherever they can make a living for them?—Yes, but they send them away with plenty of money to get homes and lands for them elsewhere; and sometimes lucrative appointments, when they become gentlemen.

18147. But do you not know that many gentlemen's sons have been sent abroad without a penny in their pocket except what paid their passage?—If such a case occurred, money would be sent after him.

18148. Then do you think the crofters are the only people who are entitled to keep their sons at home?—Well, we poor people sending our family away without perhaps as much money as will pay their passage, with insufficient clothing, and no education, often fear they may fare badly, and that worse may befall them. They must buy clothes with the first wages they earn, and the first £1 they can spare must be sent home to keep their father and mother alive.

18149. Is that any hardship?—It is only those that try it that feel the hardship of it.

18150. Do you not know that a great many of the officers in Her Majesty's army and navy, sons of noblemen and gentlemen, are barely able to keep themselves in clothes, and are not able to marry, perhaps all their lives?—They will not have to support their fathers and mothers though, and they will not have to pay the rent of the small patch of land their father possesses.

18151. But that only applies to the case of a man with one son. Where there are several sons, do they all need to support their father and mother?—Where there is only one son, he must needs remain at home to till the ground.

18152. Quite right; but should not the rest go away, and should not they be content to be bachelors for a time, like other people?—No, a bachelor is an object of charity all the world over, and such a condition was not appointed to the children of men.

18153. Then it is the first duty of a man,—especially a Harris man,—to get married and increase the number of the inhabitants?—Yes, that is his first duty, and to get land to occupy it. These were the first commands he received.

18154. But that was only when there were two inhabitants in the world?—I do not know; what is written is that 'He gave the land to the 'children of men.'

18155. Was not the command to 'increase and multiply' given only to the first pair?—That was quite the case, but it was added—'replenish 'the earth.'

18156. And have they not done so in Scadabay at any rate?—Yes.

18157. Is it not time to stop now?—I do not know that it is.

[ADJOURNED.]

LERWICK, SHETLAND, FRIDAY, JULY 13, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

ARTHUR JAMES HAY, Merchant, Lerwick, (47)—examined.

18158. *The Chairman.*—You are also factor for Lord Zetland?—Yes.

18159. In what are you a merchant?—General merchant, and fish curer.

18160. As a general merchant you are in constant correspondence and traffic with the fishing population?—Almost continually.

18161. Are your transactions with the fishing population conducted entirely on the principle of truck and barter, or on that of money payments?—Both; but quite voluntarily on the part of those connected with me.

18162. What system predominates?—I think the money system is

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now predominating very much, except where fishermen require advances to enable them to carry on their pursuits.

18163. How many years have you been personally engaged in this traffic?—Twenty-five years or more.

18164. Has the system changed since you began—did the truck system prevail more generally when you began than it does now?—I do not recognise it, as the truck system, as it is understood in England—it is a necessity of the situation which the poor fishermen are placed in, that they must have the assistance of those who employ them to carry on their occupations.

18165. Was the system of payment in goods or barter more general when you began your business?—I think it was.

18166. You think it is on the decline, but are money payments taking the place of it?—I think so, in a great measure.

18167. When you first began was there any discontent among the fishing population, produced by the practice of the truck or barter system?—I think not. There were some abuses, probably shown about the time of the Truck Commission; but, as a general rule, I do not think there was anything to object to in it.

18168. Are you aware of any complaints at the present moment?—None whatever.

18169. As a fish-curer, are you in the habit of supplying boats?—Yes.

18170. Do you do that extensively?—To a large extent.

18171. Since you have been engaged in that branch of the trade, has there been a change in the character of the boats?—Yes, they are of a larger description, and adapted to the herring fishery which has now developed to a larger extent.

18172. What is the size of the most improved character of the boats?—Large boats, of from 43 feet to 50 feet of keel.

18173. Half-decked?—Wholly decked now.

18174. And the beam?—About 14 feet, I think.

18175. What is the tonnage?—Twenty to twenty-five tons.

18176. When you build or supply new boats they are of that character?—Yes.

18177. And what was the character of the boats when you first remember?—In the fishery they were half-decked boats, and a great many of the native boats of the country, some of which are still in existence.

18178. Is the superiority of the new class of boats generally recognised by the fishermen?—I think, in a great measure it gives them an opportunity of making larger earnings, but at a greater risk and outlay. Were it coming an unsuccessful season, the effect and consequence to the people, as well as those engaged in the business would be very serious—much more so than under the older system.

18179. But they go a greater distance?—Well, they have not required to do so.

18180. Is there no alteration in the distance, to which the herring fishery is carried during your recollection?—No, it is has been remarkable during the past few years that herring fishery has been pursued close to the islands.

18181. And the system of going to the western coast, is the same now as when you began?—Yes, the early herring fishery was carried on the west coast very many years ago, long before the present time.

18182. What is your system of payment? Are the boats hired by the men who sail them?—No, they are usually provided to the men, and they endeavour to pay them off, as they can, out of their earnings.

18183. They are provided to the men—the men, in a sense, hire the

boats?—No, they purchase them; but they have to get credit upon them for an indefinite period.

18184. How many men would generally club to purchase a boat of the sizes you mention?—There are generally six men in a boat, and sometimes four of them are considered shareholders—sometimes all of them.

18185. Do they endeavour every year to purchase out their share in the boat?—Yes, it is understood the half of the earnings are to go in towards the price of the boat.

18186. Is that punctually paid or frequently in arrears?—I am not aware of any departure from that in the habit.

18187. It is the general custom?—Yes.

18188. Do you know of examples in which the boat passes entirely into the possession of the men who work her?—I have known it almost paid off in one or two years, but that was an extraordinarily successful fishing.

18189. And there are a number of the boats which we see here engaged in the fishery, which are entirely the property of the men who work them?—Yes, when they are paid for.

18190. But are they so frequently paid for, that many of the boats are actually their own property?—A great many of them are.

18191. What is the system of payment? Do the men pay a certain proportion of the fish they catch?—The half of them usually goes in upon the boat.

18192. How is the price of the fish ascertained? How is it struck?—They fish for whom they like, unless they have made a special bargain with the outfitter who equips them.

18193. They are not under any contract to supply fish to the person who furnishes the boat?—Sometimes it is made a condition that he shall have the preference at general prices of the country.

18194. Is that generally the course in your own trade—that you have the preference?—If we advance a boat, we make a condition that we shall have a preference at the highest prices they have been able to get; they give the curer the first offer.

18195. They are bound to give the curer the first offer, at the highest prices prevailing in the market at the time?—Yes.

18196. How is that price ascertained or verified to you?—It is generally discussed amongst the curers and the fishermen before anything is decided upon. It is a pretty uniform price which exists at present.

18197. Do you generally take the fish at the price, or are there instances of your refusing to take fish or their refusing to deal with you and dealing with other parties?—There are many cases in which I refuse to take them; I could not take them all.

18198. When you take them do you pay always in money, or do you occasionally pay in goods?—Partly in both; we are in the position of having advanced for provisions what they required, either in money or goods.

18199. In making your payment in goods you have reference only to what has been advanced, you do not pay prospectively in goods—you do not pay down in goods unless they have received the goods before?—No, certainly not.

18200. In making these payments in goods, is that more the custom or less the custom than it was formerly?—I think it is less the custom than formerly.

18201. Do you think the fishermen are less indebted to you for advances than they were previously, or more indebted?—It depends entirely on the success of the fishing.

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18202. Are there many of the fishermen who deal with you, who have no advances made to their families before—who are, as it were, before the world?—Many of them.

18203. More than was previously the case?—I think they are all in very fair circumstances at present and do not require them.

18204. On the whole, do you think that the earnings of the fishermen are greater than they were—that their condition is more prosperous than it was?—While the fishing continues successful it will be so, but if a reaction takes place I expect considerable evil and misery from the increased earnings of the last few years inducing more expensive habits amongst them.

18205. Are the fishermen in the habit of putting any portion of their earnings in the Savings Banks?—A very great amount, I believe.

18206. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are factor for the Earl of Zetland?—Yes.

18207. And he is proprietor of a large portion of Shetland?—No, not at all; his property in Shetland is not of any great extent. His property is more in Orkney

18208. What is the rental of Lord Zetland's land?—About £900, I think.

18209. How many tenants have you?—I cannot say off hand.

18210. Have you a large number of the class called crofters into whose condition we have been examining?—Yes, they are almost all crofters.

18211. Are all those crofters about whom Lord Napier has been inquiring in possession of land as crofters, or are any of them cottars?—Most of them I should think are fishermen and sailors—a great many of them. There are not many holdings which enable them to maintain themselves wholly by farming.

18212. But do any of them live by fishing entirely?—Fishing, combined with the croft.

18213. Are there any of them purely fishermen without land?—None upon Lord Zetland's property.

18214. What is the extent of their crofts generally, or do they vary?—They vary very much.

18215. What are the largest rents any of them pay, so far as you remember?—As a general rule they vary from £4 to £7.

18216. Are there none lower than £4?—Well, in exceptional cases there are.

18217. What stock can they keep on a croft for which they pay £7?—It used to be the system to have one animal for each £1 of rent, but they exceed very much sometimes.

18218. Do they sometimes keep more stock than they have pasture for?—When they have unlimited pasture they keep more stock than they are able to provide for during the winter time.

18219. What number of cows can a crofter of £7 keep?—I said about one for every £1 of rent, with the addition of a few sheep.

18220. How many sheep generally do they keep?—There is no limit.

18221. Have they all horses?—They all have a few, but their numbers are small comparatively to what they were in former days.

18222. Do they keep horses for the purposes of breeding and selling?—That is one of the means by which they pay their rent. The rearing and disposal of one pony would often pay their rent entirely.

18223. Has the price of Shetland ponies fallen off very much?—No, it has advanced very much. They will get as much for a one-year-old pony almost as will pay the rent.

18224. What is the price at present?—A one-year-old pony will bring

from £4 to £5; two-year-old, about £9, and three-year-old, about £12.

18225. Are these crofters engaged in fishing?—Not all; a great many of them are sailors.

18226. But none of them live entirely upon their land?—There are a few isolated cases where they do so. Some of them stay at home to look after the sheep and make a living in that way—tradesmen and others.

18227. What crop do they generally raise?—Almost entirely oats, and bere, and potatoes.

18228. Do they raise no turnips?—Very little. They are beginning to do so more generally now, but to a very small extent.

18229. Has there been any improvement within your experience in their system of agriculture?—No, it is almost entirely spade culture.

18230. Perhaps the spade is better than ploughing?—They have that impression.

18231. What is your idea?—Their crofts are too small to maintain ploughing. In some districts there are fewer native ploughs than there were sixty years ago.

18232. Do they practice any rotation of crops?—Not in these crofts. The system has been a very pernicious one, with the scalping of the hills, and the bringing in virgin earth to use as manure; that is one reason why the communities have been put under better regulations of late years.

18233. Have they a common pasture for cattle and sheep?—They have, but not to the unlimited extent that obtained in former years.

18234. Are there any large farms on Lord Zetland's estate?—None.

18235. What is the largest rental paid by any tacksman on his estate?—There are no tacksmen in that sense of the word; I think about £15 is the highest rent.

18236. Has there been such a thing as eviction or depopulation in this part of the country?—None whatever.

18237. *Have the people ever made any complaint of having too little* land, or too little pasture in particular?—It has required a good deal of care to prevent subdivision of farms, but that has been avoided so far as possible.

18238. Have you any fixed regulations prohibiting the subdivision of land?—It is understood there is no subdivision on Lord Zetland's property, We would rather enlarge them, if it were possible.

18239. And has there been actual subdivision to any injurious extent?—Well, when a farm comes below £4 or £5 it is not sufficient to maintain a family upon it, and those who hold crofts are usually in much poorer circumstances than those who have.

18240. But have they to a large extent subdivided the land in this way—a father giving part of it to his son?—On some properties I believe that does exist to some little extent.

18241. Do they build their own houses with the assistance of the landlord?—No, there are usually special arrangements in every case, according to the circumstances. They are supposed to maintain their houses once they are furnished with them, but they do not always do so.

18242. But when a man is building a new house what assistance does he get?—I say it is done by arrangement according to the circumstances of the case.

18243. And when he leaves the croft, if ever this happens, does he get compensation for the buildings?—There never has been a case, in my experience, on Lord Zetland's estate, of men leaving the property.

18244. Do they pay their rent pretty regularly?—Very regularly

SHETLAND. indeed, but I should explain that Lord Zetland's lands are very moderately rented, probably in comparison with others in the country.

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18245. Has there been any increase of rent for any considerable time on Lord Zetland's property?—Very little indeed, almost none.

18246. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you think that there is rather too large a population at present on Lord Zetland's property?—I think not.

18247. What means do you adopt to prevent the increase of population? I mean the population sitting on the soil?—We do not approve of squatters.

18248. But how do you prevent them squatting—what becomes of the increase of the population?—I suppose they naturally emigrate to places where they can make a better living than in this country.

18249. Where do they emigrate to?—The most of our people are sea-farming men, who go to the colonies in the course of their profession, and often settle there; and there has been a great deal of voluntary emigration from Shetland of late years.

18250. There has been a great deal of emigration to the colonies from Lord Zetland's property?—No, from Shetland generally.

18251. And from the Zetland property also?—Yes, many young men go abroad.

18252. And thus the increase of population is provided for?—Yes, the natural increase.

18253. Has there been much poverty this last year in Shetland?—None at all.

18254. Was there no failure of the potato crop last year?—No, nothing more than usual.

18255. These tenants of Lord Zetland's are all fishermen, and a great many of the fishermen are in debt are they not?—I am not aware of any of Lord Zetland's tenants being in debt.

18256. Have all Lord Zetland's tenants got boats and nets free?—They are not all in the category you were asking me the previous questions about; I was speaking of the people all over.

18257. I presume a certain number of Lord Zetland's tenants are under advances from curers?—Probably they will be.

18258. How do they find money to pay their rents?—Either off their crofts, or their earnings at sea.

18259. But their earnings are pledged to the curer?—No, no pledge; it is a matter of arrangement that a portion of the earnings go to clear the price of the boat and goods.

18260. If necessary would the curer advance the money for the rent too?—Not necessarily, I am not aware of any cases of that that have come under my notice.

18261. When is the fishing season here?—It usually commences in March and lasts till September.

18262. Not the herring fishing?—No, but the combined fishings.

18263. When are the prices of the fish fixed?—Usually before they commence, in the winter season. The system has become very much assimilated to that which obtains on the Scotch coast.

18264. Are men engaged before hand at these fixed prices?—Yes.

18265. And when does the settlement take place with them?—In October or November.

18266. Those that are in debt receive advances in goods for their necessities?—Not necessarily.

18267. If they want advances do the curers who engage them not give them advances?—If they require it, in special cases; there is no system of forced advance.

18268. But if a man is in debt, and has not ready money to purchase what he requires, the curer by whom he is engaged usually gives him what he requires?—I think so; they accommodate him in that way very frequently.

18269. Is the price which he pays for these goods he thus gets in advance different from what he would pay if he paid ready money?—I think not.

18270. Is it not necessary when you give credit of that sort that you should ask something more?—I never heard of two prices; any one making a purchase might get discount for ready money, but the prices are the same.

18271. The difference is in the way that the man gets discount?—If you go to take credit from any tailor in London, I suppose you have that system.

18272. I suppose meal is the principal means of subsistence here?—It is the staple food.

18273. What is the price of meal?—I cannot say. It is regulated by the price in Aberdeen, or wherever it is imported from. It fluctuates with the market rate. All the stores keep these goods.

18274. What is the price at present?—I cannot say at this moment.

18275. Lately?—It varies.

18276. But can you not say what it has been through the winter or in the spring?—*No, I am sorry to say, I have not paid that attention to it.*

18277. Lord Zetland's tenants are not bound to deal at any particular shops?—Not at all.

18278. It used to be the custom in some parts of Shetland for tenants to be bound to deal with certain shops?—I do not look at it in that light; I think it was a necessity of the situation. The country is wide and the population sparse, and there are few places where people can get the necessities of life; and they must go where they can get them.

18279. It was for the convenience of the population that the proprietor erected a shop; but having erected it, was it not customary to bind the tenants to deal there?—I do not know that it was compulsory; it was a result of the situation. In former days the proprietor had, in a great measure, to support his tenantry when they were in very poor circumstances.

18280. And you think they are less liable to be in poor circumstances than they were before?—I think at present they are in fair circumstances all over the country.

18281. Are you not aware of any case of compulsion on the tenants to deal with a certain shop?—Not one in Shetland. I do not believe there is a case of compulsion in Shetland.

18282. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say you have been about twenty-five years in business, you must have begun very early?—Yes, I commenced business early.

18283. You succeeded some relative?—My father had been largely engaged in business.

18283*. How long is it since he began business?—Probably about the commencement of the century.

18284. You are a native of this town? Yes.

18285. In that way of course you are well acquainted with the place, and have spent all your days here?—Yes, I think I am pretty familiar with all the circumstances of the place.

18286 With regard to Lord Zetland's own property, you have said that the rents have not been altered for a great number of years, and there are no arrears just now?—Very slight,—in the case of a few widows, perhaps.

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18287. You said that the rents of the smaller tenants ranged from £4 to £7, take a medium say of £5 of rent, can you give us any idea of the extent of arable land which a man paying £5 would have?—Almost every different farm varies, because there is so much grass and so much arable; I cannot answer that question.

18288. Can you not say approximately how much arable land a man paying £5 of rent would have?—No.

18289. Would he have five acres?—No, I do not think he would have five acres. He would have five acres including grass land.

18290. No more than five acres including pasture?—The pasture is different.

18291. But within his own exclusive enclosure, would he not have more than five acres of all classes of ground, including grass land?—He would.

18292. You stated that Lord Zetland's rents were exceptionally low in regard to other properties, can you give us an approximate idea of what rents are paid per acre?—No, I could not say; I did not come prepared to do so.

18293. Are you aware that in some cases, the rents are considered very high in Shetland?—I have never heard any complaint of such a thing.

18294. If there were such complaints you must have heard them?—I do not think there are any cases of rack renting in Shetland, that is a matter which cures itself very quickly, if the rents were too high, people cannot pay them and leave. They are bad payers if the rents are too high. It is one of the mistakes made, for in putting too high rents on the crofts, the landlord suffers.

18295. Is there any competition for these small places?—No, not very great; there is no great demand at this moment by crofters for more farms.

18296. When you mentioned that there were no ploughs, so that ploughs were getting fewer than formerly, you spoke about the soil being turned by the spade; did you mean the common spade?—The native spade is used.

18297. Is it a long-headed spade?—It is not a heavy spade; it is one of very old date, one used with the foot.

18298. Are there any complaints, generally speaking, in this island, on the part of small holders, on account of the rents, or that they are overcrowded?—No, I have heard nothing of the kind for many years; there has been no dissatisfaction expressed. There may be dissatisfied individuals, but there is no dissatisfaction whatever in the country.

18299. Is the population of Shetland increasing or decreasing?—It is about stationary, I think, in consequence of the emigration, and the ordinary outlets.

18300. Are there any large farms or tacks on the Islands?—Yes.

18301. Mention one or two of the larger ones and their names?—I am not sure of the largest, but there are a few in this neighbourhood.

18302. Just take this neighbourhood?—The largest here is Binnsgarth, which belongs to my brother.

18303. What estate is that on?—Sir George Hay's.

18304. What rent does your brother pay?—I think about £350.

18305. What sort of a farm is it?—Combined agricultural and sheep farm.

18306. Has your brother been in possession of it for some time?—Yes.

18307. Is it principally an agricultural farm?—It is chiefly a sheep farm combined with agricultural.

18308. What becomes of the younger members of the family of a crofter paying £5 of rent?—I think a great many of them find their way elsewhere.

18309. Supposing a man has five or six children, the eldest will probably succeed to the croft, what will become of the other four?—If they are sailors, they go out into the world and probably settle elsewhere. In the case of daughters, they become servant girls and go elsewhere, and sometimes do not return.

18310. Are you aware that, on the part of these younger members of the family, there is any clinging to their native homes, if they can get an opportunity of settling?—I think not. I think they rather like to go elsewhere.

18311. You think the seafaring life has a tendency to detach them?—Yes, I do not think they have that earth hunger we heard talk of in the Western Islands.

18312. What about the assessments?—The poor rate and school rate are those principally complained of. In large districts, with a small rental, the school rate particularly presses heavily upon the people.

18313. What is the highest rate you can recall to your recollection?—Between 4s. and 5s. in the pound, one-half of which is paid by the tenant; that is for school rate alone.

18314. And what is the poor rate?—It is also very heavy in some districts.

18315. Is that to some extent in consequence of the number of widows?—No, I think it is very much in consequence of mismanagement, and the want of a poorhouse.

18316. You have no combination poorhouse to apply the test?—No.

18317. And therefore you are compelled, to a great degree, to give relief?—Yes. One fertile cause of the high rate is when people leave this country and get into bad health and poor circumstances, and we have no place to bring them back to, and we must submit to pay the same allowance as is given in larger places. The number of lunatics in some of the poorer districts also causes very heavy burdens.

18318. Where are your lunatics sent to?—Most frequently to Montrose or Morningside.

18319. Are there any large proprietors in Shetland?—There are several large proprietors.

18320. Who is proprietor of the lands chiefly about Lerwick?—In the neighbourhood of Lerwick there is no large proprietor.

18321. Within a circuit of five and six miles?—The island of Bressay is the property of Miss Camerou Mowat.

18322. *What is the extent of that island?*—*Three miles by two.*

18323. Is there not a Lady Nicolson who is a large proprietrix?—She is not a very large proprietrix in this neighbourhood, but she is in different parishes. I think the chief property she has is in the island of Fetlar. She has two-thirds of the island of Fetlar.

18324. Are there a good number of small owners of land scattered over Shetland?—Yes, a great many.

18325. Have you proprietors, not feuars, of from £20 to £50 value?—There are a great many of them.

18326. What are the circumstances of these people? Do they labour their own land?—Yes, they cultivate their own land.

18327. Are these in fairly good circumstances?—There are few proprietors having property worth £5 or £6 who farm their own land.

18328. Do the bigger ones—up to £50—do the same?—There are not many of that class. A man, as a little investment, may have that amount of land, and may let it to some one else.

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18329. Can land be purchased in small quantities in country parts?—When it comes into the market there is sometimes considerable competition for it.

18330. Suppose any one wanted land, could he get a small quantity?—It would depend very much if there was any one wanting to sell.

18331. Is there such land in the market?—There is very little at present. Sometimes you see occasional advertisements of land for sale, but I am not aware of any just now.

18332. In fact, the land is not changing hands much?—No.

18333. Although the Earl of Zetland has not increased his rent, has the value of land risen?—It is pretty stationary. There was some increase a few years ago; but it has been in about a normal state for a long time.

18334. Is there any improvement going on in the way of developing roads or making new roads?—Each year there is always an increase in the extent of the roads, but it is done under the Road Act.

18335. Is the assessment for roads heavy?—No, very light indeed.

18336. Is the town of Lerwick improving in value and rising in importance?—It has increased, to some exteut, of late years. There is a great deal more building going on in consequence principally of the fisheries.

18337. Can anybody who wants to build a house get a site for it?—There is no difficulty here. There is what is called the town property, and it can be feued by any one wanting it.

18338. The town has got land outside the burgh boundaries?—Within the burgh boundaries.

18339. Is it given off by a system of feuing or of sale?—Feuing.

18340. What is asked per acre for land close to the town?—It is given off by the foot.

18341. How much, in a good place, is charged per foot of frontage?—I think it is limited to 6d. a foot in one line of street and 3d. in another, with a bonus of £5.

18342. Is the town hall we see here entirely erected at the expense of the corporation?—No; it has been erected by a Limited Liability Company.

18343. *Mr Cameron.*—You say the price of ponies has increased of late years; to what circumstances is that owing?—To the diminished numbers, I think, as well as the demand for them for coal mines.

18344. And not in any way on account of improved breed?—It has been attempted, but it lessens the value. Their value consists in their small size. If they exceed a certain size they are not suitable for coal mines, and the cause of the increase in price is owing to the demand for the coal mines.

18345. Are there any large breeders in the island?—The Marquis of Londonderry is the only large breeder. He has a farm for raising ponies for the purposes of his own coal mines. The farm is on the island of Noss and partly on the island of Bressay.

18346. Where is Noss?—Beyond Bressay.

18347. Is the knitting industry a source of revenue to the people?—It is the chief occupation of the female population.

18348. Can they make a good deal by it?—Oh, yes.

18349. Do they find a better demand for goods now than formerly?—I believe Shetland hosiery has always stood very well in the market.

18350. They get better prices now than formerly?—I think so.

18351. Has there been any alteration in the breed of sheep of late years?—The larger farmers have introduced cross-breds and Cheviots and Leicesters, but the crofters can only have the native breed.

18352. Are the woollen goods made from the same class of wool as

formerly?—So far as it can be got, but there is a good deal of imported wool used.

18353. Have the woollen goods not deteriorated in quality in consequence of the change of the breed of sheep? Is the native breed of sheep becoming rare?—I think it is; I do not think there are so many as there used to be; the people pay no attention to the breeding of them.

18354. Has the system tended to decrease the quantity of the native goods that go to the market, or to make the quality inferior?—I do not think you would get the same quality of real pure Shetland wool now that you could have got many years ago. It is often bought up and taken away from the country.

18355. The old breed of sheep produce a particular wool which forms the far-famed Shetland goods?—Yes.

18356. And it has rather diminished in quantity?—Yes; I think there is not the same attention paid to keep up the breed.

18357. But the crofters still adhere to the old breed themselves, and do not introduce the new kinds?—No, except in very few instances.

18358. I suppose the climate would hardly suit, and opportunities of wintering are not good?—If they did not provide winter food, they could not keep them.

18359. You did not expect to be examined when you came here, I suppose?—No, I merely came forward in deference to the request of the Commission.

18360. If you had been prepared you would have been ready to answer some questions which you have not been able to do?—Yes.

18361. *The Chairman.*—Being factor not only for Lord Zetland, but for other proprietors, do you find there is a great difference in the scale of rental paid to different proprietors by the small tenants?—I should say that our desire has been always on Lord Zetland's property not to press upon people, but to keep the rents moderate and have them well paid. There has not been the striving to raise the rent which an individual *might* have done on his own property.

18362. But have the rents been considerably raised of late years on any properties?—No, I think not; not considerably, in comparison or in proportion with the advance in the price of goods.

18363. There has been no raising of rents beyond a justifiable proportion, considering the advance in the price of stock?—No, it has not been commensurate even with advance.

18364. Are there any crofters or small occupiers living upon the large farms, and paying rent to the farmers?—A few labourers, perhaps, for the purposes of the farm.

18365. I don't mean farm servants, but labourers having employment on the farm?—There will be in some cases.

18366. Do they pay a much higher scale of rental to the farmer than the same people would do to the proprietor?—No, they perhaps pay nothing. They get a house, and may give their labour.

18367. Are their wages paid in money?—In money always.

18368. There is no complaint in the country of the obligation to render service in labour or in kind?—None whatever.

18369. Is there any complaint of small holdings and alleged exhaustion of the soil by frequent croppings. There is no complaint, but there is no doubt the soil does not produce as it ought to do if it were cultivated properly.

18370. Does it produce what it did in former times, or is there an impression that the crop is smaller now than formerly?—In cases where they are prohibited from taking the native soil off the hills, and they are not able to give it manure, it cannot produce the crops it did.

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18371. When they take native soil off the hills, do they take it off common pasture belonging to the croft?—The pastures are almost all now subdivided, and each proprietor knows his own. They are not quite common; the scatholds of the whole district are subdivided.

18372. But several crofters or small occupiers have had their stock in common upon the hill?—Yes.

18373. When they carry away soil for the improvement of arable land, do they take it off their own pasture or anywhere?—Anywhere.

18374. Is there generally abundance of fuel?—With a few exceptions. There are a few districts where it is rather difficult to get fuel, but almost every farm has abundance.

18375. There is no complaint about it?—No.

18376. Or on account of payment?—There is no payment for fuel.

18377. Is sea-weed used as manure?—Where it is convenient.

18378. Is any payment made for it?—None at all.

18379. You mentioned that a great proportion of the commodities advanced to the fishermen and purchased by them consists of meal—what meal? Do they buy wheat flour now, or use oatmeal principally?—Oatmeal chiefly; but there is a great deal of wheaten flour used.

18380. Is the use of wheat flour increasing?—It is,—not to the advantage of the people, I think.

18381. Is the use of baker's bread increasing?—Very greatly, I think.

18382. How is that procured—are there bakers established throughout the country, or do they bring it from the towns?—There is a great deal sent from the town; but in two or three districts there have been bakeries opened of late years.

18383. Would one probably find a loaf in a small occupier's cottage?—I think so.

18384. A baked loaf?—Yes, I think so.

18385. When they use the flour at home, do they take it in the form of bread or scones?—Scones.

18386. Is there any complaint of want of milk in the country?—No, I think not. In the town, possibly, in a crowded season there may be, but never in the country.

18387. They seem to be purchasing a greater proportion of their food of a superior description, though you say it would be better if they took oatmeal?—I think so.

18388. Do they make many of their clothes at home?—In two or three districts they still make a good deal of the native cloth, but it is not general now.

18389. When they make the native cloth do they make it of the wool of the native sheep, or do they purchase the wool from farmers?—Native wool.

18390. That is still made to a considerable extent?—In two or three districts.

18391. Are these native manufactures more substantial and lasting than the clothing they buy in shops?—I think so; more durable.

18392. What are the districts in which the native looms are still preserved?—The parishes of North Mavine, Delting, and Aithsting, and there may be more. Wherever there is any number of sheep, the crofter will make use of the wool in making it into cloth.

18393. When you say that the finest woollen fabrics were made of the wool of the native sheep, but that now more wool is imported and purchased for the parties, what quality of wool is it that is purchased—is it Australian or Cape wool?—I am sorry I cannot tell you.

18394. Do you think there is any deterioration in the fineness of the native fabrics?—No, when you get the pure Shetland wool.

18395. Is there any demand for Shetland sheep out of the island?—No.

18396. Are the native sheep consumed in the island?—Yes, there is a great sale for them here in town. They are brought here and offered in the market, and bring high prices, taking into account the size and weight.

18397. On account of the quality of the mutton?—Yes.

18398. But still there is no exportation?—No, not of sheep.

18399. Are sheeps ever killed and eaten by the small occupiers themselves?—I think so, in the winter season.

18400. Is there any beef salted by the people for their own consumption?—Where they can afford it, they often join together and purchase or kill a cow at November time.

19401. You stated that the houses of the small occupiers were built by the co-operation of the landlord and tenant?—Well, that is a common custom. Very often the landlord has to furnish the house entirely at considerable cost, and when he does so it often brings the rental of the place beyond what the tenant can take out of the soil.

18402. Suppose a small holding in which the old house has become intolerably bad, and a new house has to be constructed, what sort of a house would now be constructed say on Lord Zetland's estate?—A stone and lime house.

18403. How many rooms would it contain?—Two rooms, with two large closets, perhaps.

18404. Any accommodation upstairs?—Some of them put in a slight attic.

18405. And what is the roof—slated?—A great many of them are wishing to have the felt roofs, but we don't approve of them. The turf roof is considered preferable—a thatch roof.

18406. Then a new house would still have a thatch roof?—Yes.

18407. Thatched with straw or grass?—Straw.

18408. Oat straw?—Yes.

18409. Then there are no slated houses being built?—Very rarely. They come to be rather too expensive for the holdings.

18410. In these improved houses would the floors be wooden or paved or earthen?—Wood in one end and earth in the other.

18411. Would there be two chimneys in the house, or would the fire be lighted on the floor?—Generally there are chimneys now in both ends.

18412. Then is the house for cattle attached to the new cottage or is it separate?—Very often attached.

18413. But you enter the new house by an independent door?—Yes.

18414. Suppose the proprietor were obliged to furnish the whole of the new house, about what money value would it be?—Not less than from £40 to £50.

18415. In the case of an occupier carrying materials to the ground—stores and so on?—Yes, by arrangement it might be so.

18416. But when the proprietor expends £40 or £50 in building a new house o a small holding, what rate of interest does the occupier pay?—He in very often asked to pay 5 per cent., but that sometimes comes to more than he can pay in addition to the previous rent. The landlord has often to furnish such houses, and get no return.

18417. Are a great number of the primitive houses still in existence in the country?—Yes, a great many of them; and just from that cause, that the holding cannot bear the outlay necessary to put up an improved house.

18418. Is there any improvement on the type of the old houses?—I think so; the people are improving very much themselves.

18419. How were they built originally—entirely by the occupier?—The

SHETLAND. old system was, I believe, that the landlord contributed a certain part—the roof or portions of the building.

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18420. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You spoke about some people being proprietors themselves of land of the value of £5, what kind of house would these proprietors have?—No better than the crofters.

18421 *The Chairman.*—Are there any examples of small occupiers purchasing the fee simple of the holding of the house?—I am not aware of any.

18422. They will probably have little opportunity of doing so?—I have heard of no case of that.

18423. Are the fishermen ever proprietors of t own houses?—No, unless they have had a little bit of property of their own.

18424. Round the coast, are the fishermen ever proprietors of their houses?—No.

18425. Is there any desire to become proprietors—possessors of real property—amongst the people?—I have not heard of anything of that kind obtaining here. By agitation it may be created, but there is nothing of that sort just now.

18426. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it because it is so hopeless?—No, I have never heard of it.

18427. What class of the people are building in the neighbourhood of the town—merchants who have made money in Lerwick?—People in Lerwick. The population of the town is increasing so much it is necessary for them to build houses. A good many of the people—fishermen and others—find they cannot combine fishing and the crofting system together, and come into town and require accommodation.

18428. They build their own houses?—When their means afford it. There is a difficulty in getting rooms to rent in the town.

18429. *The Chairman.*—Are there any building societies in the town?—None.

18430. None working for the purpose of making people proprietors of their own houses?—No.

18431. No movement of that kind?—No.

LAURENCE JARMSON, South Connigsburgh (42)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, L.*)

Laurence Jarmson.

18432. *The Chairman.*—What is your profession?—Fisherman and crofter.

18433. Were you elected by the people of South Connigsburgh?—Yes.

18434. Will you tell us how you were chosen?—They just wished me to come here. Mr Clark, minister, and I were asked to come and represent the case.

18435. Was there a meeting?—Yes.

18436. About how many people were at the meeting?—A good many; most of the tenants were—most of the men.

18437. The crofters and fishermen?—Yes.

18438. Were there fifty or sixty, or more?—No, not that many.

18439. Twenty or thirty?—About twenty.

18440. And how many delegates did they elect?—Only Mr Clark, the minister, and I.

18441. And John Smith?—Yes.

18442. Is he here?—I do not know.

18443. Have you got any letter to present on the part of the people?—Mr Clark had the minute of the meeting.

18444. Will you be so good as to make a verbal statement?—In the first place, we complain about our rents being raised some time ago. Our lands were raised very nearly a third, and some more that, about ten or twelve years ago. Some were raised as high as 13s. in the pound.

18445. How many years ago?—About ten or twelve years ago.

18446. What else?—We found it was intolerable for us to pay this. We saw we could not pay it, and a lot of the men went to the proprietor and told him we could not pay it, and that we must have some reduction.

18447. Who was the proprietor?—Mr John Bruce, jun., of Sumbrugh.

18448. What happened then?—Then he drew out a statement for us to sign, that we would agree to fish to him from that day forward any time he might start a fishing station; and we were not to lodge another fisherman without he fished for Mr Bruce; or, if a father has sons, and they objected to fish for Mr Bruce, they would have to go. He gave some a reduction of 5s. and some more or less, when they signed that document. But I never signed this, to bind myself for lifetime; and each man only got so much when he did sign it.

18449. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you a copy of that paper?—No; Mr Clark has it.

18450. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Where is he?—He is not through.

18451. Has he come?—Yes, he was to come by land; I came by sea.

18452. You think he is on the way?—Yes, I think so; he told me last night he was to be here decidedly to day. A few years after that, the landlord came and took away our scathold from us—our hill pasture. He came with another paper for us to sign to give it up, and perhaps it would do us no harm. Most of the tenants signed that they would give it up, but it was greatly against their wills. But they could do no other, because it was said we might be sent off if we disappointed the landlords and a good many signed it against their wills, to give up the hill.

18453. *The Chairman.*—Did he take the whole hill, or a portion of it?—He took the whole hill first, and we had a debate with him, and we got back a portion of the worst of the hill, where our turf was cut after paying £20 for shifting his wire. The money was raised by us, and paid for shifting the wire.

18454. Did he give you a reduction of rent when he took away the hill?—Not a penny.

18455. How much of the hill pasture before was taken away?—Nearly three miles in the side of the square.

18456. Three miles?—Three each way.

18457. How much of that did they give you back?—We did not get, I think, but half a mile on the side of the square. It is a little angular, but if it were measured square, I don't think it would be much over half a mile. In addition to this, we have three days' work in the year for each merk of land we hold.

18458. Has that always been paid?—Yes, that is in addition; and we have to pay a fowl for each man, with our raised rents.

18459. Anything else?—That is about all.

18460. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there in your district?—Perhaps forty or sixty, more or less.

18461. How far do they live apart from each other?—Some live pretty close to one another, and some perhaps half or three quarters of a mile; the land is all divided, and each man has a bit all round him.

18462. But how far would it be from the extreme end of the village to the other end; how far does one man live from his furthest off neighbour?—Pretty near two miles.

18463. The crofts extend over a space of two miles?—Yes.

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18464. How far do crofts extend to the back; how much hill pasture have you?—Only a little bit, about two miles from the sea.

18465. What amount of stock is kept by the crofters?—Generally a cow and a pony. The smallest croft can only keep a cow, because we have no pasture for them to feed on; and if we keep more, we must lay down the croft to raise grass.

18466. And no sheep?—Some have a few sheep kept on other men's scatholds. They get permission from the holders to keep one or two sheep, but a good many have none at all.

18467. But no sheep are kept in the land properly occupied by these crofters?—No, there is no room.

18468. How much arable land is there on each croft?—From five to ten acres; they vary a little. Five acres would be about the average, but I don't think the highest would much exceed ten acres.

18469. Under what system of cropping is that land worked?—I think oats, bere, and potatoes.

18470. How many shifts do you put it into?—Generally potatoes, then bere, then oats, and then it will come to bere again, and then to potatoes.

18471. And no grass at all?—The most is laid down in grass; the best ground is never laid to grass. I am forty years on it, and there is some of the croft I never remember being laid to grass.

18472. What steps do you take to renew the richness of the soil, which must be exhausted by that system?—By manure.

18473. What kind?—Sea-weed chiefly, because we are prevented from taking the soil off the hill. We used to go to the hill, and take off the soil and mix it with cow-dung to make manure; but we are greatly prevented from taking this now, and the most we use is sea-weed.

18474. Of course, you don't buy any artificial manure?—No, we are not able to buy it.

18475. And you can make very little farm-yard manure with one cow?—Very little.

18476. Is it the experience of the older people that the land has deteriorated in quality owing to cropping?—Materially, since we were prevented from taking the soil out of the hills to make manure.

18477. Is that your own experience?—Yes, it is my own experience.

18478. Do you find much difference in the seasons; are they worse?—No, they are sometimes better and sometimes worse—much the same as before.

18479. What is the ordinary rent paid by each crofter in this village?—I do not think there is any so high as £12, and those on the smallest crofts will be paying £3 to £4.

18480. Does a man who has five acres keep a cow and a horse?—He can scarcely keep a cow and a horse, but some keep two cows and two ponies. But the very lowest cannot keep a cow and a horse, only a cow. He will pay about £3, holding five acres and a cow.

18481. But this cow or these cows and ponies have outrun; you have some hill pasture, although not much?—Those who are farthest from it have no outrun at all. It is a long distance, and it is so small that our cows cannot travel to it.

18482. The hill pasture is all in one block at one end of the village; is that it?—Yes, the hill pasture goes right across to the sea; it is at one end of the village.

18483. Then it is more available to crofters who live at one end of the village than to those at the other?—Yes.

18484. And the distance is too far for your cows to travel?—Yes.

18485. How far would it be to the farthest extent?—Fully two miles.

18486. What have you got yourself in the way of stock?—I keep two cows.

18487. And how many acres of ground have you?—About six or seven.

18488. And do your cows go to the hill pasture?—No, I feed them on straw in winter, and in the summer time they feed round the farm; and the poorest soil I lay down in grass for them—soil which cannot be wrought for any kind of grain.

18489. You don't let them into the fields you cultivate?—No.

18490. If they are not in the fields you cultivate, they must be outside?—Yes, with a band on them.

18491. On whose land?—They feed on the property for which I pay—on what we don't lay down in crop, and where grass is growing; there are bits of shallow, rocky ground which don't grow oats.

18492. You don't include that in the six or seven acres of arable ground?—Yes, I think it will be about that altogther.

18493. That is within the cultivated area, and you prevent them from trespassing on the crop by a tether?—Yes.

18494. And the land beside the cultivated bit of ground belongs to another?—Yes.

18495. There is no common grass beside your croft?—No.

18496. What do you pay for the land?—£4, 19s.

18497. Was your rent raised at the time the rest were raised?—Yes, all at the same time.

18498. Was any reason given for raising the rents?—No, nothing; they just brought a letter at Whitsunday, stating we had to be prepared to pay such rents as might be demanded of us at Martinmas, and then we got a note of what our rents were to be.

18499. That was twelve years ago?—Ten or twelve years ago.

18500. Did the crofters remonstrate at the time against this raising of the rents?—Yes.

18501. And was any answer or reason given in reply?—No; when the paper came out that we were to fish to him from that time in all time forward, and he would give a reduction, I did not sign it, and therefore I had no reason given.

18502. Do you think it was in order to get this advantage for the fishing?—I could not tell.

18503. All you know is that the rent was raised?—Yes.

18504. Do you fish yourself much?—Yes, I fish in the fishing season.

18505. How long does it last?—It commences in March, and ends in the latter part of September.

18506. It is the cod and ling fishing?—Yes, and the herring fishing too.

18507. What kind of fishing is most renumerative?—The herring fishing, if it is anything good.

18508. How long does it last?—Three and a half months. From the first of June to the latter end of September.

18509. Has the herring fishing improved of late years?—Oh, yes, materially; from the time the Scotch curers came down and offered anything like a price, men have been able to get big boats, and it has improved a great deal. But before, we got no price; the landlords gave nothing of a price, only 7s. per stone or 10s. a cran or higher; in rare years they might go the length of 12s. or 13s.

18510. Did you always sell the fish to whomsoever you liked?—Yes; some time ago, thirty years perhaps, or over that, our fathers were bound to fish to the proprietor, and then some of them stopped it, and would not

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be bound at the low prices, and then the proprietor made them pay what he called fish profits. When there were two men in one house he made them pay £1, and where there was one man in a house 15s.; and then they got fishing to any man they chose.*

18511. What is the school rate in your parish?—I could not exactly say.

18512. What do you pay yourself; what does it come to in the pound?—I think I pay 12s. or 14s. altogether in addition to the rent; the proprietor takes it in, and puts on the poor rate and school rate on the rent.

18513. A little above 3s. in the pound?—Something thereabout.

18514. When you talked of your rent, did you include the rates in your rent?—No, the bare rent.

18515. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You say that the proprietor has wanted three days' work for each merk of land, that is a day for each merk; what kind of work is it you have to do?—Agricultural labour; working on the farm generally.

18516. Do you get anything for that?—No; and if we don't give the days' work, at Martinmas he charges 2s. for each day we don't work. If I work two days' work in the year he charges 2s.; if I work only one day, he charges 4s.; and if I don't work any of the three days, he charges 6s.

18517. How much was your own rent raised at the time you speak of, ten or twelve years ago? It is now £4, 19s., what was it before?—£3, 1s. 6d.

18518. Did you get no advantage whatever from the proprietor when the rent was raised to the present sum?—Nothing whatever.

18519. You told us a good part of a hill was taken away from you at first: who has got the part of the hill that has never been given back to the people?—The proprietor keeps it as a sheep farm for himself.

18520. You have stated that the piece which was given back to you is not convenient for yourself personally; was any part of that hill suitable for you?—Yes, it lay much nearer my tenancy than what we have at the present time.

18521. Did the proprietor give any reason for taking away the whole of the hill pasture from you?—No.

18522. When the hill was taken from you, and he took your cattle, was it a favour for him to buy them, or would you rather have sold them yourselves?—We would rather have sold them ourselves.

18523. And he not only wanted to have your land, but he wanted also to take your cattle at his own price?—They were called into a public sale, and if any person bought them, the money had all to go through his hands.

18524. Was the township in arrears when this happened?—No, it was in arrears before, but they were wrought out mostly.

18525. Was this £20 you speak of that was charged against you for removing the wire actually paid?—Yes, it was actually paid.

18526. You said that you had received a notice that the increase of rent was to be put upon you at next Martinmas; when did you get notice of what the exact sum would be; I think you mentioned you got notice by letter of what it was to be?—Yes, but I could not exactly tell you what date it would be.

18527. Was it some time after the term of Whitsunday?—Yes, we first got notice to be prepared to pay the rent, and then we got notice what it was to be.

18528. And that increased rent was to be paid at the first term?—Yes.

* See Appendix A, XLIX.

18529. You did not agree to fish for the proprietor?—No, I did not sign that paper, and got no reduction of rent. I did not bind myself to fish to him, or make myself a servant to any man for a lifetime.

18530. And you are paying the high rent?—Yes.

18531. Is there any body else paying it that you know?—Yes.

18532. They rather pay it than become bound to work?—Not the old rent; they got a little reduction, something betwixt the old rent and the first rent, but not so low as the old rent.

18533. When you had the whole hill?—Yes, we had the whole hill at the time.

18534. How is it working with regard to the other people who are fishing for him?—He has never started a fishing station yet; but they bound themselves, if he wished to take a station, to fish to him.

18535. You are all fishing as you like?—Yes, at the present time.

18536. Was not that system, wanting you to fish for him, going back to the worst kind of truck?—Yes.

18537. That is why you objected to it?—Yes.

18538. It was not for the benefit of yourself and other crofters that this was going on?—No, it was not. If we fished to him, we would have to take what prices he liked to give us; and he would give us no notice of what the price was to be until Martinmas, when we came to settle, and we would have to take whatever prices he would give.

18539. Who is this proprietor; has he long been proprietor?—It is about twenty years since he got the lease from his father. His father is living, and he got it from his father about twelve or twenty years ago.

18540. Is he not laird or proprietor?—He is there, but his father is still living, and he is leasing under his father.

18541. Have the family been long proprietors?—Oh, yes; I could not say when they came to be proprietors.

18542. Was something attempted to be done to any other of the tenants of Sumburgh except yourselves?—At Dunrossness, they had to fish for him when he got the lease from his father, and they are fishing for him yet. He has another place in Sandwick parish, but he did not ask them to fish much for him.

18543. It is not fishing for his own family or table; he sells them?—No, it is for fishing in the way of making a profit out of it, in the way of business.

18544. Do the people in the townships feel very sore about this matter?—Yes.

18545. And that is the reason they had the meeting to delegate you and Mr Clark to come here?—Yes.

18546. Is there any such thing going on in other parts of Shetland?—I cannot tell. I don't travel much about. I should say every part is much the same.

18547. There are similar things in other parts?—Yes.

18548. Are the fishermen generally about here much in debt to the fish-curers and merchants?—Some, buying big boats, had to get advances, and some of them have not got their boats cleared; but some of them are not due much.

18549. Are you in debt yourself to any fish-curer?—No, I am not; but I have no share of a boat, I work on the half-catch system; if I had to go into a share of a boat, I would have to be a good deal in debt.

18550. Supposing a man is dealing with a fish-curer, and that he is in his debt and gets money upon credit; and supposing there is another man who works for the same person, who is not in debt, will the fish-curer sell his goods cheaper to the man who pays ready money than to the other?—

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Yes, generally it will be from perhaps three to ten per cent. dearer if you come and go into the merchant's shop, and mark the goods until Martinmas; it will be dearer than to the man who pays ready money.

18551. Have you known it as high as ten per cent.?—Perhaps not ten, but from three to five per cent.

18552. Five per cent. is not very much; it is the common discount on many things?—No.

18553. Do you say it does not exceed more than five per cent.?—I don't know exactly, because I never had much, I have dealt a little that way, but never a great deal. I always deal on the ready money system.

18554. In speaking to other people in that position, have you heard them saying of what they have been obliged to pay when getting goods on credit?—Yes, I have always heard that it was a good bit dearer than ready money.

18555. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does the landlord prevent the merchants from establishing shops on the property?—He did once, but there have not been many shops established lately. I don't think he would prevent it so much now; but once he did prevent it.

18556. But that is done away with now?—Yes, to a great extent.

18557. You have no difficulty in finding merchants within reach of you?—No.

18558. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you fish on the half-catch system. What is that system?—Getting one half of what is caught, as a shareholder in the boat—one half of the produce of the boat. We would gross £100, and £50 would go to hold up the boat and gear, and £50 would be divided amongst us for prosecuting the fishing.

18559. The boat belongs to the fish-curer?—The boat I go on does not; but there are fish-curers who have boats in the same way.

18560. They lend the boat and gear, and keep them in good order and they get half the value of the fish?—Yes.

18561. And the crew get the other half?—Yes.

18562. Is the boat you work in at the herring fishing or at the cod and ling?—All together.

18563. Is it a large boat?—Forty-four feet keel.

18564. When the curer advances money to a crew to buy a boat of that kind, what is the exact nature of the arrangement between them with respect to paying back the money?—The general way of paying it back is that he gets the one half of the fish to go to the debt of the boat until it is paid up, and, according as his men and he arrange, a little interest is taken on the balance—from three to five or eight per cent. as they arrange about it.

18565. And whose is the boat meanwhile?—The boat is held by the fisherman.

18566. From the day he takes possession?—Yes, until he clears her.

18567. Do they insure these large new boats?—Some of them do.

18568. The fishing has been very successful this year?—No, it has almost failed this year as yet.

18569. But there is a great deal of the fishing season before you?—Yes, the most important part is still to come.

18570. There is a large number of Isle of Man boats in the harbour here?—Yes.

18571. They are larger than yours?—Yes.

18572. Are they better?—There is more accommodation for the men lying away from home, but our boats lying near our homes, are as good for us.

18573. They suit the Isle of Man people better because they can live in the boats?—Yes.

18574. How long have you been paying rent yourself for your croft?—For twenty years.

18575. What was your rent when you began to pay?—£3, 1s. 6d.

18576. I think you said that twenty-five years ago the rent was smaller, when the people were obliged to fish for the proprietor?—Yes.

18577. And when the proprietor lost that privilege, he charged them a sum of money which virtually made a rise of rent?—Yes, he called it his fish profit, and, somehow or other he could not keep up that charge, and then he made up the rent.

18578. And then he raised the rent from £3, 1s. 6d. to £4, 19s.?—Yes, and a few years after that he took our scathold from us.

18579. The hill pasture; and afterwards a bit was restored?—Yes.

18580. About the wire fence for which you paid £20—who made the charge?—The proprietor. The proprietor said it would cost £20 to move it,—to put the wire down. After long debate with him—we could not do without some part of the hill—he said he would give us this back if we would pay £20 for shifting the wire.

18581. You say you are prohibited from taking soil out of the hill; do you consider that a grievance?—Yes, that is a great disadvantage.

18582. Were you not aware that it was injuring the pasture very much?—Well, to some little extent it might, but there was plenty depth of ground left on it. We were leaving plenty depth of earth.

18583. You think it was not injuring the pasture so much as it was improving the tillage of the croft?—No; and where we were taking that turf off it is all grown over now with grass the same as it was before. You would scarcely know it had ever been taken off.

18584. Are you prevented taking it off the small bit of hill pasture which remains with you?—Yes, to some extent he is stopping us taking it off. An officer was on the property some few weeks ago asking who had been cutting it off, and they would not inform one on another, and said they could all be fined; and they are now fearing they will have a fine to pay for taking it off at the coming Martinmas.

18585. In addition to this rent of £4, 19s. you have three days' labour for each merk of land?—Yes.

18586. What is the size of a merk?—It varies.

18587. How many merks have you?—I have three.

18588. And you also give three hens?—Yes.

18589. A merk, in your case, would be very near two acres?—About two acres.

18590. That is an old custom in the country?—Yes, I believe an old Danish system of keeping up the measure of land.

18591. What you call scathold is what we call hill pasture, at the back of the turf dyke?—Yes.

18592. The deep sea fishing begins in March and ends in September?—Yes.

18593. After the harvest work of the croft is done what do people do in winter and early spring?—Generally the fishermen are mending nets and preparing for fishing, and we have to bring the peats from the hills on our backs.

18594. You have ponies?—I have none, and many more are like me. If you go through the country you will see little baskets of straw, and we go to the hill with these for our fuel. And, if it is a fine day, we may go out along the shores fishing with the small boat for haddocks. The name for the deep sea fishing is the haaf.

18595. What is shore fishing called?—Generally going with haddock or hand lines; and when a heavy gale throws sea-weed ashore, we gather

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it for manure; and with that and procuring fuel, we are always busy.

18596. You settle beforehand the price of the fish with the curer at the commencement of the season?—Yes, with the Scotch curers we always know the prices before we start.

18597. And is it with Scotch curers you work?—Yes, but with the Shetland curers we generally never know the price until we come to settle.

18598. Supposing you didn't know the price of the fish, and that you were drawing from him, all the while, goods for the support of your family, do you also know the price of the goods?—Always.

18599. Is it the common habit to keep a book?—Yes.

18600. For each family?—Yes.

18601. And the settling time comes about November, and a balance is struck?—Yes.

18602. And, if there is a balance in favour of the fishermen it is paid in money?—Yes.

18603. With an ordinary year, and in the ordinary run of the country, is it common for a balance to be in favour of the fishermen?—With a few it is, and with a lot it is not.

18604. And which is oftenest?—It is as often against the fishermen as with him.

18605. Taking one year with another?—Yes.

18606. Is it the practice yet for small boys to be employed?—Yes.

18607. And do they have separate accounts of their own with the curer?—Yes.

18608. They are paid their own accounts?—Yes.

18609. And are settled with, once a year, in the same way?—Yes.

18610. What is the earliest age at which they commence?—Twelve or thirteen or fourteen years of age.

18611. Do the School Board allow them to be employed at twelve?—No; but before the School Board was they were, and even fully as early as twelve; necessity bound many of them to go and work for themselves then.

18612. How do the Isle of Man fishermen cure their fish—in their own boats?—No, I think they are fishing to curers here. Their boats are too small for curing on the boats.

18613. But they carry a large number of nets?—Yes.

18614. You say your proprietor on one part of his property has still people under contract to fish for him?—Yes.

18615. Are there other proprietors who still act on the same principle?—I could not say.

18616. Can you tell me if there are any Shetland curers who have tenants under themselves, who pay rent for their croft, and who are bound to go and fish to him?—This same proprietor at Dunrossness has tenants paying for their crofts, and who are bound to fish to him.

18617. But do you know if there is any curer in the country who rents land and sublets it to crofters who pay him for their crofts, and who are also bound to fish for him?—No, I know of none of that description now.

18618. There used to be?—Yes, there was, but I know of none now.

18619. I understand you to say you don't know, except your own proprietor, whether there are other proprietors who have people fishing for them?—There might be in the north, but there are not so far as I am aware, in the south, any proprietors whose tenants are bound to fish for them, except Bruce at Dunrossness.

18620. And he has not established a curing station in your portion of his estate?—No.

18621. But he has some of his people bound to fish to him, if he choose?—Yes.

18622. There are many like yourself not bound?—Yes, but the great majority bound themselves.

18623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was it you who spoke out?—No, some the men, at the time south, were sailing, and some at the same time as I didn't do it.

18624. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Were you the only one at home who would not pay?—No, there were one or two besides myself.

18625. And your rent was not reduced?—No.

18626. And were the rents of the others reduced?—Some five and some ten per cent.

18627. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What price did you get last year for cod and ling?—8s. 6d. for ling, and 7s. 6d. for cod, and 5s. 6d. for tusk.

18628. For what quantity?—By the hundredweight.

18629. Has the price risen very much within the last twenty or thirty years, or has it remained much the same?—It has risen a little within the last twenty years, but before that it was as high as what it is now almost. Before that, about forty years ago, it was pretty nearly as high as it is now. It got much lower twenty or thirty years ago. It was then as low as 4s. 6d. a cwt.

18630. Was that because the take of fish was so great?—No, the merchants said the price was so low south, where the fish were sold, that they could pay no more. But it has increased from that up till last year, when it was 8s. 6d. a cwt.

18631. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose you know the southern markets now better than you did twenty years ago?—Oh, yes.

18632. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—At what time of the year is the price of the fish fixed?—At Martinmas, generally, we settle. Some curers may make an offer in spring when they commence to fish, but, as a general rule, it is only when you come to settle that the curer tells you. Perhaps he says that is all he can afford to give; but it has lately been more prevalent to know the price of the fish when several boats come down. They won't fish without knowing the prices, and the curers who employ them have to fix the prices. But before that, we could not get a price; we had to take what we could get when the fishing was finished. We didn't know what we were fishing for until it was got.

18633. Was it the custom in your part of the country when fish were being dried to get the people to spread them out?—A man undertakes to cure the fish for so much a ton, to dry fish for the curer, and he can employ labourers to work, and he has to pay the labourers

18634. *The Chairman.*—You told us the proprietor made you pay £20 for shifting a wire fence. Is the wire fence now put round the arable ground of the crofters or round the hill pasture?—Round the hill pasture.

18635. Is it useful to the crofters where it now is?—No, it is of no use, because he has occupied it and the bit he left is of little benefit, because it is the worst of the hill.

18636. But is the wire fence round the small piece you have?—No, there is no wire fence round it, and we had to pay for removing it.

18637. What has he done with it?—Put it upon the new enclosure.

18638. The wire fence is of no use to you?—No, it is a great entrapment, because it is not sufficient to keep out our old Shetland sheep, and every time he catches our sheep we have to pay for them.

18639. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It is good enough for the big sheep?—Sometimes a few of them will come through, but not often. Every time he catches our sheep inside we have to pay 6d. a head for them.

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18640. *The Chairman.*—If there were no fences their sheep would go still more frequently in upon his land?—Yes.

18641. What can you sell off your croft; are you able to sell an occasional stirk?—I can sell nothing unless an old cow, and then I have to buy a young one for it.

18642. But if you have two cows, can you not raise a young one yourself?—Sometimes, and sometimes I must cut off the old one when I am bringing up the young one.

18643. Do you never sell a calf or stirk?—Very rarely.

18644. If you sell a stirk how much do you get for it?—Generally £1 for every year of their age—£2 for a two-year-old, and so on.

18645. Do your neighbours not get more than £2 for a stirk one year old?—They never get £2; they may get a little over £1 if they are a little fatter or leaner, but never over £2.

18646. When you buy a cow how much do you pay?—£6 or £7—say from £5 to £8—the prices vary.

18647. When you sell a cow how much do you get?—From £3 to £5; very seldom below £3.

18648. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Is the proprietor in the habit of exacting the sheep money from you?—Yes.

18649. The money is paid before the sheep are let out?—Yes, I have no sheep to pay for; but the tenants have to pay.

18650. Is that going on every year?—Yes.

18651. You say that the labour you were obliged to give was for agricultural work to the proprietor?—Yes.

18652. Has the proprietor no agricultural labourers of his own?—Yes, he keeps a ploughman there regularly working, but we have to do and work three days' work for him.

18653. *The Chairman.*—When you come to work for him the three days' labour do you get food?—Yes, we get breakfast and dinner.

18654. *Mr Cameron.*—But you can compound that for days' wages?—Yes, he charges 2s. per day.

18655. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If you work more than three days you get 2s. for the odd days?—I do not think he would take us to work odd days. I never went except three days.

18656. What is a day's wage in the place?—I could not say—2s. to 2s. 6d.

[ADJOURNED.]

MID YELL. RAEFIRTH.

RAEFIRTH, MID YELL, SATURDAY, JULY 14, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

James A. Campbell.

JAMES A. CAMPBELL, Minister, Fetlar (38)—examined.

18657. *The Chairman.*—Are there any delegates present from your district?—No. After intimation was received that the Commissioners

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were to come here, a meeting of the people was called and some nine or ten appeared. I explained to them the object of the Commission, and pressed them greatly to attend and give evidence, but none of them would consent to come, partly, perhaps, because they did not like, and partly because they would have a feeling in speaking in regard to the proprietor before the Commission. On my suggestion another meeting was called shortly after that on a Saturday night, when the fishermen where home from sea, so that all who cared to be present might be there. I could not be present as I had to be at Lerwick; but at that meeting no definite conclusion was come to. When I returned I pressed them individually—privately, some of them—to attend and state what were their grievances, and what they thought would be for the benefit of the crofters; and none of them would agree to come. Last night when I heard the meeting was to be to-day, I tried three or four of them, and two specially. One of the two agreed to come on condition that another would, but the other would not come, and I have come myself. I am sorry none of the islanders have come themselves.

18658. How far is your parish from Raefirth?—Seven miles by sea, it is the island which was on your right when coming up the sound.

18659. As you are here we will ask you to give evidence first. How long have you been settled at Fetlar?—Two years in September next.

18660. From what part of the country do you come—are you a native of Shetland?—No.

18661. From what part of Scotland do you come—where were you born and brought up?—The Isle of Man; but I only lived the first fourteen years of my life there. I had charge of a chapel of ease at Quarter near Hamilton, in a mining district.

18662. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You are a Scotsman?—Yes, by parentage.

18663. You consider yourself a Scotsman?—I suppose so.

18664. *The Chairman.*—Since you have been settled at the manse of Fetlar, have you been at all engaged in agriculture—have you a glebe which you cultivate yourself?—I have a glebe and cultivate it myself.

18665. Have you a large glebe?—It is about ten or twelve merks; and there is some scathold in connection with it.

18666. Have you any statement you would like to make spontaneously respecting the condition of the people—first with reference to their husbandry and agriculture, and then with reference to their fishing?—In regard to the agricultural pursuits, they are really very limited, the most of them just have what you could call small crofts, which are worked in a primitive way. They dig their crofts with the spade—they have no horses capable of ploughing—and the consequence is that there is a great deal of work entailed upon the women. In regard to the oats and potatoes which they sow, a great many of them have been sowing the same seed which they were using twenty-five years ago in oats and potatoes.

18667. Do they observe any systematic rotation?—Yes, I believe some of them plant turnips year after year on the same ground, and have done so for upwards of nine or ten years together. As regards oats and potatoes the ground is varied, but many keep a piece of ground for turnips and sow them there year after year.

18668. Do they put the land which they sow in oats and potatoes alternately into pasture and keep it in pasture any time?—They leave it fallow, but they do not put it on grass; if they sowed grass they would not get the benefit of it. It is left to grow what will grow upon it, but it is left fallow.

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18669. There is a good deal of it left fallow in that way?—Yes, there is I suppose from a quarter to a third of the land left in that way.

18670. Do you hear it alleged that the land is less productive—that the average production is smaller than in the olden times?—I have heard several say the potato crop is not only worse as regards disease, but that the bulbs are smaller.

18671. Have you heard it alleged of the oats that the return is smaller?—I don't remember distinctly at this time of any person saying that; but the Shetland oats, as sown in Fetlar, are an exceedingly poor crop—exceedingly short.

18672. How many grains would be considered a satisfactory return in the season—an ordinary average return?—If they get a return of nine they would consider it good.

18673. Of oats?—Yes.

18674. That would be good in a poor district of Scotland?—Well, they consider that extra good.

18675. Do you think they get in an average season more than five or six?—I don't think they do.

18676. Have you heard it stated that they sometimes don't get more than three?—Sometimes they hardly know what they get, it is so short, and so poor; I have heard people say that.

18677. But still you think five or six must be set down as an average?—Well, last year was a very good year in Fetlar at least, and I think they would set it down at six last year; but it was a very good year.

18678. Do you hear any complaints of progressive subdivision of the crofts?—No, not of late, it has not been done of late.

18679. Is there any movement towards fencing or enclosing as between croft and croft?—None whatever.

18680. Is there any movement towards the fencing of the hill pasture from the pasture of the adjacent holdings, or adjacent townships or farms—are there any wire fences being put up?—There was one wire fence put up in the east part of the country lately, but, as a rule, there has been no fencing since the late proprietor—Sir Arthur Nicolson—died. In the latter part of his life he did fence in scathold and make parks for private purposes, in which people were not allowed to graze.

18681. But where common pasture or scathold exists in its original form, is it generally fenced with a wire fence, or open to adjacent scathold?—There is no wire fencing; there are what they call small turf dykes.

18682. But there are such round the scathold generally?—There are.

18683. And are they effective in preventing the stock of one scathold going on to another?—If an animal were so inclined they would not keep it in; but I don't hear any complaint of the animals of one hamlet getting into another scathold.

18684. Are there any large tacks or farms?—No, none; I think the largest is the farm of Salter.

18685. There are no large sheep farms whatever?—None.

18686. Do you think that the fencing of the different crofts or holdings from each other would be an important element of improvement?—Personally I think it would, but I cannot speak for the islanders; many of them, I believe, are against it.

18687. What reason do they allege against fencing between themselves?—It is very difficult to get a reason, simply, I suppose, because they have been so long accustomed to being without fences.

18688. You say that without fences it is impossible to have improved crofts?—Well, no person would sow grass unless they were sure they

would get the benefit of it; if they sowed it in grass their neighbours would get as much benefit as themselves, because after the crop is cut the animals are turned loose to winter over the crofts and scathold as they please.

18689. If there were fences erected between the different holdings, what ought those fences to be—would turf dykes be sufficient, or should they be substantial stone walls?—Really I could hardly say. My own opinion would be that a wire fence would be sufficient. A stone dyke would be more permanent and probably better, but I think a wire fence would probably do. In regard to the scathold being taken under the late Sir Arthur Nicolson, the present liferenter—Lady Nicolson—has not in her day, I believe, curtailed the pasture at all. The complaint the people make now of having their pasture shortened is owing to what was done by the late Sir Arthur, not by the present liferenter.

18690. But when the scathold pasture is taken in and subdivided and formed into allotments, how is that done—is it done on the instigation of, and on the proposal of the landlord? I understand that the scathold is a common pasture in its original form?—Yes.

18691. Then it is sometimes, in virtue of an order of the court, taken in and subdivided, and fences put up, and then those different portions are appropriated to the different occupiers. It was not an allocation of scathold at all, but simply that when the proprietor wished to run a dyke across he would do so, and enclose in it what he called the park on his own scathold which had been before the privilege of the islanders to use. This was an alienation or reduction of the area of common pasture?—Yes; it was done by the late proprietor and not by the present liferenter.

18692. There are three proprietors?—Yes, and Lord Zetland and Lady Nicolson are the principal ones.

18693. Has there been any formal allocation of common pasture?—I think not. It has been between the various proprietors—between Lord Zetland and Lady Nicolson, and there was a subdivision there.

18694. And there has been no allocation of common pasture between the small occupiers?—None.

18695. Is it within your experience that such allocation has taken place elsewhere—a subdivision of common pasture amongst common occupiers?—No, it has not.

18696. Besides fencing is there any other proposal for improvement that you can make?—Some tenants would like a lease, and others again would not. But again, if you take my opinion, I think a lease would be much more satisfactory, because when a man came to find he had a hold on his property for a number of years he would be much more inclined to put his land in good order and keep his house tidy; although, at the same time, there has not been in Lady Nicolson's time any removal of any tenant so far as I am aware.

18697. In recommending leases would you prefer that the conditions and duration of the leases should be left to the occupier and the landlord, or do you think that there might be a legislative enactment which would give the people generally the right to claim a lease of a number of years—nineteen or twenty-one years or whatever it was?—That is a question I can hardly answer. I should certainly be inclined to suggest that, in the event of legislation, leases should not be for less than a certain time.

18698. If there were a lease under legislation, what is the length of lease you would be inclined to suggest. I would not be inclined to allow a lease to be given under nine years.

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18699. What do you think would be the best length of lease?—That is a very difficult question to answer indeed.

18700. With reference to the breed of cattle, has there been in your island any attempt to alter or improve the breed?—Well, unless, perhaps, at the manse and on Lady Nicolson's own estate, I do not think there has been, and some of the cattle are of a very small kind.

18701. In what direction has the improvement been at the manse and the estate?—By the introduction of new blood.

18702. What blood?—Crossing Shetland cattle with south country cattle.

18703. Ayrshires or shorthorns?—Shorthorns, I think. And then the proprietor gets cattle brought into the island, and they remain, and those on the island cross with them, and they are left very much to run, themselves, on the hill.

18704. Have any of the West Highland breed been introduced?—Not so far as I know.

18705. Do you think there is any reason why a heavier or larger class of cattle might not be generally got?—I do not know any reason and I have advocated it with the islanders. I don't think the difference in food would be so much, and even if they only kept one animal for three just now, they would have a better chance of getting a good price than by keeping the small cattle.

18706. And are those small cattle ever sold for exportation to the Scotch market?—They are sold to buyers of cattle who come to Fetlar and purchase from the islanders.

18707. And carry them to the mainland?—I suppose they do.

18708. Not only to the Lerwick or the native market?—No, I think they are taken south.

18709. Are they generally sold at one or two years old?—Generally three years old.

18710. What sort of prices are got?—From £3 to £7 for three-year-olds.

18711. Do you think a much better and heavier description of stock could be raised in the islands which would sell at a higher price?—I think so, for Fetlar is a fertile island, and there is a good pasture over it.

18712. How would you provide wintering food for them?—By having larger crofts.

18713. How do you propose to extend the area of the crofts—you say there are no large farms?—There are no large farms, but there is plenty unused ground which is quite arable, I believe, and a great deal, without very much drainage, would grow excellent oats and potatoes. Fetlar is a very fertile island.

18714. *Mr Cameron.*—Do most people in your parish engage in fishing operations while the season lasts?—A few go to the fishing, but at the present time, I think, there are only five boats in the island engaged in fishing. The fishing station is on the most exposed part of the island facing the south-east.

18715. Is there a want of accommodation or only poor accommodation?—There is no accommodation at all in the way of a pier.

18716. Can you suggest any mode by which the fishing industry might be improved?—Unless Uyea or Rostar there is no other place where a pier could be placed except at very great expense. But I believe, at this place a pier could be built without very great cost. At one of these places there are remains of an old pier, which would not take very much to be put right for a fishing station.

18717. Has that ever been made the subject of remark by the people themselves?—Frequently.

18718. How many boats are there engaged in the fishing trade through the island?—Five at present.

18719. Might there be more according to the population?—I think there might if they had only money to get them.

18720. How many families are there in the island?—I could not tell you—the population, I think, is 425.

18721. Probably fifty or sixty?—Between seventy and eighty families I think.

18722. And only five boats?—Yes, but there are a few men fishing in other places—at Unst and Mid Yell.

18723. And those five boats take a crew of from six to eight men?—They hold six; because there is no accommodation, in the meantime, for large boats at the island.

18724. At what age do lads begin to go to sea?—About fifteen and upwards.

18725. Do you find their going to sea interferes with their education?—No, whether they go to sea or not they generally leave school about the age when they need not go, after thirteen.

18726. Is education, in the district, on a satisfactory footing?—Yes, it is. The teacher, just now, is leaving his house, and although he has not presented many pupils, he has passed, I think, for the last three years 100 per cent.

18727. Does the School Board work harmoniously?—Very. There are three members in Fetlar, and four in North Yell—seven altogether.

18728. Are the farms in Fetlar of the same size, one with another, or do they vary in size?—With the exception of the one which I said was ten acres, most of them will run from three to five merks or acres—a merk is generally about an acre.

18729. From three to five merks, and hill pasture besides?—Yes.

18730. What number of cattle do they keep?—Principally two milk cows and two or three growing up to sell; those of them who are fairly prosperous have been doing that.

18731. And ponies?—They have all some ponies, and need them for bringing home their fuel.

18732. Do they breed ponies?—Yes, from time to time. They sell ponies, and that is about the chief means they have of making their rent.

18733. Where do they sell them?—Fetlar, I believe, has a good name for ponies, and people I believe come into the island from other places and purchase them.

18734. Are there dealers who come and buy ponies as they do cattle?—Well, you might call them dealers. There are people who come and traffic a good deal with the farmers.

18735. I mean do they come to the island and buy a lot of ponies and take them away?—Yes, they have done that since I came to Fetlar.

18736. And the tenants may expect the same men to come round each year?—I could not say as to that. I have only been two years in the island, and there have been several different people coming in that time.

18737. But there is a good market for ponies?—Yes, there is no difficulty in disposing of the ponies.

18738. Do they keep sheep on the hill ground?—A very few of them may have a few sheep, but I don't think many of them keep many.

18739. Are the sheep of the old breed those which produce fine wool?—I

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don't think there is one in Fetlar now; they are all cheviots and cross-breeds.

18740. *But you heard that there used to be an old breed of* Shetland sheep in the island?—There was, and there are some that come pretty near the breed yet. They are small and fine, but as a rule the sheep kept have at least a good deal of Cheviot blood in them.

18741. I suppose there is not much knitting industry in Fetlar?—Oh, yes, the young women knit, but they have a good deal of difficulty in finding a market.

18742. Where do they get the wool?—They buy it from their neighbours in the other islands.

18743. Do you believe the old breed of Shetland sheep is dying out?—I think there is no doubt of it.

18744. If the knitting industry is flourishing how do you account for the sheep not keeping up their character?—I cannot say that the knitting industry is flourishing. The girls have a great deal of digging in the seed time and a great deal of harrowing, and mainly attend to the bringing home of the potatoes; and they work a great deal in the harvest, so that their time is greatly taken up. If they had nothing to do but knit they would make a good thing of it, but they have not time.

18745. Owing to the people having so little time to knit, they find it more profitable to give up the old breed of Shetland sheep, and take a more profitable breed for the purpose of selling wool and raising mutton?—I question if they had that aim when the other sheep were brought in. The other sheep were brought in by accident, and were crossed by accident.

18746. What is the average rent paid for these crofts?—Of that I cannot speak, but I think the land, so far as I have heard the tenants say, is fairly and reasonably rented.

18747. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Who is the third proprietor in Zetland?—One Thomas Jamieson.

18748. Were the scathold lands in Fetlar divided between him and the Earl of Zetland and Lady Nicolson?—Between Lord Zetland and Lady Nicolson only lately.

18749. Not with Mr Jamieson?—Not so far as I know.

18750. You said there were no large farms in the islands, but that Sir Arthur Nicolson had cut off the scathold, and put sheep upon it?—Sheep and cattle and ponies.

18751. What number of sheep and cattle did he put upon the scathold?—I can hardly tell you.

18752. A hundred?—Much more than that; they are grazing on different parts of his property.

18753. Would that not constitute something like a large farm?—Well, if you speak of the home farm, that is so; but when I said there was no large farm I spoke of the tenantry.

18754. The home farm is a large farm?—It is not a farm at all; it is unenclosed.

18755. But it is good land which would be capable of cultivation?—A very great deal of it—almost the whole island is capable of cultivation.

18756. Is the larger part of the island in the possession of the proprietor?—The present proprietor is only liferenter I suppose, but the land belonged to Sir Arthur Nicolson.

18757. Does the home farm contain a larger portion of Lady Nicolson's property, or do the tenants occupy the greater portion?—I rather think there is more of the land under her own control than there is occupied by the tenantry.

18758. You mentioned turnips were cultivated, year after year, on one bit of land?—I know that for nine or ten years that has been so.

18759. Is the piece of ground enclosed?—No.

18760. Why do they repeat the turnip crop?—I dont know; I suppose because their fathers did it before them.

18761. Is it more highly manured then the rest of the land?—No, I think they manure their land fairly well with the limited amount of stock they have to feed.

18762. Is there any disease in their turnip crop?—Last year in many places there was a good deal of finger-and-toe.

18763. You said a number of them objected to fence; do you know the reason of that?—I don't know.

18764. Have you ever heard it objected to wire fences that while they kept the big sheep in, they allowed the small sheep to get through?—No, I never heard that objection taken to them. I believe if you were calling twenty of the islanders who did object to it, they could not give a definite reason why they objected.

18765. You said a merk of land was more a measure of value than a size; is there any difference between the merk of land and the quantity of stock you can winter upon it?—As a rule, a merk is about an acre.

18766. In Fetlar?—Throughout Shetland, I think, a merk is near an acre.

18767. Should a merk of land winter a cattle beast?—Well, it will do no more; do you mean between giving a little grass and oats?

18768. Yes. I suppose there is pasture outside in summer?—You mean a merk of land along with scathold?

18769. Yes; but the scathold goes free with the merk lands?—Yes.

18770. Therefore a merk of land should keep a beast?—Yes, at least with a good deal of scathold—a fair amount of scathold.

18771. In Fetlar there is not a fair amount of scathold?—That is the main complaint, that their scathold is too small, and they are obliged to graze their cattle on their grass?—They must keep fewer cattle; they cannot graze on the croft because there is no grass. Unless they have grass on the scathold they cannot graze on the croft, unless they let them graze on the grain itself.

18772. Are any people in Fetlar restricted in the sale of cattle or fish to any person?—No, I think they are free to sell to whom they please.

18773. They are not restricted either in purchasing from particular shops?—No. There are three merchants, and any one in the island is free to go to either of these, and out of the island if he pleases.

18774. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have said that the population of Fetlar is about 425?—I think it is about that.

18775. Has it been increasing or decreasing in the last twenty or thirty years?—Decreasing.

18776. Rapidly?—I could hardly say rapidly, but it certainly is decreasing.

18777. Decreasing steadily?—I think it is.

18778. What is the cause of that?—Well, a good many of the younger men now find they can do better away from Fetlar than they can in it; there is nothing for them to do in it, unless they go to the fishing, and the fishing is not very much in the meantime.

18779. Have you any idea of the acreage of the island?—No, I have not. I think the island is about 5½ miles long by 3 miles wide, but it is greatly eaten in with bights.

18780. You have stated that the island is very fertile: how many acres do you suppose could be reclaimed and put under cultivation by the plough

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or spade; could the present area of cultivation be doubled or trebled or quadrupled?—I believe it could be quadrupled, at least. You seldom come, except upon hilly ground, on land which is not arable, or which could not easily be made arable; and then from the formation of the surface, it is quite evident that in former years a great deal of ground had been cultivated which is now in grass.

18781. Who is in possession of that land—is it in the proprietor's hands?—No, not more so than in the hands of the tenants as scathold for meadow ground.

18782. What was the object of the late proprietor in forming these parks, and taking away so much of the scathold?—I can only speak from hearsay. His opinion was that this land would pay him better if he converted it into sheep farms.

18783. How many people might have been removed at that time, or were there any?—Of course, that was long before my day, and I can hardly say; but as I have heard old islanders state that thirty years ago there were nearly 1000 people in the island, and they did not require to import corn, but could export it.

18784. Have you any idea what is the value of the land which is now in the occupancy of the proprietrix according to the valuation roll?—I don't know.

18785. Are you aware that, generally speaking, the land in the proprietor's hands is put in lower than if it were under rental?—No, I am not aware of that.

18786. Are the people now in the island—the diminished population—in a position to take more land and get their crofts increased?—Some of them would be, and others I don't think could do so unless they were aided; some of them are what you would say very poor. There are a few who are in fairly easy circumstances as crofters.

18787. You have stated there has been some hesitation on the part of the people to come forward, and you have done your part by more than once suggesting that they should come—what is the reason of the hesitancy?—The people seem to have a feeling in case they might be called upon to state anything which might injure them with the proprietor; that is my own idea; and some of them might not come owing to backwardness.

18788. Are the people of Shetland rather of a timid disposition?—I don't think so. There are different meanings to the word timid. As regards going to sea, they have no fear; but they might have a feeling if they were holding a small croft, and coming forward to give evidence.

18789. I don't mean timid as sailors and boatmen?—Well, as regards that being so, I don't know; but I believe some of them might not care to come forward, in case they might be called upon to make a statement which would reflect upon the proprietor. I said I thought they would not be pressed to make any statement of that kind.

18790. Who represents the proprietrix in the island?—Mr Colin Arthurson.

18791. Where does he live?—At Still, in Fetlar.

18792. Has Lady Nicolson any other property except this?—I believe she has property near Lerwick.

18793. Has anybody got a lease on the island at all?—There is not a lease on the island.

18794. Are there any improvements going on amongst the crofters, so far as you can observe?—No.

18795. Did you ever hear of anybody improving that had no lease, or no fixity of tenure?—No, I cannot say I have.

18796. Would you be disposed yonrself to lay out your money in improving a place, if you were liable to be removed at next Whitsunday?—I can only speak for myself. If I had not a hold, I would not have done so much as I have done.

18797. Is there, at this moment, an importation going on of meal and other things to the island?—Every fortnight.

18798. From what you stated a little ago, do you believe it to be correct that, when there was a population of nearly 1000, nothing was imported?—No meal was imported, and they exported to neighbouring islands; I have been told that by several old inhabitants.

18799. Is there anything in the way of change of climate or otherwise that would make the raising of crop now different from what it was before; are the seasons getting worse?—Not so far as I have heard. I have heard them say that last summer was as fine as any that the oldest inhabitant remembered.

18800. You spoke about nine returns, was that very figure of nine communicated or mentioned to you?—No, it was my own experience of what I had myself. I had seed from the south, and that was counted an exceedingly good return.

18801. I suppose the glebe is not very much better soil than other parts of the island?—It is good soil, but not very much better than the soil round about it. The old minister used the plough, and it is possible the ground may be better wrought.

18802. Can you give any idea what proportion in acreage is in the proprietor's own hands, or in the home farm, as distinguished from the land in the hands of the tenants?—As I said before, I think the acreage under cultivation might be quadrupled.

18803. But how much of the estate of Lady Nicolson is in her own hands, and how much of it is in the hands of small tenants; what proportion? You said there was more you thought in the hands of Lady Nicolson?—I should think, from what I see myself, she has more than half, but still it would require an old islander who knew the island better than I do to say.

18804. Of the 425 people upon the island, how many may be upon the Nicolson estate, can you say?—I should say two-thirds.

18805. *The Chairman.*—Is there any other remark you would like to make?—I would just say that, as far as I know, the great desire of the islanders is more scathold; many of them desire a lease, and many of them would certainly take a larger holding than they have got, and for a term of years.

18806. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And they are able to do it?—A few might, and others would do it if they got a little assistance. I don't think there is any general complaint of the rents; want of scathold is the great thing. I may state that many people complain of the addition made to their rents when repairs were executed upon the church or manse at the present time. That was called church rate, and amounts to 5s. The crofters and heritors are bound to keep up both church and manse, but, in point of fact, the above system makes the crofter do it. The people thought the rate might at least be removed in a few years, but it has become permanent.

JOHN OMAND, Crofter and Fisherman, Mid Yell (57)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LI.*)

18807. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you been chosen by a number of the people to come here to-day?—I was asked if I would come, and I

John Ormand

MID YELL. asked another man if he would come and he would not, and therefore I came.

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John Omand. 18808. How many met to choose you?—About sixteen, I think.

18809. What did they wish you to state?—In the first place, I should like a Government valuation put upon the property we are now occupying; the rental is too high.

18810. That is the wish of the people who sent you here?—Yes; and secondly, an improvement in the homesteads and houses we live in; that they may be made more comfortable than they are at the present time.

18811. Anything further?—And then, at least upon the property that we occupy, that we won't be turned off at any time the proprietor wishes.

18812. What length of lease do you desire?—As long as we could get—ten or twenty or thirty years.

18813. What is the name of the property on which you live?—Kaywick.

18814. Who is the proprietor?—Lady Budge.

18815. What rent do you pay?—I pay £10.

18816. For how much ground?—Three and a half acres of cultivated ground—that is, taxes and all.

18817. And what scathold rights have you with that?—I could not say the extent of scathold, but it is very small indeed.

18818. What stock do you keep?—About six head of cattle is all we can keep, young and old together.

18819. No horses?—Yes, we have four ponies.

18820. And sheep?—I think we have about eighteen head of sheep on the scathold.

18821. What quantity of crop do you get from the croft—potatoes and oats?—The quantity is small indeed, and would not do to support a family if it were not for the grain we get from the south country.

18822. How long would it support you?—Three months would be the outside of it, and sometime not that. Some years we have to take the greater part of the crop to give to the cattle to save them.

18823. Do you do anything to your house yourself, or is it found by the proprietor?—It used to be found by the proprietor, but now he won't do anything unless we do it ourselves. When we came to the house—it is merely a house of four rooms—we had to do the inside of it for ourselves. The lady tried to tighten the roof, but it is not tight yet; and we are thinking if we could get a lease we would put up a roof upon it ourselves.

18824. What kind of roof has it?—A slate roof; but it has been standing, I believe, upwards of fifty or sixty years.

18825. You have a slated house of four rooms, but damaged?—Yes, it is damaged.

18826. You have a byre?—Yes.

18827. And stable?—No, no stable; the ponies lie out all winter. A few may have stables, but we never had any.

18828. Is the byre slated?—No, thatched.

18829. Have you to keep the thatch up yourselves?—Of course we do. We build byres and barns to ourselves.

18830. But not the dwelling house?—No; it was always considered that the proprietors should do that.

18831. How long have you been there?—Only five years in this place.

18832. And it was a bad house when you came to it?—It was going to decay in the inside.

18833. Where did you come from?—The island of Unst.

18834. What induced you to come here and take a dear place without a lease?—Rise of rents where I came from. I was away for a long time out of the country. The most of my life has been spent in the south, and I was away for a long time, and when I came home the town I was then living in was paying £16 yearly. There were three small crofts, and I went to the proprietor of Fetlar, and offered to take the whole town at the same rent, and he then raised the rent £8 more on the town, and then I would not take it. The result of the thing was I had to go to Major Cameron and take a croft from him in North Yell, and removing all my effects from the place I was residing in on to Major Cameron's property cost me over £50. I went there, and took a farm from him for £7, 10s. of rent. The first two years I settled the rent with him myself, but the next three years I was on the property he put his lands into the hands of the factor Mr Walker, and the rent he took from me was £8—that was 10s. of a rise; the second rent he took was £9, 16s., and the third rent was £14; and then I had to fly from there again, and go from there to the island of Unst, and take a farm from the major again. There was no other proprietor I could get one from, and I went to Unst and took a farm at £7, 10s. I was there nine years, and after the improvements I made on the property,—over £50 worth,—the rent was raised to £9, 10s., and I left and came here. That is the way I have been served in Shetland.

18835. You have accounted for fifteen years or so?—Yes.

18836. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was this Mr Walker John Walker?—Yes; there are not many under the British flag who do not know him.

18837. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—At present you are not complaining of the rent, or anything since you have taken this place?—No. Of course I think the rent rather high for the ground I occupy.

18838. The rent may be raised upon you any day?—It might be. They can do anything they think proper. As for Lady Budge, I do not think there are many like her in Shetland; she has used her tenants well.

18839. What notice did you get of this rise of rent from Mr Walker?—I never got notice at all until I came to pay the rent.

18840. And then he asked you for more for that same year?—For that same year.

18841. And had you the extra money in your pocket?—No, I had to go and get the loan of the money until I came home. I had to go two miles from the place where I settled with him, and had to borrow money from another until I could pay it back.

18842. About this house you are inhabiting—a slated house of four rooms—what is the cost of building a house of that kind?—I could not say what it might be worth.

18843. Can you build a house of that sort for £100?—I do not douht but I could.

18844. It would take all that?—It would take nothing short of that, I should think. But that was a house built over fifty years ago. It was built first for the proprietor, who used it for keeping his boat gear, and shal and fish, and so on.

18845. One of your demands is for improved houses; if the proprietor were putting up houses of that sort upon crofts worth £3 or £4 or £5, what rent would you expect him to draw for the house?—The small crofts the Shetland people are occupying could not afford to huild houses like it; but, at the same time, such houses as the people in Shetland would like, would be a house of about 30 by 12, with a 7 feet wall, and a wooden roof, with felt. It would answer as well as slate, and be lighter.

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18846. What would that cost?—I could not exactly say. Some here know; but I do not think it would exceed about £50 to build it. If the proprietor built the walls and put on the roof, the tenant would do the inside of it for himself—that is, with the expectation of having a lease on the property and knowing that he would not be turned away. I have done up four houses myself in my time, and I have had enough of it.

18847. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are all the people on Lady Budge's property fishing as well as crofting?—Yes, all fishing.

18848. Who is the factor?—There is no factor over the property; every tenant pays the rent to herself.

18849. Does she stay in the country?—Over there in the big house at the other side. She just takes the rents as they can give it.

18850. You say you fish yourself, are you engaged in herring fishing just now?—Yes.

18851. With one of the large boats?—Yes.

18852. Whom do you fish for?—Mr Walker there.

18853. What is the arrangment between the curer and the crew with reference to their boats?—I am fishing with Mr Walker's boat, but we deliver the fish to Mr Mackay at the station. We have Mr Walker's boat, but he is not curing the fish; Mr Mackay cures the fish.

18854. And Mr Walker hires the boat to you?—Yes.

18855. And the whole crew share alike in the gain?—The half share of the fish goes to the crew, and the owner of the boat and nets gets the other half.

18856. And he keeps the boat and nets in repair?—Yes, and we have the half share of the fish, and he the other half.

18857. And then you sell the fish to the curer?—Yes, to Mr Mackay.

18858. You choose your own curer?—Of course that is the man we fish to; that is the man Mr Walker tells us fish to.

18859. Then does Mr Walker choose your curer?—Yes, of course; the boat and nets are his, and we fish as half-catch men, and he sells the herring to Mr Mackay.

18860. His herring and yours?—Yes, both of course.

18861. Whom do you take your stores from?—We are at liberty to take them from any one we like.

18862. Whom do you take them from?—From Mr Walker or any other we wish to go to. If we did not wish to go to his store, we would get money from him to go to another and buy. That is one good job, we are not confined to any one more than another.

18863. Do you know what is the rule when a boat is bought by a crew, upon what terms is it paid back?—I am not in the way of going into the buying, and cannot say.

18864. Do you fish for cod and ling as well as herring?—I used to, but not this year.

18865. But the owner of the boat provides gear for the deep sea fishing as well?—Just the same. I have been fishing for five years to a man in North Yell, and he provides the boat and lines.

18866. Are you able to land more fish with these big boats?—It depends on where we are fishing; of course, we can fish the ling fishing in them as well as in the small boats, and with more safety, I should think; only if I had been going to the ling fishing again, I would prefer the old sixern. It is more handy in the way I have been used to; at the same time a big boat gives more safety.

18867. But in the herring fishing, you can carry a great many more nets with the big boats?—Yes, you have a better chance of herring fishing in a big boat than in a smaller one.

18868. You fish more herring with a big boat, and you are safer?—Yes.

18869. It is the same crew—a crew of six in the big boat, as well as in the small boat?—Yes.

18870. Who cured the cod and ling last year?—James Hozean.

18871. Was that since you came here?—Yes.

18872. Had he a station here?—No, but in North Yell.

18873. How far is that from here?—Eight or nine miles.

18874. You would have to stay there at the fishing?—We went on the Monday, and came home every Saturday. It was from that station there were so many boats cast away three years ago.

18875. Were you there at that time?—Yes, I was at sea that very day.

18876. Where do you get the herring this season?—Out at the north end of this island, the north firth.

18877. Right out between Unst and the mainland?—Yes.

18878. A good bit away from here?—Yes, a good bit; and we have bad tides to contend with going through Blue Mull Sound. There have been plenty of fish caught there this year.

18879. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated you had only three and a half acres of arable land?—Yes.

18880. Do you want more?—We would make improvements for ourselves if we got a lease.

18881. But you want more?—Yes, we would improve it for ourselves; we have plenty of surface inside.

18882. Is there plenty of land in your neighbourhood which could be taken in if you got it?—Yes, there is plenty in the enclosure.

18883. How many tenants has Lady Budge altogether?—About twenty-one.

18884. Are they all in the same position as yourself, wanting to get more land?—I am not aware as to that. There is so much scathold enclosed with arable ground inside the fence, that any man who wishes to add to his property by cultivating, can do so; he is at liberty to do so.

18885. But you won't do it until you get a lease?—No, I would like some security so that I would get the good of my labour.

18886. You are tired of being knocked about from place to place. Have you applied to her Ladyship for a lease?—Well, yes, I asked her once about it, and I did not think she was very willing to give one; but at the same time she said her word was as good as her bond, and I said while she was alive I believed neither I nor any other tenant would be turned off as long as we were of good character, but that would only be for her life, and we did not know how long that might be.

18887. Is the property her own, or did it belong to her husband?—Her husband bought it, and I think she is the liferenter now.

18888. Is she a native of Shetland?—Yes.

18889. You stated it was necessary for you to buy so much meal in the year, the croft don't support. How much are you obliged to buy on an average?—Some years it will cost us £10 or £12.

18890. Are you obliged to buy anything for your stock for the winter?—Sometimes.

18891. Has Lady Budge anything in her own hands; has she a home farm?—Just a little croft along with the house.

18892. What is the biggest rent paid by any of her tenants?—I pay the largest.

18893. Was it raised when you went in?—No, it was before I went in it was raised. The original rent was far from that; I think it was £5.

18894. And the house was then new?—No, I don't mind of the house

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being built, and know nothing about the building of the house. The house must have been built sixty years ago at least.

18895. We have been told that some of the tenants object to fencing, do you know that that is the case?—I am not aware of it. I would approve of fencing every one's piece of ground.

18896. Do you know that some fencing will keep out Cheviot sheep, but will not keep out the Shetland sheep?—I am aware of that. The Shetland sheep are so small that they would get in between the run of the wire.

18897. Unless it is a very close fence, it is of no value to the small tenant who has native sheep?—Not at all.

18898. You stated a number of different places you removed to when your rent was raised, where a number of people were treated in the same way as well as yourself?—Yes, on the same property—on Major Cameron's property.

18899. What is the name of the property?—Garth.

18900. Where does it lie?—It is in North Yell and Unst and on the mainland of Deeling. That piece of his property was thrown waste for a sheep farm at the time Mr John Walker had it.

18901. Is it still under sheep farms?—Yes.

18902. Were many people turned out?—Yes, I should say there were about thirty or forty families turned out—something similar to what Fetlar is now. There were about thirty houses thrown to waste on Fetlar at the time Sir Arthur Nicolson made the sheep farm, which he thought would pay him better.

18903. How long is it since this occurred on Major Cameron's property?—Seventeen or eighteen years ago.

18904. What became of the people?—They had to look after themselves, and they all got settled down again. Some came here to Lady Budge's property, and some went to the estate of West Sandwick, and some went over to places in North Yell, and some to the island of Unst.

18905. Were there any other cases in this neighbourhood of sheep farms being made except these two?—Salter and Windhouse have been wasted, to my mind.

18906. And there were people there at one time?—There were.

18907. Were these good fertile places?—So far as I am aware of, they were as good as any other of the places now occupied.

18908. Is the population in your neighbourhood increasing or decreasing?—It has decreased from what it formerly was.

18909. Within your own recollection?—Yes.

18910. But is that from people being put away or going away?—By people being turned from it, and it laid down for sheep farm purposes.

18911. Are the people as fond of their homes here as they are in the mainland and islands of Scotland?—I believe they are, so far as I know.

18912. A good number of them go to sea, and go to all parts of the world?—Yes, they are through every part of the world mostly now. I have been in a good many places myself, and have found Shetland people there.

18913. But they would like to come back?—Some do, but some go away and settle down and make homesteads in the colonies. I would never have come to Shetland again, if it had not been to seeing to my parents.

18914. Was that because you were knocked about?—No, but I thought I could make more use of my money, and more use of my time abroad.

18915. What is the best country you have been in?—I could not say

one place more than another of the colonies. At sea every place was alike to me, but Victoria was the place I would have approved of.

18916. Are many people from Shetland there?—A great many.

18917. Are they doing well, those who went?—Mostly, those I know of.

18918. *The Chairman.*—You say there are some advantages in the larger classes of fishing boats now used?—Yes.

18919. Do you think the present class of boat used is perfect, or do you think it should be made larger, or altered, or in any respect made better?—It might be made better by putting steam into them; but the boat, in its present state, I think, is quite comfortable and safe.

18920. But you would be in favour of introducing steam?—Yes.

18921. If a boat of that class were got, would it not be more difficult for fishermen to buy shares and become proprietors of the boat?—Well, the outlay on the boat would be greater, but then, at the same time, you would have more advantage of the fishing. If you were out in calm weather with the present boats, and falling into a calm you could not save your fish; whereas, if you had steam, you would save the fish, which might be a matter of £40 or £60.

18922. Do you think there is much advantage attached by fishermen to becoming proprietors of their own boat, or do they think it better for them to remain in the position of hirers?—I think it would be better for them to become proprietors, so that they would have the advantage of selling the fish at the best price.

18923. Can you suggest any improvement that the Government might introduce for the sake of the fishermen?—Well, there is one thing Government might introduce, and that is to have proper harbours of refuge in the dark nights when the boats are out, and it comes very rough weather we cannot see, and there is no light to direct us, and the men might be cast away. We have great need of a light to lead us in.

18924. You want lighthouses and harbours of refuge?—Yes.

18925. Have you considered about whether there is any particular place about here where a harbour could be made?—We have a good harbour here if we had good piers. There are curers coming down from the south making enlargements and better piers, but a light is the thing we require in this harbour in dark nights when we are coming in; once we get into the harbour we are safe enough.

18926. You said you thought it would be an improvement if the different holdings were fenced off one from another?—I think so, according to my own idea.

18927. But what sort of fence do you think would be the best between small holdings—a wire fence, a stone fence, or a turf fence?—I think a small wire fence would be well enough between the small crofts.

18928. But it gives no shelter?—No, of course not.

18929. Do you think there is any advantage in a stone dyke over a wire fence?—Well, the soil here is so deep you cannot get a proper foundation to build a stone dyke on; you have to build it on the top of a marsh.

18930. Are there many stones in the ground?—Not where I am. There can be no sort of fence where I am except a wire fence. But there are other places where they could put up stone fences.

18931. Is there any other remark you wish to make before you retire?—None.

18932. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What quantity of meal do you get for £10? do you buy it by the hundredweight?—No, by the boll.

18933. What do you pay for it?—Different prices; sometimes from 16s. to 18s. a boll.

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18934. Wheat flour?—Yes.

18935. Brown flour?—Yes.

18936. And oatmeal?—From 20s. to 25s. for a boll.

18937. This last year?—No.

18938. When?—19s. to 20s. last year.

18939. And you use flour more than oatmeal?—Just half and half always.

18940. *Profesor Mackinnon.*—Do you think that if you had had a light three years ago, lives would have been saved?—No, I don't think the light would have done any good in that way, the sea being so heavy. The loss of life mostly took place before the boats came to land. But here, in this harbour, coming in in a dark night from the fishing, there would be much good of a light to keep one off the rocks.

Rev. JAMES BARCLAY (80)—examined.

Rev. James Barclay.

18941. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are parish minister of Mid Yell?—Yes, it was a double parish originally, but South Yell was disunited from it recently.

18942. Do you belong to a family of this country?—Yes.

18943. Are you a native of Shetland?—I am.

18944. How long have you been minister of the parish?—Since 1844.

18945. Where were you before that?—I had no parish before that.

18946. Is there much change in the condition of the people since you came here?—A very great change.

18947. Is it for the better or the worse?—For the better; very much for the better.

18948. Would you be so good as to state in what respect?—In respect of the circumstances of the people generally. For instance, there was no work of much consequence here when I came, with the exception of fishing, but now the people have work at their doors. Formerly you could get a girl to work for you at 6d. a day; now you cannot get them under 1s. 6d., or 2½d. an hour. That is so far an improvement in their circumstances. Their buildings are also improved.

18949. What are the wages of a man?—When I came here 10d. to 1s. a day, and I am now paying myself as high as 2s. 6d. for boys, and 5s. for a mason.

18950. And is there more work for them now than there was?—A great deal.

18951. Of what kind?—Almost every kind. This herring fishing gives every one a chance of employment—boys and girls and men and women. They are all employed; whereas formerly there was very little work. Although there was herring fishing then, they could not afford, and did not come to anything like the wages they are giving now.

18952. Is there work to any considerable extent going on in connection with the land?—Not much in connection with land. You see they are both crofters and fishermen combined, and at one season of the year there is very little done on the land.

18953. Are there any large farms in this parish?—Not very large. The largest farm I know is in West Sandwick.

18954. What is the extent of it—what rent?—I could not mention the rent exactly; it is £100 odds, I think.

18955. Is the most of the land occupied by crofters?—Yes, the most of the land; but there is a good deal of land unoccupied—in sheep farms. As nearly as I can calculate, there are about 300 odd merks of land occupied by sheep; of course, that reduces the number of the inhabitants very much.

18956. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And how much by crofters?—I do not know where the crofters who used to live here are.

18957. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Has there been much change in that respect since you came?—Yes, a great deal.

18958. Has part of the ground been put into sheep pasture and taken from small tenants?—A great deal.

18959. Have any of the small tenants been removed out of the parish to make way for sheep farms?—Not, I think, in this parish—not many. I do not know about North Yell.

18960. But some of them have been deprived of some of their pasture in order to increase the pasture of sheep farms?—They have, and I think that is a great injury that is at the bottom of the discontent, and it is very natural that it should be.

18961. Has it led to much discontent in this parish?—Not so much in this parish as in the neighbouring parishes. There has been a good deal of common taken from the people in this immediate neighbourhood, but then it is enclosed, and they get the benefit of it, so that you cannot say that is a hardship; I rather think it is favourable to them.

18962. Is part of the scathold fenced?—Yes, I think so. It keeps out outsiders, and they get the benefit.

18963. Is there any considerable number of small tenants in this parish who are able to live upon their crofts, independent of any other occupation?—No, I know of none. If they were to take larger farms, and had fixity of tenure, they might do it; but they have many other ways of providing for themselves—their cattle, and sheep, and ponies, and the fishery—and they take them all combined.

18964. Is their condition generally in this parish comfortable, or the reverse?—I should say very comfortable.

18965. There is never anything approaching destitution?—Not since 1847 and 1848, when the potato failure was.

18966. In respect to clothing, do you think they are better off than they used to be?—Yes, they are more fashionably clothed, at any rate.

18967. Are the children generally well clothed?—Generally; perhaps they require a little more attention to be paid to them.

18968. Are there any children so poorly clothed as to make it a reason for their not attending school?—I suppose they will put in that as one reason.

18969. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Or the church?—Yes, I cannot complain of want of clothing of the people. The fact is that in these forty years a complete change has taken place among the people both as to food and clothing, and in every respect. But, so far as I can see, the crofters and landlords are living in perfect cordiality and peace. I do not think myself they require anything, unless it be fixity of tenure or leases, and that the forty days' notice to quit be altered; that is a terrible hardship. I do not see how the crofter can possibly improve the place if he has no fixity of tenure.

18970. *Mr Cameron.*—You mean by fixity of tenure security of lease?—Yes.

18971. You don't mean fixity of tenure?—No.

18972. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Some have leases?—Yes.

18973. Any considerable number?—No, you will hear crofters com-

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plaining of their rent being too high, but they forget that, at the same time, the profits have increased to three times the amount. In regard to the cattle, in 1844 I could purchase a cow for 35s. or 40s.—a native cow, a farrow cow—and a calf at £3. This year you could not get the same class of cattle under £5 or even £7. The rents have not risen to that extent; so that, looking at it from a purely commercial point of view, the people are the gainers.

18974. Are there no cottars at all?—No, I don't exactly know the meaning of that.

18975. A cottar is a working man with a house and a bit of land sufficient to raise a few potatoes and a little corn?—There are very few of these. We have a good many small places of that sort; we call them housewives, those who are on the poors roll, but that is the only class of cottars I know of. You will see yourselves round here that the houses are very good for fishermen. These houses have been newly built. No doubt, a great many of the people require better houses; but they don't provide them themselves; the landlord provides the houses.

18976. Have there been a good many new cottages built?—Oh, yes, a good many.

18977. Good slated houses?—Not many slated houses except here, about Mid Yell. In the country generally they are thatched houses. They are now getting felt roofs.

18978. Are these found as satisfactory as slate?—I should think not.

18979. Or as thatch?—It is better than thatch.

18980. Does the custom still prevail of having the fire in the centre of the house?—Oh, yes.

18981. Is it generally the case?—In the old houses; but when they get new houses they use chimneys.

18982. Are there any houses in this parish in which the cattle are accommodated under the same roof with the family?—Not now.

18983. But they used to be so?—Oh, yes; people thought it was very warm and comfortable and healthy.

18984. Have they improved in the tidiness of their habits about their houses?—They are improving; it will take some time to do that.

18985. In respect of education, do you think it has made great advances?—There cannot be much; until the Education Act was passed there was only one school in the double parish.

18986. Then the people in a great part of the parish were without education?—They educated themselves. There was generally some lad went about; and they seemed to be more anxious about schools then than they are now.

18987. I suppose they complain of the taxation?—It is very heavy.

18988. What is the rate in this parish?—The school rate and poor rate are 6s. 6d. between them—half on the tenant and half on the landlord; and then, adding other taxes, it comes very hard.

18989. How many schools are there in the parish now?—Six board schools. You see the population is scattered round about the shores—there is no interior population—only along the coast; and you must have schools within three miles of each other, and it is a very heavy burden.

18990. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said there were not many people removing from your parish, or giving way to sheep farms, but that there was such in neighbouring parishes?—Yes.

18991. Mention the neighbouring parishes?—I can only mention what takes place in my own district—North Yell and Fetlar.

18992. Any more?—I don't know.

18993. And Unst?—Yes.

18994. You mentioned that some people had leases here?—There are a few of them.

18995. I presume on all bigger farms like West Sandwick the tenant has a lease?—I think they have.

18996. Would anybody improve his land unless he had a lease or some hold?—I think not.

18997. You would not be disposed to do so yourself?—No; I would not. A man who has no security may he turned off on forty days' notice. It would take sometime before they would pay up the improvements.

18998. You have stated that the condition of the people generally has improved within your own observation?—Yes.

18999. Do you think that several of them, if they got the opportunity of enlarging their crofts, and had a little more security in their position, would be disposed to improve?—I think many of them would.

19000. For instance, to-day we had a walk in this immediate neighbourhood, and the fields are very dirty and full of weeds—most slovenly—can you make any excuse for people tilling in that way?—The combination of fishing and crofts—the one spoils the other. They give more attention to what pays them best.

19001. You stated that a good deal of improvement and progress have been made within your recollection; is that progress and comparative comfort of the people entirely owing to the development of the fishings rather than to anything done in improving the land or the facilities afforded them?—It is only of late that the fishings have increased.

19002. But before then were the circumstances of the people improved?—Yes, they were greatly improved.

19003. But not so rapidly?—Oh, dear, no. During the last five or six years a great improvement has taken place in the circumstances of the people.

19004. Do you think some of them have been laying by any money?—I am sure I cannot say. I suppose they would.

19004*. I am only putting that question with regard to the desire for more land and bigger crofts,—that they would be able to stock them?—I think they would.

19005. You stated that a cow a good number of years ago would cost 35s. to 40s., and that now it would cost something like £6 or £7. Now would one of these small crofters be able to rear an animal that would bring that price at the present day?—I should think so. I have a small property of my own, and I have some tenants and crofters on the glebe lands, and one crofter can pay me £5 odd, and raise fourteen head of these cattle.

19006. Have you seen him do so?—I have.

19007. Should not a man like that rather be encouraged?—Surely.

19008. Would they not really form the wealth of the country?—Surely; but it is rarely you get such an active man.

19009. But when you have such a man he ought to get encouragement?—Certainly.

19010. And I hope you encourage him by not raising his rent?—No. not in that way. He has three farms close together.

19011. *The Chairman.*—You mentioned that every class of people found employment and advantage in the fishery?—Yes.

19012. The women and younger people among others?—Quite so.

19013. Are you speaking of the women belonging to the locality, or do the fish-curers import labour from other places?—They have been obliged to import labour through the scarcity of gutters.

19014. Where do they hire that class of women?—At various places in

MID YELL. RAEFIRTH. Rev. James Barclay.

the north of Scotland—Peterhead, Aberdeen, Inverness; and indeed they have come from as far as Argyleshire.

19015. When they bring them over here, do they bring them in gangs?—In considerable numbers; it depends on the number of the fishing boats they have.

19016. Do they make a proper provision for their lodging and entertainment here?—The best they can. Here, in this place, they have built wooden houses for them.

19017. Is that sort of trade under any inspection or regulation?—Not that I am aware of; it is only of late that has begun here.

19018. Do you think there is a proper sort of lodging provided for them?—Generally these houses are put up quickly, and they all have stoves in them to enable them to do the necessary work. I hear no complaint.

19019. You have not heard any complaint of irregularity or immorality?—I think the people have been very quiet. This is the first time we have had these strangers, and they appear quiet and decent people. I have heard no complaint of any of them, so far as I could learn.

19020. Are they decently dressed?—Yes.

19021. Do they go to church?—Some of them.

19022. Are there men brought as well as women?—Lads are attached to the boats; each boat has about six men and a boy.

19023. Is there any drinking amongst that class of people?—A good deal, I suspect.

19024. Any among the women?—I cannot say; I have not heard of any. In various places in Unst all the public-houses stopped for a certain time. They stopped selling any spirits during the fishing season in Delting and various other places.

19025. But there is nothing like an outburst of intemperance?—No.

19026. You mentioned that the union of fishing and crofting had a had effect upon the cultivation—in producing a slovenly sort of cultivation. Do you think it would be advisable or advantageous to divide the two classes or not?—I am sure I cannot say.

19027. I mean, do you think it would be better to give the crofters their crofts and to place the fisherman in habitations apart without any interest in the land; or do you think that a portion of land is essential to the fisherman?—It is essential, I think, in the present state of matters. They require milk and cattle.

19028. Have you heard this question discussed or considered?—No, I have heard it mentioned, but not discussed, and I do not see very well how they could do without land.

19029. Is there any other statement you would like to make spontaneously about the people?—No, I cannot say there is. I think myself, generally speaking, the people in this parish have no great cause of complaint. Their rents, no doubt, have been raised, but the produce of their farms has been raised—cattle, sheep, and ponies. When I came here eggs were selling at 1½d. a dozen, and now they are selling at 6d. You could get a capital lamb then for 2s., and now it would cost you 5s. I have seen a lamb sold for 1s.

19030. *Mr Cameron.*—What do sheep sell for?—You will get a real Shetland sheep of good size for 10s.

19031. What age?—Three or four or five years old.

19032. What will it weigh?—40 lbs.; and you would have got the same kind of sheep for 5s. or 6s. before. But there is a good deal of mixture in the sheep now.

19033. Do the sheep vary according to market prices going for

sheep in the south, or does the price remain pretty much the same?—It remains pretty much the same

19034. At what time do they sell the sheep?—The month of August, or now.

19035. Do you know anybody who has sold this year?—No.

19036. Where do they sell them?—I do not know.

19037. Are there markets here?—No.

19038. Who buys them—do dealers come round?—No; for instance, if I want a sheep, I go to purchase it.

19039. But there are 5000 sheep?—That is a different thing.

19040. Does anybody buy them from outside?—Yes, they go down to Lerwick.

19041. Does the price in Scotland regulate that price here to any degree?—I do not think it; not so far as I know.

19042. Have you any idea what the population was about forty years ago in your parish?—Between 1700 and 1800.

19043. And what is it now?—Nearly 1900.

19044. It is rather greater?—Yes.

19045. Do you think that the land would sustain a larger population than that?—Yes, I think it would. I think if you take into consideration the number of merks of land that used to be under cultivation, say, 300 odd merks, and give a population of five to each farm, you would bring up the population to about 2300.

19046. Your part of the parish is not overcrowded?—No, it is not.

19047. How do you account for the heavy local taxation in Shetland?—It is very difficult to say.

19048. Have you ever heard any reason assigned?—Many reasons; but I could not venture to state what the cause of it is. The poor rate and school rate are very high—6s. 6d. in pound.

19049. It appears to be a general rate in the island?—I suppose so.

19050. Has anybody ever tried to find out the reason?—There is no apparent cause. There is no greater poverty here than in the Highlands, where the rate is not so high.

19051. How do you account for it?—It is easy to account for the school rate; and there is one reason, for instance, for the poor rate being high, and that is the number of lunatics we have to support.

19052. Has the number of widows, in consequence of the dangerous life the men lead, anything to do with it?—To a certain degree, but not much.

19053. Is there any poorhouse in the parish?—No.

19054. Has that anything to do with it?—Yes, a good deal.

19055. Do many of the young women go south for employment?—Yes, a good many, as servant girls.

19056. Do they do well in the south, so far as you know?—Yes, I have known some of them do very well, while others did not.

MATTHEW ROBERTSON (69) Mid Yell—examined.

19057. *The Chairman.*—What is your occupation?—Crofter; my occupation is very little.

19058. Were you a fisherman too?—I was at one time.

19059. From Mid Yell?—Mid Yell.

19060. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What property is your croft upon?—Mrs Budge's.

MID YELL.

RAEFIRTH.

Matthew Robertson.

19061. What is the size of your croft?—I hold four acres or four merks of arable land.

19062. And your stock?—Six cattle, young and old—and two milk cows.

19063. And sheep?—Say about twenty head of small sheep.

19064. Ponies?—Three ponies.

19065. And the rent?—Originally the rent was about £5 exclusive of the taxes.

19066. You don't consider that the rent is high, do you?—If it were not for the taxes, I would not. The valuation is £4, 18s. 6d.

19067. What is it that the people have got to say generally?—The think their taxes heavy, and they would like their houses put in better condition; if the houses are out of condition, the proprietor is not willing to put them in order. If the proprietor repairs them, he lays something on the rent on that account. We would wish thatch roofs to be done away with and to have felt or canvas. We would wish a house 30 feet long, 12 feet or 13 feet wide, by 7 feet in the walls. The houses are too small.

19068. Seven feet of thickness of wall?—No; 7 feet high.

19069. You consider a felt roof superior to a thatch roof?—Far superior.

19070. If you had a lease of your land, could you undertake the putting of the house in order yourselves?—We would put the inside in order, if the walls and roof were put on. The occupants would put the inside to their own satisfaction.

19071. Was that an old fashion of the country, that the proprietor should make up the outside and the tenant the inside?—Yes, it has been so in all my time.

19072. I suppose you have been upon this estate all your life?—Yes.

19073. And your father before you?—Yes.

19074. The taxes you consider too high are the school rates and the poor rates?—Yes, and there is 15s. in addition laid upon our land on account of the fences betwixt the property belonging to our proprietor and the next proprietor, a fence which was partly forced, because our proprietor did not wish the fence to be raised at all. There was 15s. laid upon our croft to defray that.

19075. Has that fence done any good to you?—No, rather an injury, because our small sheep go through the fence, and that creates bad feeling, and we are threatened with having our sheep poinded.

19076. And are there big sheep on the other side?—Yes.

19077. And they cannot come over to you?—No, it requires a small fence to prevent the small sheep from coming through. But there is another annoyance, and that is caused by the roads running through the town, the gates being left open. We have been very much annoyed and injured, when our crops were on the ground, by animals coming in during the night and destroying our crops.

19078. The road goes through the arable ground?—Yes, and passengers travelling with carriages leave the gates open, and the animals come in, so that we are very much annoyed and injured.

19079. The gates are pretty numerous upon the roads in Mid Yell?—Yes.

19080. It is the school rate and the poor rate that are so very high?—Very high.

19081. How could you manage to reduce the school rate?—I could not say.

19082. I suppose you want to have the schools?—We need the schools.

19083. Do the children go well to the school?—In some cases they

might turn out better, but they attend more regularly than they did at first.

19084. Are the people anxious that the children should go to school?—Some are and others are not. Those who have not had the benefit of education themselves don't feel the necessity as much as the others.

19085. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you a felt or a canvas roof?—There is a felt roof on our house, put on at our own expense.

19086. If it were once put on, would the tenant keep it tarred?—Yes, the tenant would guarantee to keep it in order.

19087. Do you know how long the felt roof lasts?—I am hardly able to say. I suppose, if well cared for, it will last for a lifetime.

19088. What is the greatest experience you have had of these roofs?—I have only had a little experience for a few years, but we have found the benefit of it. It is much lighter for the walls, and it is tight, and we have not the bother of putting up a thatch roof.

19089. How long is it since felt roofs were introduced?—It is long since they began with some individuals, but they are not numerous yet.

19090. What is the oldest you know of?—I am hardly able to say. In North Yell, I believe, they have had some for a number of years. But that has not been on a dwelling house—only a house used as a store.

19091. Do you line the roof below the rafters?—When we wish to make a comfortable room upstairs we line it.

19092. But if it is only a single floor, you don't line it?—No, if we are not going to make a particularly comfortable room, we don't line it; but if we wish to make it anything comfortable we do.

19093. Is the house not very cold if it is not lined?—Yes. The house I occupy is all lined with wood along the wall in one end, and a wooden floor. It is not uncommon, that, in many houses.

19094. But if a felt roof is not lined, is it not peculiarly cold in winter?—Yes, in winter time, and it is very warm in summer.

19095. You mentioned you had a complaint about the erection of the fence on the march between your proprietor and a neighbouring proprietor; who is the neighbouring proprietor?—Mr John Harrison.

19096. Who is your proprietor?—Mrs Budge.

19097. If this fence had been made so as to keep in your sheep, would not that have been of mutual advantage?—Yes, it would have been.

19098. And did you represent to Lady Budge at the time the fence was made that it ought to be made so as to keep sheep in?—Lady Budge had no power at that time, it was old John Walker.

19099. Did you represent that to John Walker?—No.

19100. Do you think, if you had represented it to him, he would have seen that the fence was so erected that it would keep in your sheep?—I could not say; he was a very stiff kind of man.

19101. In regard to the gates you spoke of, would it be of any use to fence the roadsides where there is arable land so as to keep sheep out of it?—It would be. It is in the night time, when the gates are left open, that the sheep get in and the injury is done. Sheep and cattle come in to our corn land and do great injury.

19102. What remedy is possible for it?—I don't know, unless there were restrictions laid on travellers that they must shut the gates.

19103. Have you any other complaints to make?—Nothing in particular. I have no complaints to make against our proprietor; she is a very nice sort of woman.

19104. Is there anything you would like to see done for the land?—No, only I would like that something should be done to the houses we dwell in.

MID YELL. RAEFIRTH. Matthew Robertson.

19105. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that the fence you referred to was put up at the instance of the other proprietor?—Yes, our proprietor was very stiff against it, and was put into the Court of Session about it.

19106. Do you know the law about a mutual fence between two properties?—The law about mutual fences is, I understand, that each one should pay a share.

19107. Do you know also that unless the fence is as good for the one as for the other he is not bound to pay for it?—I did not know that.

19108. You had better go to the proprietrix and tell her you are anxious for a fence to keep your sheep out as well as the others?—They are trying just now to improve it by putting in an additional wire.

19109. *The Chairman.*—Is there any other statement you wish to make?—Nothing in particular.

THOMAS GREEN, Crofter, West Yell (46)—examined.

Thomas Green.

19110. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What amount of land have you?—I have about 140 acres in pasture.

19111. What do you pay for your croft?—£25.

19112. Is your land enclosed?—Yes.

19113. A fence all round it?—Yes.

19114. What stock to you keep?—We have about eight cattle—winter stock,—and about forty sheep; and we have some grazing cattle which go away in the harvest time.

19115. And how many horses?—Five.

19116. How many cattle do you have in summer?—About fifteen; these are extra.

19117. Do you buy these in the spring of the year?—In May.

19118. And sell them—when?—In perhaps three, four, or five months.

19119. Do you take cattle in for hire for summer grazing?—Not as a rule, but I might take in a beast from any one.

19120. What is the price of the summer grazing of a beast here if you did take one in?—It used to be about £1, for four or five months. I have not been long here, only about two years.

19121. Where did you come from?—The mainland.

19122. Who is the proprietor of the place you are in?—Major Cameron.

19123. Had you a farm on the mainland?—I had a croft—a smaller one.

19124. You took this one because you thought it better?—It was better, no doubt. I had to go away from there because they doubled my rent when the lease was out; when I got a lease from Mr Walker, he doubled the old rent and I thought I might have been better looked after by the major, but he doubled it at the end of the lease too.

19125. You took this place two years ago?—Yes, I got this one from Mr Joseph Leask, who owns the whole of that west side.

19126. Have you a lease of any kind?—Yes.

19127. For how long?—Fourteen years.

19128. And when that is ended do you expect the rent will be doubled again?—I don't know what Mr Leask may do. I have a new proprietor now—one of the young men. The old man is dead.

19129. Have you anything to do in repairing the building?—Well,

Mr Leask sorted the house, but I have to keep it in repair; he won't be at the cost of any building.

19130. Have you a slated roof?—No, we have a canvas roof.

19131. Are the office houses thatched?—Yes.

19132. And you have to keep them up?—Yes, as a rule.

19133. Have you to keep the canvas roof tarred?—Yes.

19134. Do you live entirely by farming, or are you otherwise employed?—I fence a good deal; I put up fences—I am here for that purpose.

19135. But you found your farm fenced when you went to it?—No, it was a turf dyke, and would not keep out anything.

19136. Did you put up the fences yourself?—No, Mr Leask gave me the material, and I have to pay the interest on that.

19137. Besides the £25?—Yes; and our taxes are very heavy.

19138. What interest do you pay besides taxes?—6½ per cent. on the whole cost of the fence.

19139. What does that come to?—55s., and we are taxed on that interest.

19140. What are the taxes in your parish?—About 6s. 6d. in the pound I think.

19141. But you only pay half?—Half on us—school rate and poor rate.

19142. What arable land have you got?—I think about fifteen acres, but it is in a miserable state—all wet; and he binds me to improve the land at that rent.

19143. Have you anything to complain about?—No, I have not so much to complain about now as I had before. We are charged so much a sheep for being in the scathold, besides what I have mentioned. He charges 6d. a head.

19144. But you keep forty sheep on your own ground?—Yes.

19145. And you have other sheep on the scathold?—I have none, but other tenants have. They don't know about this meeting; they are all away at the fishing; and I would not have known of it, had I not been over here working.

19146. Have the tenants any general grievance?—I think the most they have to grieve at is the want of leases, and rents being raised on them for improving. They don't raise the rent on a fellow who don't improve.

19147. You think the rent has been raised in proportion to the amount of improvement?—I know some of them have got a good rise by improving.

19148. How long is a man generally allowed to enjoy his improvements before the rent is raised?—In olden times he might have gone on ten or fifteen years, and perhaps have a new place at no rent, and then perhaps they would get a rent of 30s. or 40s. according to what improvements had been made. That is the way my grandfather started the place I left.

19149. Had he anything like a lease?—No, but he lived in the place until he was 84 years of age.

19150. Had he a promise of it?—Yes, from Mrs Mowat. They were not so ready to remove in these days; there was no sheep farming. We were in it only two years ago, when the major, after I laid out £50 or £60 upon it, doubled the rent. My last lease in that place was fourteen years. I got it from Mr Walker.

19151. What was Walker?—He would be, I think, factor, and would have shares with Major Cameron in this sheep farming.

19152. They took away the scatholds from the people?—They did,

MID YELL. — RAEFIRTH. — Thomas Green.

and drove away the people; they took the crofts wherever they could make the best sheep farms. A good many of them came over to Yell and North Maven, and anywhere they could get a place.

19153 *The Chairman.*—Major Cameron asked you for an increase of rent. Was it double the rent?—He doubled it at the end of the lease.

19154. Then you left. Did Major Cameron let your holding to another tenant?—Yes.

19155. And what increase of rent did he get from the other tenant?—I think 5s. more than I was paying. He got the tenant in after I left.

19156. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Not at double the rent?—No.

19157. *The Chairman.*—Would you have taken the farm at an increase of 5s.?—I would not have left it for a pound or so.

19158. The new tenant took it for 5s. more than you paid before?—Yes; that was all he could get.

19159. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He could not get the double rent?—No.

19160. *The Chairman.*—But now you pay £25 for your holding, which contains eight cattle, five horses, and forty sheep—that is within the fence?—Yes.

19161. Is there any land within the fence which you could still improve, and turn into arable?—Yes, and I will do it; I am so far bound to do it; but I would do it without being asked to do it.

19162. Because you have a lease?—Yes, and I know the benefit of improving.

19163. What kind of house is it you have? how many rooms are there in it?—Four rooms.

19164. Do you mean four rooms on the ground floor, or two below and two above?—Two above and two below.

19165. It is built of stone and lime?—Yes.

19166. How old is it?—I could not tell exactly. It was repaired last year, the walls raised, and a new roof put on it. I cannot complain about the house.

19167. I want to know whether your house is a good one?—Yes, the house is not bad.

19168. How much do you suppose the proprietor laid out in sorting and repairing it?—I could not exactly say. He was only at the cost of the wood and mason work; I did the rest. I put on the roof.

19169. Did he pay for the canvas and tar?—Yes, canvas, tar, wood, and mason work.

19170. Would he lay out £40?—No, not £20.

19171. How much did you lay out?—I think the whole thing would cost about £30, including my labour.

19172. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do the crofters upon the west of Yell engage in the fishing?—Yes.

19173. Those who are your neighbours?—Yes, the most of them are at the fishing.

19174. What is the average rent they pay, off and on, in that place?—I think somewhere from £4 to £6—perhaps a little more; say from £3 to £6. I know there are some as low as £3.

19175. Are there many of them on the same property as you?—A good many; I could not say exactly the number.

19176. Is the whole of the west shore of Yell there under small tenants except your own?—Yes, the proprietor owns the whole district, with the exception of some small patches.

19177. Does he stay in the place?—No, he stays in Lerwick.

19178. What is he besides?—He is a merchant in Leith—J. B. Leask.

19179. He does not keep a place in the west of Yell?—He has a store or shop.

19180. Does he cure fish?—Yes, the people don't have many small boats now; but he would get them big boats if they could only manage them.

19181. But I suppose the people upon his own property sell the fish to him—those who do fish?—The cod and ling fish.

19182. Do they take their stores from him?—I expect so.

19183. Has that property been long in the family?—No, I think the late Mr Leask bought it from the Bruces.

19184. Who is the neighbouring proprietor—Major Cameron has property there, has he not?—No, he is north from there. Our neighbouring proprietor is on the Gossaburgh estate—West Sandwick.

19185. That is full of crofters?—Yes.

19186. And is the proprietor resident there?—No, I don't know where he is.

19187. He has a local manager?—I think a Mr Keith.

19188. Does he live in the place?—Yes, I think he is here.

19189. Does he belong to Shetland?—No, he belongs to Caithness, I think.

19190. Is that a large property?—There is some in East Yell, and some in West and South; there is a whole lot of it.

19191. Does Mr Keith manage the whole of it?—I think so.

19192. Do they engage in herring fishing as well as cod and ling fishing on the west coast?—Only those in the big boats.

19193. Where do they go to the deep sea fishing from there?—To the north.

19194. Between North Maven and Yell—right out at the mouth of Yell Sound?—Yes, I suppose so.

19195. Do they go far out?—Forty or fifty miles out, I daresay, in the summer time.

19196. And the big boats are chiefly engaged in the herring fishing?—As a rule they fish for ling too, at least most of them.

19197. How many has Mr Leask of these boats?—There are only two of the big boats, I think, in West Yell.

19198. The smaller class of boats belong to the people themselves?—I rather think he finds the boats his tenants are fishing with.

19199. The old sixerns as well as the new class of boats?—Yes, but there are not many of the old boats now.

19200. Does he arrange with them on the half-catch system?—Not in the small boats. I think they pay hire for the boats and lines in that case, and some of them own their own boats.

19201. Is the arrangement in the smaller class of boats, that the boats and lines belong to the curer?—They used to pay so much hire for the boat.

19202. How much for the season?—I forget if it was £3 or 50s.

19203. And did he keep the boat and lines in order for that?—No, the lines were separate.

19204. They were their own?—Yes, or a separate transaction or hire of them was made.

19205. But in the large boats at the herring fishing, the owner of the boat gets one half the fish?—Yes, and supplies the material.

19206. And keeps boat and material in working order?—Yes.

19207. You are south of West Sandwick?—Yes, on the next point.

MID YELL.

RAEFIRTH.

Basil Sinclair.

BASIL SINCLAIR, Crofter and Fisherman, West Sandwick (42)—examined.

19208. *Mr Cameron.*—What size of holding is yours?—About four merks.

19209. Is that four acres?—Near by that.

19210. What stock do you keep?—Five cattle altogether, old and young.

19211. Any ponies?—Three.

19212. Any sheep?—Half a dozen, I think.

19213. What is your rent?—£6, 10s. exclusive of taxes.

19214. How many months a year do you occupy yourself in fishing?—Generally about five months.

19215. Have you any partners with you in the fishing?—There is a boat's crew.

19216. Does the boat belong to yourselves?—Not at present.

19217. But you hope to buy the boat?—If times would improve.

19218. Has the fishing been pretty good for the last few years?—No, very small.

19219. How many boats are there in your district?—Only two at the present time, but there are a good many employed in other boats.

19220. How many families are there in your district?—Pretty near about thirty.

19221. Are they nearly all employed in fishing?—The most of them.

19222. Men and boys?—Yes; of course, there are a few not.

19223. Do the women get any employment in gutting herring?—No, there are a few of them over here, but not many.

19224. Do they attend to the farm work when the men are away?—Yes.

19225. What do they do?—Keep the ground clear and keep the weeds out of it, and attend to the cattle.

19226. How do you cultivate your farm?—We dig it with spades.

19227. Do you harrow it?—Yes.

19228. Do the women harrow it?—Both women and men sometimes.

19229. Have you a sufficient amount of scathold for the crop that you can grow?—Yes, we have the full privilege of the hill pasture along with the arable ground.

19230. Are you as well off as you were a few years ago?—Not at all; we are much aggrieved for our small boundary, and we are confined in our property. We would like a Government valuation; we think our rent too high, and we are confined in our holdings.

19231. What do you mean by that?—Our land is lying in small patches twenty yards square, and five or six tenants come in amongst these again, and then we have another patch, and we cannot have the benefit of it. The land is not in any one spot.

19232. You are talking of arable ground?—Yes.

19233. Would it not be possible to consolidate the ground so as to give each tenant arable ground in the immediate neighbourhood of his own house?—Quite possible.

19234. Who is your landlord?—Mr Basil Hastie Robertson.

19235. Who is the factor?—Mr Keith.

19236. Has any representation ever been made to them about that?—Yes.

19237. What reply was given?—The reply was that the land was to be laid out in lots, and it has been done, but we have never occupied it—we have never had the privilege of occupying it.

19238. You say it has been conceded to you by Mr Keith that the land should be consolidated?—Yes, and it was done; but somehow or other it belongs to two different landlords; there is a Mrs Robertson, who owns some as well.

19239. Is she the wife of Mr Robertson?—She was the wife of the late Mr Robertson, and she has a share in the property.

19240. Is the property under trust?—I think so.

19241. And the factor manages the property for the proprietor or proprietors, whoever they may be?—Yes.

19242. Explain how it is, if you applied to the factor and he made a revaluation and redistribution of the land, why that arrangement was not carried out?—That is what we cannot exactly understand, because the proprietors apparently could not agree, as the land was mixed.

19243. If you went to the proprietors for a reduction of rent I could understand that they might not agree, but if it were merely a question of redistribution for the convenience of the people, I don't understand why the proprietors could not agree to what the factor had already sanctioned?—Our proprietor agreed that the land should be laid out in lots for each house by itself, but the other proprietor interfered after that was done, because, in doing so they came to occupy some of his land. The houses were mixed in amongst the others, and before the land could be laid out it interfered with the other property, and he interdicted the proceedings.

19244. Do the properties lie adjacent to one another?—They are mixed.

19245. In fact, the arrangement could hardly be carried out without what is called an excambion or interchange of properties to consolidate the properties, and then make an arrangement to consolidate the crofts?—That is right.

19246. Do you know if the factor has ever represented the desirability of carrying out some arrangement?—Yes.

19247. Could they not agree as to the terms?—It appears so.

19248. And the tenants are the sufferers by it?—Yes.

19249. Do you know how the properties came to be so mixed up?—Partly because the late Mr Robertson purchased some property which belonged to the Earl of Zetland and other parties, and after his death his property was in the middle of the other property, and it was heired separately.

19250. It is a very complicated arrangement?—Yes, and we have to suffer.

19251. Has the factor never suggested any way out of the difficulty?—Yes, he has tried what he could; but it never came to any arrangement.

19252. Does the land you occupy belong to the one proprietor or to two?—The land I am occupying belongs to one.

19253. And is it not all together?—Not all together. I have about thirty patches of it.

19254. Separated from each other?—Yes; I am not sure of thirty, but there are twenty at any rate.

19255. How do you get across to the other parts—do the people give free access?—It is a difficult matter, but we must give each other access.

19256. Do you drive carts across the other man's arable ground?—Not carts, but wheelbarrows.

19257. And you have to walk yourselves?—Certainly. We have got a promise that it is to be arranged better in future; but we have had that promise for the last three years, and it has never taken place; and we have very bad houses as well.

MID YELL.
—
RAEFIRTH.
—
Basil Sinclair.

19258. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are all fishermen in West Sandwick, I suppose?—Yes, mostly.

19259. How many men have a boat?—Six, and sometimes five.

19260. Are any of them owners of boats?—No, there is only one crew purchasing a boat just now.

19261. What is the cost of a boat with all its sails?—One of these big boats costs from £240 to £250 new.

19262. And what will the nets cost besides?—Each net will cost about £3.

19263. How many nets will there be?—According to the size of the boat—some forty and some fifty.

19264. What kind of boats are they—the same as those in Lerwick?—Yes; some smack rigged and some lug sail boats.

19265. What is the average tonnage?—25 to 30 tons of dead weight.

19266. Do you pursue the cod and ling fishing?—Not this season; but I have done it in former years.

19267. Why not this season?—Because the herring fishing commenced earlier.

19268. Have you had good herring fishing?—Fairly, as yet.

19269. How long does it last?—Up till about the latter part of September.

19270. What do you consider a good fishing for a boat to make?—400 crans would be a fair fishing, and a good one 500 to 600 crans.

19271. Is there any fish-curing place at Sandwick?—Yes, for ling and cod—a small place.

19272. Is it a good harbour?—A fine harbour, only it is small. Heavy vessels could not very well come into it.

19273. Have you sufficient accommodation for your present boats?—Yes.

19274. A good pier?—Well, the pier is very simple just now; we can get into the pier at high water, but only then. It would be easy to have a pier there, and it would not be costly.

19275. A pier of stone and wood?—Yes; the piers here are always made of stone and wood.

19276. Have you a sufficient supply of sea-ware for manure?—Some seasons we get a good deal and some seasons none.

19277. Have you none except the drift sea-weed?—None.

19278. None growing on the shores?—A few houses have the benefit of a little, but only a few.

19279. What do you do for manure?—We get turf.

19280. Is not that forbidden; is it not considered bad for the ground?—No, not at all, where the ground is deep.

19281. Does the grass grow freely again?—I lay down the surface, and take from underneath that.

19282. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many crofters besides yourself are concerned in getting matters adjusted betwixt the two proprietors?—I could not exactly say. I suppose there are about fourteen or fifteen situated in the same way.

19283. What is the relationship between the two proprietors?—The late proprietor who died was the half brother, I think, of the mother of the present proprietor.

19284. But they are relations?—Yes, very distant relations.

19285. Did you and other people join in the remonstrance to have the matter settled?—Yes, several of us tried.

19286. Did the whole of you join and sign a paper?—Yes.

19287. And that was of no use?—We got a promise that it was to be

done, and in fact, it was done; but we never got the benefit. It was marked off how it was to be done.

19288. But have you remonstrated as a body, against the delay in carrying the thing out?—No; we did once, at the commencement.

19289. Don't you think it would be wise to meet and put in another remonstrance against delay?—We have given notice through Mr Keith, the factor, and he has applied for us.

19290. Do you know whether one of the proprietors has only recently come of age, and that that is the reason he could not settle the matter legally?—He is not of age yet, and won't be for some years.—[*A Voice.*—The main cause is that it is in the hands of the lawyers.]—*Witness.* And the poor tenants suffer for it. The houses are most miserable too.

19291. *The Chairman.*—Are there any of these houses in which the family and cattle are together?—No, the cattle are by themselves.

19292. When you enter the house, do you enter by an independent door, or by the byre?—By an independent door outside.

19293. Have you ever seen any houses in this country where the cattle and the family are under the same roof?—Yes, I have heard of it, but I have never seen it.

19294. In this house of which you speak, are there any windows in the wall or only panes of glass?—No, we have two small windows in the walls; but there is a portion of the present house which was handed down to me as being 140 years old, and nothing has been done to it since.

19295. Have your family been so long there?—No, I have only been three years in my present house.

19296. But were your forefathers there?—They resided there, not in the present houses, but close by.

HUGH HUGHSON, Seaman (37)—examined.

19297. *The Chairman.*—Where were you born?—Shetland.

19298. Were you born in East Yell?—In Vidlan, on the mainland.

19299. At what age did you go to sea?—Sixteen.

19300. And have you made long voyages?—Yes, most of my time.

19301. What countries have you been in?—China, India, and the Colonies.

19302. Have you been in the Royal Navy?—No.

19303. Have you met many Shetlanders on board ships in which you have served?—A great many.

19304. Are you now living on land?—Yes.

19305. Have you a family?—No, I have not; I came, and took up my brother's family. I came home to see my mother, and when my brother died I took up his family.

19306. You are now living in Yell?—Yes, in Gossabrugh, East Yell.

19307. And have you got some land?—Yes.

19308. Do you find the young people in your place inclined to go on board ship, and serve for long voyages?—Yes, a great many of them.

19309. Have any of them enlisted in the navy?—Some of them have.

19310. Do you think that if the Government were to send a training ship to this country, to show the people how the boys are brought up, they would be more inclined to enlist in the navy?—I think they would.

20311. Have you ever seen a training ship?—Yes, and I would have been glad to have been put into any of them at ten or twelve years of age.

MID YELL.
RAEFIRTH.
Hugh Hughson.

19312. You think that, if the people saw how the boys were treated, they would be encouraged to enlist?—I should think they would be if they only knew the value of it as I do.

19313. You are satisfied with the treatment the boys receive on board?—Yes, in the navy.

19314. Is it generally known among the fishing people and poor people of the country?—No, it is not. The poor people in Shetland are kept blind to everything. They are blinded to what is going on in other parts.

19315. But still you say a great number of people are going to sea?—Yes, but those at home are kept very ignorant of what is doing; they are not allowed to know how they could better themselves, and they are taxed in all possible forms and ways.

19316. Are you now living by land or sea?—By land, and on the money I saved up before. I cannot live on the croft, it cannot keep me; it is on what I saved up before that I am trying to keep my brother's family. But if I got security I might live on property. My brother had a lease, and I am holding it on at the present time.

19317. How long has the lease still to run?—Ten years yet.

19318. And are you making any improvements?—I have, ever since I came.

19319. What is the nature of the improvements?—Cultivation.

19320. Any drainage?—Yes, drainage.

19321. What sort of drains?—Open drains. I drained the property, and places which were growing weeds when I came home, are now growing white oats.

19322. Have you any fencing?—No, I would be glad if I could get a fence on my property, to keep it from other people's cattle.

19323. If your proprietor would pay for half the fence, would you pay for the other half?—Yes.

19324. What sort of a fence?—A wire fence.

19325. Is it soft ground?—Not so extra soft, but what a fence would stand.

19326. Is it rocky ground?—No, not rocks, sand.

19327. What is the extent of your ground?—About six merks or acres.

19328. Besides scathold right?—Yes.

19329. What stock do you keep on it?—Six cows and two horses, and I think about eight sheep.

19330. And what rent do you pay for that?—Over £20, taxes and all.

19331. What sort of a house is there on it?—Four rooms with a felt roof.

19332. *Is there any business carried on?*—I have a small business. My brother had it before.

19333. Do you cure fish?—A little, but it is not much that I can get to cure.

19334. Are there many competitions for curing?—No, there is no one but myself, but there is not much to get.

19335. Was your brother bound by his lease to make improvements?—No.

19336. How long was the lease for?—Fourteen years.

19337. Who do you say was proprietor?—Mr Ogilvie Robertson, and now it is Mr Hastie.

19338. Have you and the proprietor had any differences?—No, only I cannot get the house repaired, and it is becoming spoiled. If I repair it he won't pay me for it, and if I leave it he won't give me any mdeurrage.

19339. If the roof is felt, won't you keep it water-tight?—Yes, if they put the walls in repair, but the water is coming in through the walls.

19340. It was not repaired when your brother took it?—No, and by the lease he was bound to repair it. Word was sent by the factor that I would have to put repairs on it. They will give the lime, but I don't see I am bound to do the work.

19341. Is there any dissatisfaction among the people in the country near you?—Yes, there is a great many of them in the same position, the same as I am. If they could get leases of their property they would improve it. That is what they want.

19342. They want long leases?—Yes, about twenty-one years.

19343. And then they would keep the thing going themselves?—Yes, the property is going to waste as it is.

19344. That is the chief cause of complaint at this place?—Yes, want of leases.

19345. *Professor Mackinnon.*—If they had that long lease would they improve their houses too?—I don't see how they could if they pay heavy rents. I think the factor should improve the houses and repair them. That was the arrangement when the leases were made.

19346. You don't consider the rent too high if the proprietor did what you wish?—It is rather too high, because I cannot keep cattle enough to pay the rent. If I could keep cattle enough to graze on my property and pay the rent, I would not consider it too high.

19347. Is it higher than the rent of the crofters about you?—Yes, there is none about me paying above £5 of rent.

19348. Although they have a croft as big as yours?—Yes.

19349. How do you account for yours being so high?—I don't know.

19350. Is it because of the shop and fish-curing?—I suppose so.

19351. And the lease?—Yes, I expect so.

19352. The others have not leases?—No, I cannot account how the rent was raised. My brother's predecessors paid only £8 for the place.

19353. But they had not a shop and curing establishment?—Yes, they had.

19354. You would not be inclined to enter into a new arrangement of that kind yourself. You don't think it is a good thing?—No, I do not consider it is. But on account of keeping a family, who are all quite young, I went into it. There are eight of a family.

19355. You would not have taken it for yourself?—No, I would not at the rent.

19356. Even suppose the proprietor had fulfilled the terms of the lease by putting the house in order?—No, I should not have liked to take it for myself.

19357. Have you made any representation to the proprietor or the factor about putting the house in order?—Yes.

19358. Who is the factor?—Mr Keith.

19359. And did he not consider your proposal reasonable?—Yes, providing he could get the sanction of the landlord, but he cannot.

19360. What would it cost?—About £10 or £12 would put it in repair.

19361. The ground of dissatisfaction which the people of the district have, is that they have not leases?—Yes, that they don't have leases, so far as I know.

19362. They don't fish much. Is that because there is no special fishing ground?—There is ground, but the harbour is bad; there is not a safe harbour to come into.

19363. Could a harbour be easily made?—I do not know if it could, because it is an open bay.

MID YELL.

BARFIRTH.

Hugh Hughson.

19364. How far are they from a suitable harbour?—Mid Yell.

19365. How far is Mid Yell?—Six or seven miles.

19366. And where do the young people of the place go to?—They generally go to the fishing, and others go to sea.

19367. Are they better or worse off than in Vidlan?—A good deal worse off than where I was brought up.

19368. In what respect?—Because their farms don't pay them, and the fishing is not so good.

19369. Were the farms better in Delting?—Yes, and the farms were producing more; they are not producing half of what they used to do. The people are forced to leave because they cannot make a living; the young people are going away, and the old people are not fit to work or improve.

19370. Do you think the farms are big enough to keep the people without assistance from the fishing?—No, the one needs to be assisted by the other—part fishing and part farming.

19371. Some of the family remain at the farm and some go to the fishing?—Yes.

19372. And that is the way they live about you?—Yes. But if they had the farms more improved they could take more out of them. They have no chance; they have no demurrage for improving the farms, and they leave them worse, and don't believe in working on them. But I think, if I could work upon it, it would pay me. I would have benefit by it. The more improvements the crofter makes the greater is the benefit to himself.

19373. But you don't make improvements?—I have made improvements in the three years I have been there; I have improved well on to three acres.

19374. Is the value of it increasing?—Yes, I see them increasing it to me, and that is why I won't improve more. If I could have it fenced, and got it to myself, it would be different.

19375. Perhaps by the time the lease is out it won't be too highly rented?—I do not see why they should increase it on me. If I improve ground I think the rent should not be increased, but lowered, so that I should get the value of my work.

19376. How do you think that could best be brought about?—I do not know exactly. I think it could be brought about very easily by looking at the value of the property when I took it, and when I leave it after my improvements.

19377. You would wish the law to be such that you could get the value of your improvements?—Yes, from the time I commence until I leave it.

19378. Of course, the law is that the proprietors as well as yourself should abide by the terms of the lease?—Yes, but they won't do that. They want to place you so that you cannot make them do that.

19379. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been looking after this place?—Three years and six months.

19380. What family were you obliged to take up?—Nine of them—eight children and my brother's wife.

19381. Were your parents dead?—My father died when I was a child. My mother is alive, and I have to support her.

19382. Are you spending some of your own earnings?—I am spending my own earnings all the time—ever since I started here.

19383. What you want is encouragement from the proprietor—permanency in your holding?—Yes.

19384. In regard to these fences, you say you would pay half the fence?—Yes.

MID YELL.

RAEFIRTH.

Hugh Hughson.

19385. You used the expression that the people in Shetland were kept in ignorance, what did you mean by that?—Because they don't get to know where they could get a better living. I consider I could make a better living in another country than I can do in Shetland.

19386. Are there any newspapers published in Shetland?—Only the Shetland *Times*, and it is very small; it is not of much account. The only thing we get in it is an account of the fishing, and if we did not get a paper out of the south we should be almost entirely out of the world.

19387. *Mr Cameron.*—Why don't you get a paper?—I always send for one. I generally have the *Scotsman* or the Liverpool *Mercury*.

19388. Yet you said you did not know what was going on?—Plenty don't. You might be in town yourself a century, and not know what was going on, if you had not a newspaper.

19389. But if you buy a paper, you have the same information as other people?—Yes, but the rest of the people in the place don't do that. I send and get it for myself, but I am not going to get papers to let them know what is going on.

19390. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there plenty of land in Shetland where a man may make a good living?—Certainly, if the people only had the privilege of working on it.

19391. Although you say there are other places away from Shetland where you could make a better living, yet a good living could be made in Shetland?—Yes.

19392. And any thing you want in the way of increased holdings you are willing to pay a fair rent for?—Yes, if we could only get them, but we cannot get them.

19393. You don't want anything without paying fairly for it?—No, nothing; but we cannot get it; the proprietors won't give it to us. Some small squatters perhaps are put on, and they perhaps take up our pasture, and if they have cattle they drive ours off and take it, although we are paying for it. We should like to have our own pasture for which we pay, and let them keep on theirs.

ALEXANDER WALKER, Merchant, Mid Yell (28)—examined.

Alexander Walker.

19394. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled here?—Nearly four years.

19395. Were you brought up to this description of trade?—No.

19396. What was your father?—My father was a gardener.

19397. You are a young man to have become a trader. Were you anywhere else before being here?—South Shields.

19398. How did you come to establish yourself in Shetland?—My wife is a Shetlander, and I came with her and her brother to Shetland, and we started business together in West Sandwick, and then removed from there to here, and dissolved partnership.

19399. You have been here only four years?—Yes, since 1880.

19400. Since you have established yourself here, have you found your business improving?—Yes, but there were a great many drawbacks that kept us back.

19401. Still you say there has been some improvement?—Certainly.

19402. What do you deal in besides fish-curing?—General goods of all kinds.

19403. Do you find that the people make more purchases than when you first came?—They do.

19404. Do they pay as well as they did?—They pay better.

MID YELL.

RAEFIRTH.

Alexander Walker

19405. They buy more and pay better?—They do.

19406. Do you think the condition of the people has improved within the last four years?—It has.

19407. You said that there were drawbacks to the improvement of your trade; what are these drawbacks?—Since I came to Shetland this is my second removal from a yearly tenancy. At Martinmas 1881, I was removed from this place, after offering £50 for the place. I paid £35 before. I was the sitting tenant, and I offered the same rent and the same security as the man who came after me, but I had to be removed.

19408. But still you continued in Mid Yell?—I had to build a shop for myself, and lie out of business on account of these removals. It almost ruined me. I furnished the place. I had an hotel licence, and my furniture was lying in the manse after I was in the place a year.

19409. Why didn't you apply for a lease?—I did that, but they would not give it.

19410. When you opened shop and established yourself, how did you get ground upon which to build your shop?—I got it from Mr George Hay of Lerwick, a different proprietor.

19411. And have you a lease now?—No, I was promised a lease once the shop was built, and the shop was built for a little more than £100, and he charged me £16 more than the place paid before, for the £100 of outlay.

19412. You have laid out this money without a lease?—They built the shop; I paid for the building, but they afterwards paid me.

19413. Did they pay you back in full?—In full.

19414. Then you now sit as tenant at will?—Tenant at will, and six-monthly rent.

19415. What is their great objection to giving a lease?—I cannot tell. I was certainly promised a lease from Mr Hay, but he has not fulfilled that promise, and there are a great many drawbacks. I have no pier, and I am agent for the Earl of Zetland and for the Steam Navigation Co. I have to wade into the sea in carrying out my duties as agent for the steamer, while, if I had had a lease, I would have improved the place, and built a pier for myself. But how could I do so, and be turned out perhaps at the end of the year.

19416. What other drawbacks are there?—The drawback is this, that if we do improve, we have no certainty of getting anything for improving; and we are tenants at will, which is a very wrong thing. In addition, last year I had £700 worth of goods, and what was I to do with forty days' notice in a place like Shetland? I have three fishing boats and men to supply, and it won't do for me to be without stock, especially here where we only get the steamer once a week.

19417. Have you the facilities of postal communication and telegraph?—We have; but we have not got accommodation where we can telegraph for an article and have it in the shop by the next train. Perhaps the steamer leaving Lerwick may miss the south steamer's goods, and in that way one may miss his stuff. I cannot get goods the same as in the north of Scotland or England. The summer before last we had only two posts in the week, and in winter only one. I think in summer now there are three.

19418. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you deal largely with the people hereabout?—I do.

19419. Do you find them good customers?—I do.

19420. Are they generally able to pay fairly well?—Yes, if we keep away from the poorer classes; plenty of them are not able to earn anything.

MID YELL.

RAEFIRTH.

Alexander Walker.

19421. Are there many of them not able to earn anything?—There are a great many feeble old people.

19422. Do you give them long credit?—Commonly we have to give it from year to year; we cannot help it, although it is safe enough. Crofters are not like people getting in money every day. They cannot sell stock more than once a year. They cannot get money unless they sell stock, and if you push them for money they have to sell their stock at a disadvantage perhaps.

19423. What sort of goods do you chiefly sell to them?—General goods and drapery and groceries, and I buy hosiery.

19424. Do you sell meal?—Meal and all.

19425. Do you take fish from them?—Yes.

19426. What is the system on which you take the fish,—do you pay money or goods?—Those who require money are paid in money; some require goods, and some will take part goods and part money. That is the way commonly; but mostly now it is cash.

19427. Has there been any change in that respect within the last few years?—No material change since I came here.

19428. Didn't there use to be more of a system of paying by goods?—I believe so; but that was before my time.

19429. Do the people here know when the fish is taken from them what the price is to be?—Yes, the price is the first thing asked for.

19430. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been here most of the day?—I have.

19431. You have heard the evidence given by the other witnesses?—Yes.

19432. Do you agree with them, from your own observation and your conversation with the people about their complaints, that no encouragement is given by the proprietors in the neighbourhood, and that very little progress is going on?—I believe that is so. There is little encouragement given by the proprietors.

19433. And consequently there is not the progress there might be?—Not half.

19434. You were paying when you came here first £35, 0s. 5d. of rent?—Yes.

19435. And you were willing to give £50?—I offered £50 when the place was advertised.

19436. What additional accommodation or buildings were given by the proprietor or included in that enlarged rent?—None given, but a great deal taken away. I had a farm here, and it was taken from the property altogether.

19437. And there was a rise of rent?—Yes, and a reduction of the farm.

19438. Do you consider, therefore, that these proceedings have had the effect of harassing you in business?—I am all but alive. It has almost been my death, and nearly ruined me besides. There were six months I lay in a small place of 12 or 14 feet long and 12 feet wide, by being thrown out, and having no place to go to with my wife and children. And we had to take in £600 worth of shop goods with us.

19439. When you came here from Sandwick did you come with the purpose of developing the resources of the place, and do good to yourself?—I did.

19440. Is there only one proprietor all along here?—Yes, the whole way, unless the small piece of property I am on, belonging to Mr Hay.

19441. What is the name of the proprietor, and the person upon whose land you were formerly?—It belonged to the Spences—Mr Robert Niven

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Spence; but he died before I came here. It was sold then to Richmond & Co., or Mr John Harrison, the present proprietor.

19442. Who occupies the store and place you had formerly?—Mr Sandison.

19443. Does he live there?—He does.

19444. Does he carry on the same occupation as yourself?—Not exactly; he is not interested in fishing personally. Perhaps he is interested for the proprietor for all I know.

19445. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Has he a business?—Yes, the same as I had.

19446. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*—Is that the only licensed house here?—It is.

19447. We were told that in other places that, when fishing population is about, the licence is suspended; why is that not done here?—I don't know: I believe it would have been in our favour if it had.

19448. You personally would not be against it if you held the licence?—I know for a fact it would keep many a shilling in my drawer which I have to pay out. I have sixteen or eighteen fishermen in my boats, and when they come ashore they want money to get drink, and let the fishing be good or bad I have to give it to them, and it comes to be a drain upon me.

19449. What rent are you now paying?—£20, with taxes.

19450. *Mr Cameron.*—The shilling would be carried to their credit?—I pay it to them.

19451. You would have to pay it later on; but you are not a gainer?—No, I am not a loser, if I am certain of it at the end of the season.

19452. You take the shilling into consideration when you settle with the fishermen?—Yes.

19453. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What have you for the £20?—Not so much as I could stand upon outside my door. The house was formerly 4, and I was to have a lease; the rent was put down at £4 for the house and £16 for the shop. The cost of the shop was a little over £100.

19454. What do you pay for milk and supplies?—I pay for grass, and keep one cow for the sake of my children only. Otherwise I would not keep a cow at all; I have no place for it.

19455. *The Chairman.*—What do you pay for the grazing of the cow?—Twenty shillings a year.

19456. What do you pay in winter?—I have to purchase stuff.

19457. How much does it cost you?—Perhaps about £2; I paid it last year.

19458. Does the cow run out in winter?—I have the use of the hill during the whole year, but there is scarcely any grass in winter. The cow goes to get the air.

19459. The cow on the hill costs about £3 a year?—It does.

19460. For which you get the milk?—Yes.

19461. And that suits you better than to buy milk?—I could not get it to buy.

19462. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is milk so scarce?—It is.

19463. Do the people need it all for their own families?—Yes, and more if they could get it. Sometimes they have no milk at all. There are some large families, and sometimes it is late before the cow calves.

19464. What do they give their children?—They purchase syrup in spring; sometime in the spring of the year the cattle are not able to rise owing to want of food.

19465. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is it customary to go round the hill and lift them?—No, they are in the byres.

19466. But they have to be lifted?—Yes, a thing which is unknown where I belong to, as the cattle are better fed. I belong to Deeside, Aberdeenshire.

19467. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How long had you a licence?—Only one year.

19468. Was the licence suspended during the fishing season that year?—No, but the fishing season then was not like what it is now. There was only one curer then, and latterly there have been two.

19469. By your arrangement with the fishermen, are you bound to supply them with money for drink?—I am bound to a certain extent; if the men have been out at the ling fishing for two or three nights it is necessary that they should have something when they come in, and many a time at herring fishing the same thing occurs. But at the same time, I will not say that it is necessary just now, in the herring fishing season.

19470. Would it not be necessary to have a licence in that case?—Not so much now as in the dead of winter.

19471. Are you bound to supply them with money to get drink?—No.

19472. Why do you do it?—For the convenience of the men.

19473. Do you consider it wrong?—Many a time I do, but still I cannot help it.

19474. But your complaint against the proprietor is that he preferred to have another tenant?—Yes, that is the late proprietor. He told me my offer would be as good as that of any one else, but I found it was not.

19475. He gave the place to the other tenant at the same rent as you offered?—Yes, but the farm was taken away.

19476. You offered £50 for the place you had, including the farm?—It was put up that way, and I offered £50, as it was advertised.

19477. And the proprietor got £50 for the place, less the farm?—Yes, but it was less the farm that I offered.

19478. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Was the place advertised without their making you an offer?—It was.

19479. *Professor Mackinnon.*—And it was given to one who only made the same offer as you?—Yes.

19480. *The Chairman.*—And you were put to the expense and inconvenience of shifting the goods, and having no place to shift them to?—Yes.

19481. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What remedy would you provide for the like of that?—To give a lease would be the best remedy, and then, when a man's lease expired, he would know it was his duty to renew it, or look out for some other place.

19482. Would you deprive the proprietor of the right to choose his tenant?—No, but I think the sitting tenant, if his character is good, ought to have the preference.

19483. Would you make that a matter of law?—I cannot say that; I think it ought to have been a matter of law in this case. Forty days' warning is not sufficient for a merchant in business.

19484. *The Chairman.*—Would you make a proper length of warning a matter of law?—Yes, I should say that in cases of yearly tenure one year's notice should be given.

19485. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you apply that to all places in England and Scotland?—No, but there I would have got a store for my goods.

19486. Would you make it the law elsewhere than in Mid Yell?—I would make it a law in any country place, in the case of a tenant at will, especially in the case of a country merchant, when he is liable to be turned out at forty days' notice it is a very silly affair.

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19487. Is he more silly in Mid Yell than he would be in London or Manchester?—Yes, what would I do with my goods in Mid Yell?—I would have to charter a schooner to take my goods out of the country. There is no store to put one's goods into.

19488. Don't you think if business people had this enormous advantage under the law that there might be very considerable competition amongst them, and that they would come to Mid Yell?—No, I don't think that. The best way to prevent that is to give leases.

19489. But there might be competition for the lease?—Just so.

19490. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Would you apply it to the merchant as well as the proprietor?—I would have it fair on both sides.

19491. That the merchant should be bound to give notice too?—Yes, I should say so. The present notice of forty days' is too short.

19492. And the merchant would be bound to give security for a year's advance of rent?—That would be a simple matter.

19493. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You applied for a lease at £35, 0s. 5d.?—Yes.

19494. And you consider that the landlord, having refused to give you the lease, had no right then to put you out in favour of a stranger, you being willing to give the same increase of rent?—That is so; I might even have given £10 or £20 more rather than be removed. I would suggest in addition to what I have stated, that a workhouse should be erected in Lerwick or elsewhere. There are more paupers in the parish than ought to be getting a supply, and that is at our expense entirely; whereas in the workhouse, women who can do any kind of work, might bring in something which could be applied to the support of the institution.

19495. Are there poor here on the rolls who ought to be supported by their relatives?—There are some, I think, but there are a great many on the poor roll who would be able to do something if they were energetic enough.

19496. And who would not go into the poorhouse?—I am certain they would not. One workhouse would be sufficient for the whole of the islands. Under the present system, there is also the expense of keeping inspectors, which would be avoided if a workhouse were erected. We don't have any satisfaction under the present system at all.

JAMES M. BARCLAY, Inspector of Poor for Mid and South Yell, Clerk to the School Board, and Collector of Rates (38)—examined.

James M. Barclay.

19497. *Professor Mackinnon.*—We were told that the poor rate and the school rate together were 6s. 6d. in this parish, what are the rates in South Yell?—It is the same in both parishes; they form one civil parish.

19498. North Yell and Fetlar are a separate parish?—Yes.

19499. Did you hear the evidence of the previous witnesses?—Some of it.

19500. Have you any idea how the rates could be reduced in any way and the efficiency of the administration still kept up?—I don't see how the rates could be reduced at present. The poor rate has been reduced this past year, and I hope to be able to reduce it again this year. But the rental of the parish is low. The valuation of the parish is only some £1500 or £1600. A rate of even 4s. only produces about £300, and there have been as many as seventy paupers on the roll.

19501. How long have you been inspector?—Eight years.

19502. Do you think there are some people on the roll who would not

have been on it if what is called the poorhouse test were applied?—There are some, but these people are not receiving a very large allowance; a very small allowance generally. Cases of that sort are sometimes taken on, but the allowance is fixed very low. They are taken on simply to help them. The allowance may perhaps pay their house rent.

19503. Looking at the number that can be taken off the roll by the poorhouse test, and considering the expense of erecting the poorhouse and maintaining the inmates in it, would you consider it to be an economical arrangement for Shetland to enter into such an undertaking as building a poorhouse?—I think it ought to be done; if it did not save much off the rates, it would at any rate reduce the pauperism. It would reduce the number of paupers, although the allowance to each individual would have to be more. Only real cases of pauperism would then be admitted, because the test would show whether the people had friends who would come forward to help them or not. A great many of our paupers are old people of eighty or ninety years of age.

19504. Are there many of your paupers whom you have to maintain out of Shetland?—Yes, and they are the heaviest on the parish. Sometimes we have a number in Edinburgh, Lerwick, and different places—people who have gone from the parish, and have not established a residence anywhere else. The allowance given to these people is much larger than what they would get here. They get 2s., 3s., and 4s. a week; whereas if they were here they would only get 9d., 1s. or 1s. 6d. a week.

19505. And you think you would save in that way?—Yes. The rates are also kept high on account of the number of pauper lunatics in the asylum. The parish also got into debt at one time, and the rate has been kept up a little to reduce the debt, which is now paid up. Since the pauper lunatic grant was established by Government for the aid and maintenance of pauper lunatics, and the regulation by the Lunacy Board allowing paupers not dangerous to be boarded out, we have been able to save a good deal of money. We were paying £120 a year at one time for paupers in the asylum alone.

19506. Your school rate is high, is it not?—Yes, 2s. 6d. in the pound.

19507. Is there any prospect of its being reduced?—Not for some years.

19508. How many schools have you under the new system?—Six.

19509. How much money have you borrowed to build these?—The interest on the borrowed money is over £60 a year; the schools cost £1300 or £1400 each.

19510. Do you think you have got schools in every part of the parish where they are neeessary?—In every place where there is any population that will authorise the board to go to the expense. There is only one district where there is no school, and the number of children there is very small.

19511. How are these children educated?—They have no school at present.

19512. You have not taken advantage of the arrangement by which they can be educated by a lad, and sent to a school for examination?—We have, but the people would not take advantage of it; they would not have it. There was a teacher appointed on the itinerating scheme, but the people would not have him. There were not ten children, I think, in the district I refer to, and the people wanted a school built, and they are dissatisfied that that has not been done. The School Board applied to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and a teacher has been appointed for twelve months, but he has no place to go to.

19513. Is there no corner for him?—There was a house vacant last

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winter, and the School Board are at present restoring it to make it suitable for him.

19514. I hope you have not engaged the teacher?—He was engaged conditionally, if he could find a place to teach in.

19515. Are these new schools being taken advantage of by the children?—In some districts they attend regularly; in others they do not, and there is no worse district than Mid Yell itself.

19516. Has the School Board taken any steps to force them in?—There is a compulsory officer who goes to the school and sees who are absent, and some of the people have been before the board, but none of them have been prosecuted.

19517. I suppose they can give a good many reasons for their children not being at school?—Yes, but the reasons are not always satisfactory.

19518. But the School Board have not prosecuted any parents?—No.

19519. Of course, prosecution would be somewhat expensive?—Yes. All the children, I may say, cannot attend in the winter season.

19520. But they could attend better than they do?—Clearly; and in some districts where they do attend the school is almost self-supporting, whereas in others the deficiency which has to be made up is over £20; and that accounts for the high school rate.

19521. Are the teachers principally male or female?—There are three male teachers and three female teachers.

19522. Female teachers can be had cheap; is that the reason you employ them?—Yes, and they get on quite as well. We have no advanced scholars.

19523. *If there was a good school here, don't you think some of the* people would take advantage of it, and allow their boys to remain at school some time longer?—There are three principal schools with certificated male teachers, who ought to be able to give the children a good education.

19524. Are there many boys who remain at school till they are fourteen or fifteen?—Not many.

19525. Is that less or more the case now than under the old administration?—Under the old administration the teaching was very uncertain. There were a few boys who had been at sea, who attended to learn a little navigation.

19526. And has that practice entirely ceased?—I think those who go in for examinations in the merchant service attend school at the port they are sailing from—Liverpool, or wherever they may be.

19527. And there is nothing now in the way of teaching the older boys navigation?—No, I should say not.

19528. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the population of the parish?—I am not quite certain, but I was told it was 1708 at the last census.

19529. And there are seventy paupers on the roll?—Not just now, but there have been that. There are somewhere about sixty just now.

19530. What is the ordinary allowance you give to a pauper?—About 1s. a week to those who are resident in the parish.

19531. And what besides?—They have a house or hut.

19532. Fuel?—They have an allowance for peats, and some of them have to be cared for and attended.

19533. Do they get clothing?—A certain amount of clothing.

19534. Do you give them the 1s. a week in meal?—In *money, to* buy meal or whatever they require.

19535. But they can hardly live upon that?—No, they cannot.

19536. What do they do?—I cannot tell you; many of them are old women, and knit so as to supplement what they get; and many of their neighbours are kind to them.

19537. Could they not force you to give them a higher allowance than that?—In some cases, where they have applied to the Board of Supervision, they have not succeeded. There is no case where any application to the Board of Supervision has resulted in an increased allowance since I became inspector.

19538. Where there are children under age, to what extent do you increase the allowance?—It depends on what the mother is able to do for them.

19539. What would be the allowance of a woman with three children?—We have none of these; we have few cases of that sort on the roll.

19540. Your allowance appears to be small, and your rate high?—Yes.

19541. And you think that might be improved if you had a poorhouse?—Yes, it might not at once reduce the rate.

19542. But it would reduce pauperism?—Yes.

19543. Do you think people would not go into the house if it were used as a test?—It would be used as a test; and the Parochial Board would be able to give a better allowance to those who were really deserving.

19544. Have the Parochial Board ever taken the subject into consideration?—Yes, it has been up before them several times, and they have been always frightened at the expense.

19545. Who is the Board of Supervision inspector who comes round here?—Mr Peterkin.

19546. Has he recommended a poorhouse?—Often.

19547. But they have never adopted it?—It has not been adopted yet. Some of the local inspectors drew up a memorial addressed to the parochial boards, representing the necessity for a poorhouse, and it is just going the round at present.

19548. The round of what?—The round of the parishes. It was to be sent to the various chairmen to be submitted to the boards, pointing out the reasons why the inspectors consider it advisable that the boards should consider the matter again.

19549. The idea was to have one poorhouse for the whole islands?—Yes.

19550. Do the six schools in this parish supply accommodation for all the children?—Yes.

19551. Are there not some places too far off?—Only the one district I mentioned; and if there had been a road all the way, the children would not have had over four miles to walk. But there is only a road part of the way.

19552. Is there not a very nasty burn between where the people live and the school?—It depends on what school the children attend. If the people on the west side were to attend West Sandwick school, they would not have to cross the burn.

19553. How many families have to cross the burn to get to school?—There are only three families of children on that side of the burn.

19554. Have these families always paid their rates?—Until recently; there has been a dispute about that lately, and we gave them an opportunity of hearing the decision of the sheriff in the case, and they have been at Lerwick this week. I have a note from the solicitor who acted for us this morning, stating that the case has been up, and has been decided against the people.

19555. Their ground, I suppose, was that they should not be called upon to pay rates, because there was no school available in terms of the Act?—Yes.

19556. Do you know what reason the sheriff gave in deciding against them?—No, I have heard no particulars.

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19557. But the people have expressed themselves as willing to pay, since they have got a house fitted up as a school temporarily?—I don't know yet: they will have to pay, because the sheriff has decided against them. We could have proceeded against them by summary warrant, but we did not do that.

19558. In point of fact, it was impossible for the board to erect a school owing to the fewness of the families?—Utterly impossible. I understand their case would come under a section of the Scotch code providing that children in an outlying district may be taught at their own houses by a teacher approved of by the inspector, and that the children be brought to a central school for examination.

19559. And you arranged for that?—We offered them that accommodation last year; but they would not be satisfied unless they got a school built.

19560. Are all the teachers certificated?—Yes, or in the way of earning certificates.

19561. What is their salary?—£30 for females and £40 for males, and half the fees and half the grants.

19562. Do you know what that amounts to in each school?—Some of the female teachers made about £50 last year; and they have a free house. And some of them may have an evening school, and so add to their income.

19563. Do the parents of the children like the female teachers as well as the male teachers; is there any dissatisfaction felt about them?—No.

19564. Do they teach sewing?—Yes.

19565. Singing?—Yes, most of them.

19566. Do you find that the salary and half the fees and half the grant is sufficient to get a fairly good teacher?—We have some very good teachers.

19567. Do they belong to the islands mostly?—No, they are all strangers.

19568. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the valuation roll of the county of Shetland published?—No, it is not printed.

19569. It never was?—Not to my knowledge.

19570. Do you know the reason of that?—No, I cannot give any reason for it.

19571. Do you get a manuscript copy of it?—Yes, a certified manuscript copy.

19572. What does the clerk charge you for it?—Nothing.

19573. We have been told there are a great number of lunatics?—Yes, there are five or six in our parish.

19574. And, of course, they are all boarded in the south?—Not now, we have four boarded out in the parish.

19575. I presume that has very much lightened the expense?—Yes, it has lightened the rates considerably.

19576. What is the assessment you levy in the year?—A little over £300.

19577. What do you get for the two offices you hold?—£25 as inspector, and £10 as collector.

19578. Do you find any difficulty in recovering the whole of the assessment, or are there generally arrears?—We generally get in the greater part of it, but there are some arrears; we have sometimes to wait before we get it all in. The people may be hard up one year and better off the next.

19579. Are the old people of eighty or ninety who are on the roll men or women?—Principally women.

19580. Have they any direct descendants upon whom the board could count?—Yes, if the board were to strictly carry out the Act, they would find relatives who might be forced to contribute; but most of the pauper's relatives are not residing in the parish—they are not at hand, and consequently are allowed to escape. They may be in Edinburgh, or Leith, or Lerwick.

19581. Do you let them off often if they are only at the distance of Lerwick?—*It depends on their circumstances.*

19582. Do you know of any case which has come under your own observation where families on the poor roll have been dispossessed and obliged to leave the country?—No, not of my own knowledge.

19583. Do yon know of cases where they have been put out of their holdiugs?—Not to my knowledge.

19584. Are there many proprietors in this parish holding their own lands?—Yes, there are a few of that class, perhaps a dozen or so, owning their own farms.

19585. Do you think these people return their lands at the full value they would bring if rented?—I think so in most cases. The assessor has visited most of them, and tried to ascertain their real value.

19586. Does he sometimes vary the rental given in?—He did so two years ago in two or three cases, and increased the value.

19587. Was that appealed against to the Valuation Court by those who made up the erroneous retnrns?—I think some of them appealed, but I don't think they followed up the appeal.

19588. I suppose you could not give us any information about the returns in the island of Fetlar?—No.

19589. What returns are made by Lady Nicolson for the land which is in her own hands?—Somewhere under £400. I have seen the valuation, but I could not say for certain the amount. It is some time since I saw the return, but I think it was about £370.

19590. Have you any idea what was the return for the tenants?—I have not.

19591. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What deductions do you make from the rental to find the assessable value in the parish?—25 per cent.

19592. Then the real rental is over £2000?—Yes.

19593. Are you a native of the parish?—Yes.

19594. Have you heard the complaints made to-day regarding the want of improved houses, and security of tenure, increase of rent, and want of compensation for improvements: have yon known that these complaints were current in the parish for some time before it was known that the Commission was coming rouud?—I know that in some districts the people have complained of uncomfortable houses.

19595. And have thought the proprietor should have done more to make them comfortable?—Yes.

19596. Has there been want of security of tenure after having improved a place?—There may have been rare cases, but I don't know of any in my own knowledge of recent years.

19597. Have you not heard that there was considerable dissatisfaction in the parish with regard to these matters?—Only when the matter was brought up, and the people tried to find out if there was any cause of complaint; and if there is anything they must speak it out.

19598. Did you hear anything said to-day which you did not expect to hear?—No, I did not.

19599. *The Chairman.*—Do you think what you have heard said is on the whole well founded, or the contrary?—I think generally what I have heard was fairly enough stated, only when they talk about getting

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good houses, they forget that the building of houses is an expensive thing, and that the proprietor must have interest for his money. They think the proprietor ought to do some things which are quite unreasonable in the way of repair and rebuilding without an increase of rent. Of course, if a tenant takes a croft with a house upon it, the proprietor has to keep it up, and will do ordinary repairs; but when it comes to the rebuilding of a house, it is a serious consideration, now that wages are so high, and I fancy no proprietor would do it without looking for some return.

19600. Do you think there is any material improvement, or tendency to improvement, in the lodging of the people?—Yes; within my own recollection there has been considerable improvement on the inside of the houses—lining them with wood, and papering them, and so on. A great many of the houses are lined, some of them all round, others have the ben end or private room—all of them mostly—lined with wood and papered, and that did not use to be the case.

19601. I observed a kind of half-witted person hanging about the door of the church; is that lad in receipt of parochial relief?—Yes.

19602. How much does he receive?—£2, 10s. a year and his clothing.

19603. How much is that per week?—Hardly a shilling. He was only admitted this year.

19604. And one suit of clothing?—Just as he requires it.

19605. Does he always require it?—He would need it oftener than he gets it: he is very destructive sometimes.

19606. Is he lodged or boarded?—He lives with his mother and the rest of the family; his father is dead.

19607. Has he received any education?—No.

19608. Has any application ever been made to place him under restraint, or in an asylum?—No, he was only admitted on the roll this last year.

19609. He is what might be called an innocent?—Yes; and it is quite probable the allowance will be increased now that he is getting up to be a man; only he was admitted as a pauper before it was considered necessary to put him on the roll of lunatics.

19610. Who are the members of the School Board here?—Rev. Mr Watson, Rev. Mr Barclay (my father), Mr Leask, proprietor, Mr Keith, farmer, and Mr Sandison, merchant—five members.

19611. Have there been any contested elections?—Yes, twice, I think.

19612. Have they created any interest in the parish?—The first time they did.

19613. Were there any candidates brought forward from the class of small occupiers or crofters?—No.

19614. Has that class of persons shown any desire to be on the board, or to take any interest in the adminsitration of education in the parish?—Some do take an interest in education, but I have not heard of any who wisbed to be on the board; there are some who take an interest in education, and are anxious to have their children educated.

19615. But my question was with reference to their being on the board?—No, I cannot say they have expressed any desire to be on the board.

19616. But you are not aware that any influence has been used in the higher ranks of society to prevent representatives of that class getting into the board?—No, I am not aware that there has been any.

DAVID PETRIE, Crofter and Fisherman, Gossaburgh, Mid Yell (54)—examined. MID YELL. RAEFIRTH. David Petrie.

19617. *The Chairman.*—Have you any statement to make about the condition of the people?—Yes.

19618. Please to do so?—The first thing we want is a fair valuation by Government of the lands we are occupying, because we have heavy rents and very little surface; and besides, we want houses we can live in. Our houses are 28 feet long by 12 feet wide, and 6 feet high in the walls, and are built like a dry stone dyke. There is some mortar heaved into them when they are being built; that is all. If they are built with lime, we have to be at the expense of it. Then they have a turf roof, not fit for a human being to live under.

19619. What sort of houses do you wish to get?—We want them to be built with lime, so as to make them sufficient and comfortable to live in. We cannot live comfortably in them just now; on a windy night in winter we are blown from the fireside almost. As for myself, I have no proprietor to apply to; there is a factor who takes up the rent, but he does not know who the property belongs to.

19620. How is that?—Because it is a disputed property.

19621. What sort of roof do you want?—I would like a house with two comfortable rooms and a felt roof.

19622. We have heard a great deal about felt roofs, we don't think felt roofs are good in the south of Scotland; do you think the people here have had sufficient experience of the durability of felt roofs?—I think they have had experience of them for a few years.

19623. Do they not require to be tarred every year?—They do.

19624. And if they are tarred every year, how long do you think they will last?—A long time, I think. A thatch roof is a great deal of trouble, and the wind often like to carry them away.

19625. What do you generally use for thatch here?—All straw.

19626. You want a valuation of your land and good houses: what do you want next?—We just want to have a fair valuation of our lots; we can say nothing against the scathold, we have it at our freedom; there are no railings where I live.

19627. Do you want to have fences?—No, they are of no good that I see to us.

19628. What else?—That is just what I am stating to you.

19629. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you complain of the rent?—Yes, because there was £1 laid on me, and then they came and took away so much of my inside property off me, and I got no reduction.

19630. The inside property?—Yes, the arable land.

19631. *The Chairman.*—When did they do that?—When the property was allotted.

19632. Was it given to the proprietor, or to another crofter?—It was given to another crofter when the land was allotted. The land was in rigs, and then it was allotted, and they had to strike a straight line.

19633. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you not get another piece?—A small piece on one side, but none on the other.

19634. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You lost more than you got?—Yes, and they raised the rent £1 just the year before.

19635. *The Chairman.*—Was that to benefit the occupiers that the land was allotted?—Mine was a lot before, but not on the other side.

19636. But generally speaking, is it a good thing that the land should

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be allotted and divided?—I don't think it was, because some of them had to travel a long way to their land.

19637. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the cost of a good house in Shetland?—The houses formerly built in Shetland only cost about £5 or £6.

19638. But these would not satisfy you now?—No.

19639. What would be the cost of a better kind of house?—I could not exactly say; I am only wanting my house repaired and remedied; that is all I want.

19640. *The Chairman.*—The existing wall would do?—I got lime for my house two years back, and took it out of the vessel: but it cannot go on unless I do it myself, and it would take a man a fortnight to do it. The house has stood for fifty years.

19641. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is your rent?—£5, 10s. besides taxes.

19642. How many cattle do you keep?—Six.

19643. *The Chairman.*—And ponies?—None.

19644. Sheep?—About thirty; they are in the scathold.

19645. You don't pay anything additional for the sheep?—No.

19646. It is all in the £5, 10s.?—Yes.

19647. How many sheep do you count as equivalent to one cow?—I suppose about ten.

19648. How many of your cattle are young?—I have two cows and four young ones.

19649. If you had a good house, and were satisfied that you would not be turned out, would you consider your rent too high?—I consider it is too high, because they made off with my property. I only paid £4, 10s. formerly.

19650. But as things improve, you get higher prices for your produce?—It is only a few years we have had that; we must just take the times as they come; and that might not come for a long time again.

19651. If you had to fix your own rent, what would you fix it at?—£4, 10s.

19652. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And you would have a good house?—Yes. I have seen the cattle sold at £2 and 30s.

DAVID OGILVY, Teacher, Mid Yell (25)—examined.

David Ogilvy.

19653. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What part of the country do you belong to?—Fifeshire.

19654. You went through the Normal School, did you not?—Yes.

19655. You were a pupil teacher?—Yes.

19656. How long have you been here?—Two years.

19657. Where were you teaching before?—In the High School, Wigan, Lancashire.

19658. You went there from Fifeshire?—Yes; I went from being second master in Ladybank School to Wigan High School, where I was English master.

19659. How many pupils have you got here?—There are 71 on the admission register—that is, on the roll.

19660. What is the average attendance?—Last year 32·3; the year before, 29.

19661. I suppose that is a lower attendance than in Fifeshire?—I rather think so; one-half of the children were at something else. Besides

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the 71 on the register there is a lot over five years of age who are not on the roll.

19662. Do you know the population of your school district?—I have never had the list handed to me yet.

19663. Have you any idea?—About 300, I think.

19664. What is the excuse given for the children not attending school with greater regularity?—Any frivolous excuse is considered good enough, such as keeping the house or minding the child, or going 'gipping' herring. There are about thirty away just now rolling barrels; and this is the only time these children can come to school; they belong to the north side of the voe. Now, when they can work and make money at the herrings, they give no excuse for being absent. Only the other day I had an application by a parent to have his girl's name taken off the roll. She is about twelve years of age, and has passed in the second standard only. She is 'gipping' herring.

19665. During the winter they have a variety of excuses?—A good many of them have.

19666. And in the summer they remain away earning money?—Yes, they won't come; one time they can't come, and the other time they won't come.

19667. Why don't the smaller ones over six years of age come?—The children don't come until they are seven years of age. Until the children are seven years of age, their parents would think it was too far to send them if it were only 300 yards.

19668. Are things improving?—Yes; ever since I came they have improved. When I came I could get women to work at 1s. a day, and now I cannot get them for 2s. 6d.

19669. I mean is the school improving?—Not a bit; it is getting worse; they are getting so much work at the herrings that every day more are going away.

19670. Has the matter been under the consideration of the School Board?—When I came first I used to write about once a week, for a time, stating the thing; but there was no action taken by the board, and I got tired writing. I sent a list of the children who were away, and the reasons given by the parents for their absence,—that they were "gipping" and working among the herrings, rolling barrels, and so forth, and up till now no notice has been taken of the matter. The compulsory officer comes round about once in a month, or when he is sent for.

19671. Where does he stay?—Three and a half miles from here.

19672. Is this the place where the only school of the parish was before 1872?—I could not say. I think it was at East Yell.

19673. There was no school here until the new arrangements?—No.

19674. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The School Board draw money for the average attendance?—They do.

19675. Therefore it is very much to their advantage to increase the average attendance?—Decidedly.

19676. Yet they don't make any effort to do so?—They do not. There are some bad cases. There is one family of four men and two women; the women are engaged in "gipping" herring and the men at the fishing. They have two girls both under school age in the family, and, not content with six of the grown-up members being employed and earning wages, an application came the other week to get the elder girl's name taken off the roll, although she is only about twelve years of age.

19677. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are the school apparatus and dwelling house in good order?—Not very good order.

MID YELL.
—
RAEFIRTH.
—
David Ogilvy.

19678. They are new?—Yes, but the ceiling is tumbling down on the pupils' heads, to the danger of their lives, sometimes in winter.

19679. Is that due to bad workmanship or bad weather?—Bad workmanship. I have seen ceilings in the south standing nearly fifty years, and yet quite good, and trains passing every day.

19680. Could you not keep good fires on?—It is not damp; there are good fires kept on; but the hair is not mixed properly with the plaster.

19681. Do you find many of the children pretty well advanced in their education?—No.

19682. What is the longest time they remain at school?—Till they are thirteen years of age.

19683. Do not the children who live about here, where there is no excuse of roads and rivers, attend school in winter?—The children on this side are the only children we can depend upon attending at all, and even in their case we cannot depend on their coming to school. The cluster of houses on the hill up there is the only place I can surely depend on; but I think there are about twenty round about this side of the voe not at school; you cannot depend upon them. On the north side and over the hill some of the children have to come a long way, and they cannot be depended upon.

19684. How many children will you have in winter over thirteen years of age?—More than likely not one; I think I had only one last year over thirteen.

19685. There are some boys and girls within easy reach who might attend when they are not doing anything else?—Their parents always find something for them to do; they think education is of no value in this part of the world; they think they will save the school fee by keeping the children at home.

19686. What is the fee?—9d. a quarter for infants, 1s. 6d. for the more advanced, and 2s. 6d. for the most advanced in the school.

19687. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When was your inspection?—June.

19688. How many did you present?—Thirty-two.

19689. How many of these were in the third standard?—About a dozen, I think.

19690. In the standards above the third how many were there?—Four—three in the fourth and one in the fifth.

19691. *The Chairman.*—All these irregularities and discouragements, of course, were made known to the inspector?—The inspector takes no notice of that at all; it is not his business.

19692. Can he not make any general report?—I asked him, and he said he once did so, and the Department returned it to have it modified before it was sent to the School Board.

19693. Would it be possible to accommodate the holidays in some way to the gutting of the fish and the curing season, so as to throw the work of the children into the holidays?—They want them so often during the season—or think they want them—that supposing you were giving them holidays now, they would want them again when the harvest comes on; and then they would want them in spring, about a month or so before the examination, to dig the fields and carry manure.

19694. But would it not be a good thing to throw at least one of the seasons of labour into the holidays? when are the holidays?—In the harvest time, and in the spring labouring seasons.

19695. Do you give spring holidays here?—Three weeks.

19696. Do the parents assist you at all by instruction at home?—In very rare cases.

19697. Are the parents of advanced age generally illiterate, or have they almost all received some education?—They have all received some

slight degree of education; there are no cases—or at least any rare cases—where they cannot write a letter in a legible hand, and read the newspapers.

19698. Is that the case both with men and women?—Those who have sailed south are better informed and better educated as a whole than those who have remained at home.

19699. Do you find the children lively and intelligent naturally?—I don't find them take enough interest either in their lessons or games. I think the children are rather weak physically; I never saw a south country game played here, such as cricket or football; they are unknown. The children sit and mope about, seemingly without spirit or heart for anything.

19700. Are there any people in the parish who do anything to encourage the children by offering prizes at a voluntary inspection, or anything of that sort?—I have brought up that subject two or three times, but the board would never give even a small grant for prizes; and no party in the place takes enough interest in the school to do it I have been here about two years, and I have never seen a member of the School Board inside my school except on the examination day—even a member of the board.

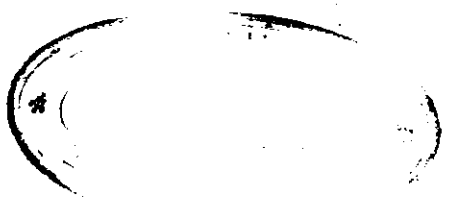
19701. Beyond the performance of their official duties, the members of the School Board don't show any intelligence or benevolent interest in promoting education?—They have not even performed their official duties.

19702. In what degree or manner do they fail to perform their duties?—They should visit the schools, or depute some one to do it for them, four times a year, and sign the registers; I think the chairman of the School Board visited the school once during last year, and I think that was the first visit I have had from a member of the board since I came, unless on an examination day; so that instead of the books being signed by two members four times last year, they were only signed once in four quarters by one member.

19703. Are the statutory meetings of the members well attended?—I don't know that.

19704. Do you think that if there was an intelligent interest shown in higher quarters in the education of the children some good might be done?—Most decidedly. The children are beginning to improve, and they like to be encouraged; and I have no doubt if a few of those who lead public opinion in this place would take an interest in the school, the children would do very well, and become smart men and women. But as it is they think it better to do a little work, and get pennies for it.

[ADJOURNED.]



UNST.

BALTA SOUND.

BALTA SOUND, UNST, MONDAY, JULY 16, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, LI.*)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq. M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

ANDREW SPENCE, Crofter, Breakon, North (53)—examined.

Andrew Spence.

19705. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—No, I have been badly, and not able to attend the fishing.

19706. Have you any statement which you wish to make?—Yes. I am living on a wasting property, as it is blown nearly away with sand; and if it had not been for the improvements my father made from the hill we would not have been living. Sixteen years ago, a man became factor of the land, and laid on a sum of £1 on the rent for the hill, and after that he railed in the hill and took it away altogether; so that I have nothing but a piece of land inside, and my animals I have to put out on other people's property.

19707. Does that statement apply to the other crofters in the same place?—To a good many.

19708. When the hill was enclosed and taken away from the crofters, was there any reduction made on their rent?—None for us.

19709. What stock do you keep at present?—I have three Shetland cows.

19710. Ponies?—Four ponies.

19711. Any sheep?—None.

19712. How many acres of arable ground have you within the fence?—It was called eight merks in the old Shetland style; but I think there are about three parts of it blown away. I suppose it is four merks or acres now.

19713. Three-fourths of it blown away?—Yes, three merks I would reckon.

19714. Have you any idea how many acres according to our measure?—No.

19715. What rent do you pay?—£5 of rent, and 2s. of road money.

19716. When you had the hill, how much stock did you keep?—Just the same as we keep now, I believe. I could not exactly say, because I was away at the time, and my father had possession.

19717. You think the crofters keep as much stock now as they did when they had the common pasture of the hill?—Some of the heritors left when the scathold or hill was divided, and gave their tenants enough off the hill to serve them; others took it away altogether.

19718. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Had you no sheep when you had the scathold land?—Yes, but the man who took possession of the scathold land brought sheep into the district, and there was scab came amongst them, and killed them off, and it is still amongst ours. The farmers dipped their sheep, but we just poured the dip on ours, and in winter they all died. Some have sheep still, and others none.

19719. *The Chairman.*—Do those who have sheep pay more than the others, or do they all pay the same?—Every man pays according to the land

he has. The crofters alongside of me hold under the Earl of Zetland. They hold 11 merks, and pay £5 a year; but it is on a wasting property. The Earl of Zetland left sufficient hill for the stock they had when the scathold was divided.

19720. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who is your proprietor?—Major Cameron.

19721. Has he a factor in North Yell?—Yes, a very fine man; but of course, he could not go beyond Major Cameron's orders or the way he found the property after Walker left it. Walker, who took away the hill, left some years ago; and the gentlemen who is in it now just has it something as he found it. Walker wronged every person, and would not have cared whether the sheep were put under a dyke or what we did with them. I believe he spoiled the major.

19722. Did you make any representation to Mr Walker that the rents should be reduced when the scathold was taken away?—I only paid the rent to him two or three years, and he gave me no satisfaction.

19723. But you did represnt it to him?—Yes.

19724. Your complaint is that you have lost the scathold, and have not had any reduction of rent in consequence?—Yes, I want some of the scathold back if it were possible—some of the hill back belonging to the property.

19725. You said you had to pay others for keeping your stock; do you pay for the grazing of cows or ponies?—No, I graze them on the property I pay for; but what I put on the hill I feed on other property, or I could not keep so many animals.

19726. *The Chairman.*—What about your house?—The last factor that came in to act for Major Cameron repaired our houses; we have no complaint against the house.

19727. Is it the custom in your place that the proprietor builds the house?—Yes, I believe the house was built by the proprietor first. I could not say when it was built, but I am the fourth occupant.

19728. But is it the general custom that the proprietor builds or helps you to build the house?—Yes.

19729. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many of the crofters are in the same position as yourself?—There are a great many.

19730. How many people are complaining like yourself?—I could not say, but there are a great many.

19731. How many people have the same cause of complaint as you have?—A great many, but I could not say the number.

19732. How many families are there in your town—how many crofters altogether?—In our town there are from twenty to thirty, but they are not all under the same landlord.

19733. And is it only the condition of the tenants of the one that you complain about?—I have only one landlord. The other tenants are complaining, but they don't bring in their case because we expected you on the 20th, and you are only come now. A telegram came from Lerwick last night, and they had not time to take their place along with us.

19734. But there are thirty crofters?—From twenty to thirty.

19735. Who has got the scathold land which was taken from you?—Major Cameron's factor has it, I believe.

19736. It is one big farm, is it not?—It was made into parks—a sheep farm.

19737. Have you any idea how many acres would be in that land which was taken away from your predecessors, and is now in this sheep farm—is it a big farm?—Our little bit is not a great many acres.

19738. Was the hill ground taken altogether?—A great many acres;

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I could not really say how many, because I was not at home at the time, and have no idea; but it is a great quantity of hill.

19739. You say no allowance was made for you in the rent that was taken from you?—No, Walker laid on £1, I was led to understand, and it was never taken off. He took away the hill; we have only liberty to cut our peat.

19740. Is there any reason why you could not get back the land; it is not let upon lease?—I could not say how it is exchanged; it is exchanged, I understand, to another man, more especially the piece that belonged to the croft that I held.

19741. Have you ever seen your proprietor himself?—No.

19742. Does he ever come to North Yell?—I am not aware, but I have seen his factor, and he would have been inclined to have done something, but it appears things are in such a case that he just has it as he found it.

19743. How long has Major Cameron been proprietor?—He got the property from his father.

19744. And how long is it since his father died?—I really cannot say.

19745. Is it a long time?—I believe it is about twenty or thirty years back; but I could not exactly say, because I was not here at the time.

19746. Are you and your neighbours impoverished in your circumstances, in consequence of the taking away of this ground?—My next neighbour belongs to the Earl of Zetland's property, and the Earl left sufficient hill for their stock, so that they are not impoverished. But some of their land was blown away, and they have got a reduction of rent.

19747. Are your own circumstances worse in consequence?—I am hemmed in, and the other tenants throw it up to me that I am putting animals on their property.

19748. Are there other people impoverished in their circumstances in consequence of being deprived of land?—Yes, I believe there are. The hill was common belonging to all men, and they came and took it away from us.

19749. Is the ceasing of keeping sheep rather a loss to you?—A great loss.

19750. Was it the native sheep you kept?—Yes, the Shetland sheep.

19751. *The Chairman.*—Did you use the wool of the native sheep for making clothes at home?—Yes, stockings and blankets, and the old people made outside clothes of it also.

DONALD MOAR, Crofter and Fisherman, Cullivoe (23)—examined.

Donald Moar.

(*See Appendix A, LI.*)

19752. *The Chairman.*—Do you hold land and pay rent?—Yes.

19753. Was your father established there before you?—Yes, he has been there these last fifty years.

19754. Who is your landlord?—Major Cameron. I am in the same position as the man who has just been examined. I am in want of scathold. It was taken away, and they put £1 upon the rent; they took away the scathold, and never took off the £1.

19755. How many sheep were kept upon the scathold belonging to your croft formerly?—They kept sheep more or less; perhaps fifty or sixty sheep, and some maybe had fewer.

19756. Did your father in his time keep about forty sheep?—He kept about twenty sheep, but some people had more.

19757. When the ground for those twenty sheep was taken away, he had no reduction of rent, but, on the contrary, there was £1 put upon the

rent?—There was £1 put upon the land when Mr Walker came and looked over the scathold; he raised the rent £1 on account of the stock pasturing, and then he took away the scathold, and the £1 was never taken off.

19758. On your own croft, what stock do you keep?—Three cows and six ponies. Donald Moar.

19759. No sheep?—No sheep.

19760. Have you a good house?—Yes, very good; it has just been repaired.

19761. What is your rent?—£4 altogether.

19762. Why is your rent £4, while a neighbour who has the same stock pays £5?—The ponies that I have I am obliged to other people for letting them go upon their land outside.

19763. When did you receive intimation that this meeting was to be held here?—I received the intimation at the telegraph office on Saturday or Sunday sometime.

19764. Was it on Saturday or Sunday?—I could not say which. I heard on the afternoon of yesterday that you were to be here to-day.

19765. But you think that the telegraphic intimation arrived on Saturday or Sunday?—Yes, either Saturday or Sunday.

19766. Who was it informed you that the meeting would be here to-day?—Mr Sanderson, the postmaster, told me yesterday.

19767. How long did it take you to come here?—About three hours.

19768. *Mr Cameron.*—When were you chosen to represent the grievances of the people?—Last Monday. It was represented then that you would not be here until the 20th.

19769. Who told you that?—It was the directors of the place, the minister and two or three others.

19770. Did he say to you how he had heard?—No, it was reported you were to be on the 20th at Balta Sound.

19771. How many people were at the meeting when you were elected?—About twenty people.

19772. Were they all tenants of Major Cameron?—Yes, and other proprietors.

19773. What others?—Dr Paul.

19774. Who else?—The Earl of Zetland.

19775. Are there any other proprietors in North Yell who have crofter tenants?—Yes, there are different people, but these are the big proprietors.

19776. How many are big proprietors?—Those who have a dozen farms, and so on.

19777. How many of those are there?—Three, I think—Dr Paul, Major Cameron, William Paul, and the Earl of Zetland.

19778. The two delegates from North Yell are both from the same property; do you know why there were no delegates from the property of the Earl of Zetland's and Dr Paul's property?—I do not know.

19779. Do you think they have no grievances?—Yes, but they are all busy at the fishing.

19780. But why are the tenants of these proprietors all fishing, and the tenants of Major Cameron at home?—This other man who is along with me is at home, and I was at the fishing; but they let me off, so that I might come along with him.

19781. But why were not the delegates chosen from different properties, as would be most natural,—one from the Earl of Zetland's, one from Dr Paul's, and one from Major Cameron's?—That would have been much better, but likely enough it was overlooked.

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19782. What are the grievances of the other properties?—The grievance on Dr Paul's property is that he won't repair their houses.

19783. And what is the grievance on the Earl of Zetland's property?—I think he has come to pretty fair terms with them; there is no grievance.

19784. The principal grievance is what you and your neighbour have stated?—Yes, the want of scathold.

19785. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What about the blowing away of the land, of which the other witness spoke about to-day?—That is the north-west wind, which brings the sand in and made the place all waste, and the sea has got possession of what was fertile land.

19786. Why don't you sow it with bent?—The people may not be up to that.

19787. Is there no bent at all?—Maybe a very little.

19788. Does that keep down the blowing?—Yes, but the sea has got possession; it runs in over the land more than it did formerly.

19789. What fishing do you chiefly engage in at Cullivoe?—Herring fishing now.

19790. Have you a good harbour?—Very good. But there is no season there; we fish here at Unst, at Uyea Sound.

19791. Do you fish at the mouth of the Blue Mull Sound?—Yes, at the west side of the island.

19792. Have you big boats?—Yes, we have got none of our own, but we hire them and fish on the half-catch system.

19793. You are one of a number who have a boat?—Yes.

19794. What is the crew?—Seven of us.

19795. And you work upon the half-catch system?—Yes.

19796. Who is the curer?—William Paul.

19797. Is that the proprietor you spoke of?—Yes.

19798. You give the fish to him?—Yes, he owns the boat, and we give him the fish, and we get half the fish for our trouble.

19799. And he keeps the boat in working order?—Yes, he keeps the boat in working order, and gets half the fish.

19800. How long does the fishing last?—Till September.

19801. Have you given up the cod and ling fishing?—Yes, we gave it up on 12th June.

19802. But you were at that fishing before that date?—Yes, from the month of March.

19803. What do you do from September to March?—Just work at the land through the winter, and repair the fishing material; and when it is weather good enough to enable us to go off to the fishing, we go in four-oared boats round the shore.

19804. You cannot go to the deep sea fishing in winter?—No, the farthest is a mile.

19805. What fish do you get there?—Cod principally.

19806. But not in large quantities?—No, about 1 or 1½ cwt. in a day.

19807. Does the curer supply you with stores?—Yes, we have dealt with him this while back; but now the Scotch curers are coming into the place, they are getting their eyes opened.

19808. Do the Scotch curers bring stores?—Yes.

19809. And when you have a Scotch curer you get stores from him?—If you have no money, your curer has to supply you.

19810. How often do you settle with the curer?—Once a year, when the fishing is done—about Martinmas.

19811. And how do you settle the price about the herring?—We get £1 a cran from the 1st of August—for 250 crans we get £1 a cran, and for any over that we get 14s. a cran.

19812. Up to the 1st August your arrangement is that you have £1 a cran?—We have from the start 150 crans at 15s., then for any above that 14s. to 1st August; and then we get £1 for 250 crans; and for any beyond that quantity 14s. if we get that many.

19813. When is this arrangement made—before you commence the fishing?—Yes, before.

19814. Is there any bounty?—No, not for us, because we are not able to buy a boat.

19815. It is a long fishing season?—Yes.

19816. What do you consider a good fishing in the season with one of these big boats and seven of a crew?—300 crans is considered a very good fishing, but of course they sometimes make more than that.

19817. Do you expect to make more than that this year?—We cannot tell. We have got 100 crans already, and we may get 300 or 400 or 500 more, and perhaps not 100.

19818. And the arrangement is made before the fishing season begins?—Before it commences we get a written agreement to that effect, so that it cannot be broken.

19819. And does that carry with it also the obligation to purchase from the curer—that you are to procure your stores from him?—No, you don't require to take stores from the curer unless you like.

19820. But, unless you have money, you must?—Yes, and of course at his price.

19821. Because you could not get them anywhere else?—Yes.

19822. So that to the one who has no money it is virtually an obligation?—Yes.

19823. And the settlement is made at the Martinmas term every year?—Yes.

19824. What is the arrangement about the cod and ling fishing; how are the prices fixed?—At the same time as the herring fishing—the new year before the season begins.

19825. And what price is fixed for them?—We get 7s. 6d. for cod, 8s. 6d. for ling, 5s. for tusk, and 10s. for halibut, per cwt.

19826. Do they salt the halibut?—They ice them. We get 10s. for them up to the 6th May.

19827. What market are they sent to?—Birmingham and Leeds and London.

19828. Halibut and turbot are different fish?—Scotch people call them halibut, but we call them turbot.

19829. Is it a round fish or a longish fish?—It is long.

19830. Do you get very heavy halibut?—Yes, pretty heavy—upwards of a cwt.

19831. And ling is 8s. 6d. a cwt., cod 7s. 6d., tusk 5s., and halibut 10s.?—Yes.

19832. Halibut goes in ice and the others are salted?—Yes.

19833. You just give the fish to the curer?—Yes; we have nothing to do but take off the heads, and in the case of turbot we don't even do that. We do not split up the fish.

19834. What do you do with the heads?—We use them for our own purposes. We get the fish, and take off the head.

19835. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who gets the liver?—We keep that for our own purposes, or the curers buy them.

19836. And the sound?—They buy the sound.

19837. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The whole of that belongs to you?—Yes, the liver and head, but not the sound.

19838. You take nothing to do with the cleaning and drying?—Nothing whatever.

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19839. And is that arrangement all over the country with respect to the fixing of the prices?—I believe it is: of course, I could not say as to Scotch curers. They give better prices to a man who has a boat of his own. Perhaps they have a better advantage. But I can only speak from my own experience, and I have told you what our curer gives.

19840. Would you prefer to have a boat of your own?—Oh yes.

19841. Are there many of the crews in the place who are able to have a boat of their own?—No, not many; there is just one crew who have been able to get a boat of their own.

19842. Do you consider the big boat better than the old sixern of the country?—Yes; they may be more expensive, but there would not be so much loss of life as with the old boats.

19843. Are they better able to live in a wilder sea?—Yes, very much; the small boats were merely skiffs.

19844. But they were good sea boats?—Yes, but there is no mistake a big boat would live where a small boat would not.

19845. Is the price you mentioned for herring about the usual price going in the place?—Yes.

19846. You fix the price of the herring and you fix the price of the cod and ling; and the price of herring is 15s.?—From the 6th of June to the 1st of August.

19847. And after that £1 for 250 crans?—Yes; and perhaps you might get that in two weeks; and if you got more you got 14s. a cran.

19848. For the over-catch before or after the 1st August, 14s.?—Yes.

19849. After the 1st August you got 20s. for 250 crans, and the over-catch after that is 14s.?—Yes.

19850. If you got the 250 crans in two or three weeks, you would get 14s. as long as you fished after that?—Yes.

19851. The over-catch is always the same, 14s.?—Yes.

19852. And that price is settled in the beginning of the year?—Yes.

19853. Is the fish after the 1st August considered more valuable or less?—They are more valuable—they are full; they are considered to be in their prime.

19854. And cure better?—Yes.

19855. The season gets colder?—They are considered better anyhow.

19856. Is that the best period of the fishing after the 1st of August?—Generally the best; they consider the herring at their best.

19857. Do you look for a good fishing this year?—We expect so.

19858. There is plenty of fish about?—Yes.

19859. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you got any lease from Major Cameron?—No.

19860. Is it a thing quite unknown for small crofters?—No; some of them have them; two of Dr Paul's tenants have.

19861. Are there any leases on Major Cameron's property among the crofters?—I could not tell you; none that I know of.

91862. I asked the previous witness how many crofters—heads of families—had the same cause of complaint as himself, and he said, perhaps between twenty or thirty—can you tell me?—No; I do not think there are that many in North Yell.

19863. Are some of these upon other estates, or are they all upon the Cameron property?—No, they are upon other estates.

19864. Have there been any small tenants or crofters removed altogether out of North Yell within the last twenty or thirty years?—Yes, whole towns have been laid in sheep pasture.

19865. Can you mention any large sheep farms that were once occupied by crofters?—Yes, Westa Firth.

19866. To whom does that belong?—Major Cameron.

19867. Any other?—Kirkabusta, on the Cameron property also.

19868. Any other?—Windhouse, in Mid Yell.

19869. Any others in North Yell?—Granister and Garth. That is all in one enclosure now; there are fences dividing it.

19870. How many people may have been upon these four places?—There were a good lot; pretty nearly twenty houses on Westa Firth alone.

19871. You are not sure about the others?—No, but that is the biggest place.

19872. Did you know any of the people yourself?—No, I was too young.

19873. Did you hear your father or other people speaking about them as people pretty well off?—Yes, they were well off; they had plenty of scathold and sheep.*

19874. What became of them?—They all removed; some went to other countries and some removed to other farms. They had to go one here and one there. I could not say where they went to.

19875. But some of them had to leave North Yell altogether?—Yes.

19876. Who is the tenant of that big sheep farm just now?—There is no tenant but the shepherd.

19877. Is it in the proprietor's hands?—Yes, so far as I know.

19878. And there is only one shepherd?—Yes.

19879. Were there pretty good houses upon these farms?—Yes, they are very good; Major Cameron has very good houses upon his property.

19880. The houses belonged to those people who were put away?—I believe so; but they are all down now.

19881. Were they all built of stone?—Yes, all built of stone.

19882. Do you agree with the preceding witness, that the loss of the sheep was a great loss to the crofters?—Yes, it was a considerable loss.

19883. What use did you make of the sheep—what purposes were they devoted to?—They made clothes at home; they spun wool with yarn, and it was woven with machines which they had for the purpose in Shetland.

19884. Was the carcase made use of?—It was eaten.

19885. At what age?—Three or four years of age; the wethers were generally used at that age and the ewes older.

19886. Were these sheep generally eaten by the crofters themselves, or were they sold?—Generally eaten, because the prices were low, and they thought it better to eat them than to sell them.

19887. What have the crofters now for food instead of these sheep?—Nothing, unless a pig.

19888. Is there anything to prevent your getting some of that scathold as before?—I don't see any reason why they should not give us a little of it.

19889. Are you willing to pay a fair rent for it?—Yes.

19890. *Mr Cameron.*—You stated that some grievances, of which you or your neighbour complained, existed upon other estates; but, as I understood you before, you said there was no grievance upon other properties except that Dr Paul did not keep the houses in proper order. Which of the two statements is correct?—The correct one is that the tenants upon Dr Paul's property have a little scathold, and Major Cameron's tenants have none.

19891. Does the grievance of which you and your neighbour complain on Major Cameron's property extend to the estates of any of the other proprietors?—No, they all have a little scathold.

19892. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The other proprietors have given them a little scathold, whereas Major Cameron has given none?—That is it.

* See Appendix A, LI.

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19893. *Mr Cameron.*—But you stated that the other tenants had no grievance except that of the houses on Dr Paul's property?—Yes; undoubtedly they do require more scathold, if they would only give it to them.

19894. *The Chairman.*—When you settle with the fish-curer, if the balance is in your favour, are you in the habit of getting the balance paid to you in money?—Yes.

19895. It does not remain on his books to your credit?—No; the cash is paid the night you settle.

19896. Is money frequently paid—is it often the case that there is a balance due to the fishermen?—In general, the fishermen are due money to the curers.

19897. But, still, in some cases they have money to get?—Yes, in a good many cases they have a little to get. They are getting better on now; the big boats get more money. Twenty years ago Shetland was very poor.

19898. Is there any complaint among the fishermen an account of the prices charged by the fish-curers, or is it believed that the prices are generally fair?—The prices have been fair within the last five or six years. Before that the curers did not give fair prices, because the people could not make a better of it.

19899. Supposing one of your neighbours or yourself was able to buy a boat, and did not require the assistance of the fish-curer; would you then be allowed to fish as you pleased, and to sell the fish to anybody you liked?—Oh, yes; they would not hold you to fish to them if you could purchase a boat for yourself. You could go to any curer you liked and get privilege and bounty too.

19900. And the proprietor would not molest you on account of that, but would allow you to remain in your croft?—Yes; at anyrate none of Major Cameron's tenants would be disturbed on that account. He has let them fish wherever they liked.

19901. What bait do you use for the long line deep sea fishing?—Herring.

19902. Can the herring be caught all the year round for bait?—Yes; when you don't catch herring you don't set lines.

19903. Is there any artificial bait used?—The small boats use mussel bait but the large boats don't.

19904. You have no complaint to make about the bait?—No; they always get some bait if they want it.

19905. When the proprietor himself—like Dr Paul—is also a fish-curer, the tenants are expected to fish for him?—Yes.

19906. And do they actually fish for him?—I think he does not compel them, if they have a boat of their own.

19907. If they had a boat of their own they could go where they liked, and he would not complain?—No, because he has no fishing boats, but merely the boat of another proprietor. If you have a boat of your own, you can go where you get the best price for the fish.

19908. On the whole, as matters stand now, is there any great complaint about the system of supplying goods, or as to the relations between the fishermen and curer—are there complaints, or are they all pretty well off?—I think they are all pretty well satisfied. The curers give their goods pretty cheap, supposing you don't have money to pay for them until the fishing is out.

19909. Are things better now than they used to be?—Considerably better. Even twenty years back, in my mind, the people were very poor; and within the last half-dozen years they have got considerably up. People

from the South, and curers, have come and given good prices for fish, and of course the curers in Shetland have to give the same as the Scotch curers.

19910. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is there considerable competition amongst curers themselves?—No; I believe every one just gives what he thinks he can pay; generally, however, they have some such agreement as we have.

Donald Moar.

19911. Have you ever received money from a curer?—Yes.

19912. At the settlement, when a balance was due, you got the cash? Yes, on the night of the settlement.

19913. You stated that some of the crofters had leases on Dr Paul's property?—Yes, these are the ones I know, and there may be some of whom I don't know.

19914. Are those who have leases more inclined to improve their land than those who have no leases?—Yes, they are, because if they improved the land, perhaps, when they had no leases, they might be turned out next day and the croft taken from them; indeed, if they improved the ground, the ground was taken from them.

19915. Do you know the length of lease on Dr Paul's ground?—No, I do not know.

19916. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You mentioned one proprietor who is a curer—Dr Paul—is it the case that the tenants there fish for that curer only?—Yes, they fish for him, but if they had a boat he would not hinder them from going to any other curer they liked.

19917. How many of them are there under that curer?—Not many; he has not many tenants.

19918. Are there any who do not fish to him?—No, they all fish to him.

19919. And is that a general practice when the proprietor is a curer—Yes, if he gives them as good a bargain as others.

19920. When the boat is their own they can go to where they please?—Yes, where they can make the best bargain.

19921. But very few have boats of their own?—Yes, very few; just two in North Yell.

19922. So that, as a matter of fact, people just fish to the proprietor?—Yes.

19923. Supposing the proprietor to be a curer, and that you were working on the half-catch system, how would the price of the fish be settled?—Just the same.

19924. Who would settle it?—The proprietor; and if you had any money to get he would give it to you.

19925. You would have no voice in settling it?—No.

19926. Unless the boat is your own, you have no voice in settling the price?—No, they give the general price of the country.

19927. And it is growing more and more the practice that fishermen are clear at settling time than they were in the past?—Yes, they are improving greatly.

19928. Are there beach boys for drying cod and ling?—Yes.

19929. Is it the practice for them, when they are of tender age, to open an account with the curer and take supplies?—Yes; their parents are poor, and they have to go and work for themselves.

19930. They have a separate account for themselves, no matter how young?—Yes, if they can only work.

ARCHIBALD SMITH, Crofter and Fisherman, Quoay, Westing, Unst (50)—examined.

(See Appendix A, LI.)

Archibald Smith.

19931. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you anything to state to the Commis-

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sion in regard to the condition of the people in your place?—I pay 36s. a year for the scathold, and the greater part has been taken off from me—that is the only thing I have to complain of.

19932. When was it taken off?—When Mr Walker became factor, fourteen years back.

19933. And was there any reduction of rent?—No, there was no reduction of rent.

19934. What rent do you pay?—£12.

19935. What animals do you keep?—Eight cows, three ponies, and eight sheep.

19936. How many merks of land have you?—I could not say.

19937. Can you not guess?—No, I could not, because I came on to my father-in-law's land, and I could not say how many merks of land he had.

19938. How many acres?—I could not give an account of what it is.

19939. What quantity of corn are you able to raise?—Fifty threaves.

19940. How much is a threave?—Twenty-four sheaves.

19941. Is it oats you grow?—Yes.

19942. Do you raise any other grain than oats?—No; five or six threaves of bere.

19943. And potatoes?—Some years we have a few, but some years not many.

19944. How many barrels on an average?—I could not state.

19945. Do you raise as much as keeps your family in potatoes during the year?—No; I have not had a potato this year at all unless what I need for seed.

19946. Was there disease in your potatoes?—They did not grow, and it was bad seed, by the sea coming over it; the place is exposed to the sea.

19947. Is your land exposed to the sea?—Yes, I am sea-bound.

49948. Do you raise sufficient grain to support your family for any length of time?—Some years, about six months a year, or a little better, and I must buy for the rest of the year.

19949. How many bolls do you buy?—I have bought five bolls already this last year.

19950. At what price?—£1.

19951. Did you keep a larger stock before the scathold was taken from you?—Yes; my father-in-law had 30 or 40 head of sheep.

19952. Had he more cows?—Yes.

19953. How many?—Two more.

19954. Were they Shetland cows?—Yes.

19955. Any horses?—No.

19956. Do you find the pasture you have sufficient for the number of animals you have mentioned?—No; one-half the year they have to go inside in the town, and I pay for them.

19957. Then they are not sufficiently fed there?—No.

19958. Have you to buy any food for them in addition to that?—No.

19959. Are they, as a rule, in a very poor condition in spring?—Yes, they are in a very poor condition.

19960. Are the cows ever in such poor condition that they don't calve?—Sometimes they cannot rise off the ground.

19961. What time of the year is that generally the case?—In the month of May.

19962. Is that general through the island?—No, not every year, only in bad seasons.

19963. I suppose it is not the case where they have plenty of grass?—No, it is not.

19964. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you paid 36s. for the scat-

hold land you lost; how do you make that out?—It was laid upon the land for the grazing.

19965. And when was this 36s. added to the rent?—Fourteen years ago.

19966. It was made £12 then?—Yes.

19967. When did you lose the scathold land?—When it was enclosed.

19968. How long after the rent was made £12 was it that the scathold was taken from you?—I could not state that.

19969. Had you the scathold two or three years after paying the £12?—Well, it was enclosed at the time the property was enclosed, and a good part of the hill taken off and a small piece left.

19970. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was it during the time of Mr Walker's factorship that the rent was raised and the scathold taken away?—Yes.

19971. How many years was he factor upon the estate?—I don't exactly mind that.

19972. Five or six?—Yes.

19973. This is on Major Cameron's property also?—Yes.

19974. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was this Walker, the factor, a native of the island?—No.

ROBERT JOHNSTON, Crofter, Tipton, Haroldswick, Unst (77)—examined.

19975. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you a crofter and fisherman?—I am old now and am not fishing.

19976. You were a fisherman?—Yes.

19977. Who is your proprietor?—Mr Edmonston.

19978. How many crofters are there besides you in the village?—My son stops alongside me, in a house close by.

19979. Has he a separate croft?—Yes.

19980. How many other crofters are there in the neighbourhood on Mr Edmonston's property?—Six or seven.

19981. Were you sent by these six or seven as a delegate, or did you come here on your own account?—I came here because I am living in a very bad house, not fit for any person to stop in. When the rain comes out of the heavens, the rain comes running through upon me,—and here is Mr Edmonston sitting hearing me, and I am not telling a lie.

19982. You came here because you live in a bad house?—Yes, there is no house in Unst so bad. There is a gavel between me and my son—a gavel which I bigged with faels.

19983. Do you think yours is the worst house in Unst?—Yes; the couples split and came down, and the roof is rent and the rain gets in; the roof could not be prized up. The house was occupied by my grandfather.

19984. Do you suppose the couples have existed 100 years without repair?—The roof has never been repaired; it has fallen twice upon me.

19985. But it must have been a strong house originally?—Well, it likely was, and my time will be short now. But I should like if it had sufficient, suppose I should only bide a season in it.

19986. Did the other six crofters know you were coming here to-day to represent your grievances about the house?—They likely "kenned" I was coming.

19987. But they didn't tell you to say anything on their behalf?—No; and I had nothing to do with them.

19988. You came on your own account about the house?—Yes.

19989. Have you any other complaint?—No, I have nothing to say.

19990. Except about the house?—Nothing but the house.

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19991. Have you ever applied to the proprietor or factor?—I have spoken about it back and forward, and sometimes he said there were no men to get; but I won't stop although I should walk out this winter, if I am living.

19992. Is it the custom for the house to be kept in repair by the proprietor or crofter?—All my neighbours have good houses, and I don't think I should be the one to want a house, because I have always paid my rent. My wife has been badly for twenty years, and she has never been out of the room for seven years, while she has been silly; and I have a daughter who lost her senses, and I went to Mr Edmonston here, and to the inspector at the schoolhouse to get clothes and a supply. I also wanted my poor rates down for the present year, and they would not give me a cent. down.

19993. What rent do you pay?—£6, 6s. 11d. forbye poor rates; the rent was lifted from £4, 16s. to £6, 6s. 1d. I don't think it was right to lift it upon me, when all my forefathers have lived and died on the property in Unst.

19994. Was the rent lifted upon the other crofters as well as you at the time?—Yes.

19995. In the same property?—On some it was, and on some it was not.

19996. Why was the rent lifted?—I don't know.

19997. Was any reason given at the time?—I heard of none.

19998. When was that done?—I don't know exactly, but I think it would be eight years in May.

19999. Have you got sufficient scathold for your cattle?—I have nothing to say about the scathold, because I have plenty of room to keep all the animals I have.

20000. *The Chairman.*—How many animals have you got?—Three old kye and two young ones.

20001. How many ponies?—Three my son left me when he went away, and that is all I have to pay with; and I think, if I left and went away a small way, I was not fit to have anything to live upon, and that lass lying badly and fit to do nothing.

20002. Did you say your son had a croft?—Yes he has a house.

20003. Has he still got it or has he gone away?—A son of mine went away and left me the three ponies.

20004. But have you a son who has a croft now?—Yes; he is stopping in the other end of my house?—There is only the gavel betwixt us.

20005. Is the house your son has a good house?—It is a very good house.

20006. Your son has a good house, but you have a bad one?—I have; I cannot live in it.

20007. Is your wife alive?—Yes; she is 76 years of age.

20008. Have you any other children living in the house with you?—Yes; I have, the lass who lost her senses, and can do nothing.

20009. Have all the houses in the township been repaired except your house?—When there was need for it.

20010. When you asked the proprietor to repair your house, what reason did he give for not repairing it?—I do not know. I sent him word of it lately, but he paid no attention to it; surely he will do it, but I do not know.

20011. Is your rent all paid?—Yes.

20012. Have you any other complaint, except the want of your house being repaired?—No.

20013. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rent does your son pay?—£5, 5s.

20014. Has he more land than you?—No.

20015. Has he as much?—He should not have so much, but he raises as good a crop as I can do.

20016. Was the rent raised from £4, 16s. to £6, 6s. 11d. all at once?—I suppose it will be about eight years ago.

20017. At one time?—Yes.

20018. And did you get any advantage at the time it was raised?—Not 1.

20019. Are there many crofters on the property of Mr Edmonston—men like yourself?—Yes, six.

20020. But all over his property, is there a lot of crofters?—Yes.

ROBERT ROBERTSON, Crofter, West Myres, Scraefield, Unst (74)—examined.

20021. *The Chairman.*—Were you a fisherman?—No, I was always upon the land.

20022. When did you hear that the Commission were to be here?—Not until yesterday; but we had heard before that you were coming.

20023. Who gave notice to you?—Some of our folk were here and heard it when they heard the sermon.

20024. Had you any meeting of the people to send anybody here?—No, they just told me you were coming, and I thought I would come down.

20025. Are there any others here from your place?—Yes, two men.

20026. How many families are there in your place?—I have but a small patch of hill ground. I have been driven out twice by sheep farms, and had to take a bit of barren hill because I had nowhere else to go.

20027. What rent do you pay?—£6 of rent for sixteen acres of hill ground—very barren ground.

20028. Who is your laird?—George Henderson, who stops in Burravoe.

20029. Have you no arable land?—No.

20030. Are you not able to raise any crop?—No, very little; it is bad soil.

20031. What stock do you keep?—Two cows, three ponies, and I think three head of sheep. I had plenty of sheep, but I have no place to keep them now.

20032. When were you removed to your present place?—I was driven out about nine years ago.

20033. Why was that done?—Because they took the place for sheep farming.

20034. What farm was made out of the place you were in?—Roe.

20035. Were there many other families removed besides yourself?—Yes, six.

20036. Where were they sent to?—I don't know; they had to shift for themselves.

20037. Have they found places in this parish?—Yes, except one man who went with his family to America.

20038. Did the laird find any place for them himself?—I could not say. One man got a place from him, and perhaps two.

20039. Did they get new houses when they were removed?—No, there were houses there before.

20040. Was there a house where you went to?—No, I had all to do.

20041. Had you a house to build?—No, but I had all the rest to manage.

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Robert Robertson.

20042. Did the landlord build the house for you—a good house?—Yes, a good house; I wanted a good house.

20043. Is it the same landlord now?—No.

20044. Who is your laird now?—Mr Henderson. It was Mr Edmonston's property I was removed from.

20045. Was there a sheep farm there before?—No, there was no sheep farm there before. There were sheep on the common pasture, but they all had to be turned away. I had sixty head of sheep, but I had to put them away because I had no room for them.

20046. What rent had you to pay?—50s. I was on another bit of ground when I was driven off the first time by sheep.

20047. Were you removed more than once?—Twice.

20048. Where were you removed from first?—I removed first from Balasta, where I had fourteen merks of land.

20049. Who was your landlord there?—Major Cameron.

20050. How long ago was that?—Between fourteen and fifteen years.

20051. How long had you been in your first place?—Five years; but I was five years in another place, and Mr Edmonston's before that.

20052. Were you removed from Balasta, that your land might go into a sheep farm?—Yes, I went out for that.

20053. Were there many other people also removed at that time?—No; I went of my own goodwill from there, because it was a dear rent and very little for it, and I thought I would improve another piece of ground and make a living out of it, but I was driven out. I thought I would get a lease, but I did not.

20054. What is your complaint here to day?—I have been badly handled and driven out.

20055. That you have been removed from a good place to a bad place against your will?—Yes.

20056. What would you like to get now?—I should like to get my rent down, for I pay far too much. The one half would be too much, but I was forced to take it. But my lease is up now. I had a seven years' lease, and it is up two years ago. I was to come to some agreement as to the rent, but he never came to me, and I did not go to him.

20057. You think the rent ought to be reduced a half at least?—I think so.

20058. Of course you have to buy all you need?—I had a family when I was driven out by the sheep farm, and I had a daughter left with four helpless children, and she had no place to go.

20059. Are you able to support your family?—I am supporting myself and am due nobody; but I am getting unfit for work now.

20060. *The Chairman.*—How many animals do you keep?—Two cows and three ponies, and three sheep, I think, if they are living.

20061. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you get any compensation when you were turned out?—No, none.

20062. Who got the place when you left?—It was occupied as a sheep farm.

20063. What was the name of the farm?—Roe was the last place.

20064. Who was the tenant of it?—Mr Edmonston.

20065. Had he it in his own hands?—He had the management of it at any rate. It was set to another man.

20066. Who was the other man?—Mr Sievwright, who stopped in Lerwick.

20067. Were you well off when you were in that place?—Yes, I was very well off; it was the best place I was ever in.

20068. Was it not a very useful thing in the country to have a lot of

the small Shetland sheep?—It was that. I have seen me taking ten lambs in a night, and killing them. Was not that useful? But now we have nothing.

20069. Was it not an advantage to the population generally, apart from the farmer and crofter, the native wool could be bought for the purpose of spinning?—Oh, yes; it was a great advantage; it was all woollen clothes then; and now the people have to buy clothes.

20070. Was it not an advantage to the people of Shetland generally, apart from the crofters, that they could purchase the native wool for the purpose of knitting and selling the goods?—Almost the whole of them had wool of their own without buying.

20071. Is it much more difficult now for people living in towns like Lerwick, to buy native wool for the purpose of knitting?—I believe it is, because in Shetland people are all in the same way.

20072. Are you not aware that the demand for Shetland produce of the native wool is rather increasing, although the supply is diminishing?—They can get all they have use for.

20073. You are an old man and have been here all your days?—Yes.

20074. Have a great number of small tenants been removed in your lifetime from their crofts, for the purpose of making big farms?—Yes, plenty; it is only of late that the sheep farming came into this island.

20075. Has the introduction of sheep farming been for the benefit of the small tenants and crofters who were there before?—Oh, no; not for the benefit of the small tenants.

20076. Has the production of corn diminished a good deal since the sheep farms were begun?—Oh, yes; now there is no corn where the sheep farms are; the farms were taken away and occupied by the sheep; most of this island is occupied by sheep farms.

20077. Is the population getting less?—The population is away.

20078. The men have gone to far foreign lands, and left the country altogether? They had nowhere to go to.

20079. Are you acquainted with Balta Sound?—I am well acquainted about Balta Sound.

20080. Is there a name to the bay where the wreck took place?—Haroldswick.

20081. Between Balta Sound and Haroldswick, were there not a great number of tenants?—No; there is no sheep farming there to put them away.

20082. Is there not a great number of ruined houses between this and Haroldswick?—No.

20083. I think I saw a lot yesterday?—Well, but there is nothing now of what there was of tenants, because some of those to whom the property belonged failed and are away. But the two houses I had were taken in by the landlord and made a bigger farm of.

20084. How many houses or people were put away to make the farm between this and Haroldswick?—I could not say; there are five or six houses.

20085. Were they not very good houses?—Just fair houses, I believe. I heard no complaint about them.

20086. Were the people who were there well off?—They were not ill off. They were always turning money round; they were active people, and did well enough.

20087. I did not see anything there yesterday but a lot of ponies?—I believe that; most of them all died away.

20088. Do they keep any cows, or nothing but ponies there?—They keep cows too; but there is only one little house, with some slate upon it, next the hill; that has two cows, unless the big house.

UNST.

BALTA SOUND.

Robert Robertson.

20089. What do you call the big house?—Upper Springfield.

20090. Do the people like yourself, who have been removed, complain very much of having been removed from their holdings?—They have complained very much indeed, because it put them to a great deal of trouble and a worse bargain than where they were, and that was why they complained.

20091. Who is Mr Henderson?—He does not belong to this island, but he has property in it.

20092. He is your present proprietor?—Yes.

20093. And you have no complaint against him, except that your land is too highly rented?—No, he has not disturbed me in any way.

20094. Are you complaining of your rents?—Yes, I had been complaining of my rent, and he said he would come down somewhat, but he has not said what it was to be.

20095. Are your neighbours complaining of the rent?—No, I do not think they have much cause, because there are two or three places like mine which are 30s. or 35s.

20096. And you are obliged to pay the rent you do because you could not get another place?—Yes; but I am at liberty now, because my lease is up.

20097. Would you rather have a lease than be without one?—No; I would not take a lease at the rent.

JOHN HARRISON, Crofter and Fisherman, Balaster, Unst (55)—examined.

John Harrison.

20098. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you fishing this year?—No.

20099. Are there many families living where you are?—Seven.

20100. With land?—Yes, belonging to Major Cameron.

20101. Did they send you here or did you come for yourself?—I came for myself.

20102. Are any of your neighbours here?—Yes.

20103. To speak for themselves?—Yes.

20104. And what have you got to say?—I have to say that we want some more scathold, because we have no scathold belonging to our farm.

20105. Did you have scathold at one time?—Yes.

20106. When was it taken away?—About fourteen years since.

20107. And since then you have had no scathold?—No, not unless we pay for it to other proprietors.

20108. What have you to pay for scathold?—So much for each head of cattle—2s. for a cow, 3s. for a pony, and 1s. for a sheep.

20109. What size of a croft have you?—Seven merks.

20110. For which you pay?—£4, 5s.

20111. What stock can you keep upon it?—A cow and a quey.

20112. No pony and no sheep?—No.

20113. If you had scathold land, how much could you keep?—May be two cows and three ponies, and five or six sheep.

20114. And could you winter them?—Yes.

20115. Did you get any reduction of rent when you lost the scathold?—5s.

20116. Five shillings reduction of rent, and the loss of value to you was 15s. or 16s. you think?—Yes.

20117. The only complaint you have to make is that you want more scathold?—Yes.

20118. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you succeed your father in the place?—No.

20119. How long is it since you went to this place?—Twenty years.
20120. And you had scathold for about six years?—Yes.
20121. Who is your proprietor?—Major Cameron.
20122. Was this scathold taken away to make a sheep farm?—Yes.
20123. And all the allowance you got was 5s.?—Yes.
20124. Were you fairly well off before?—Pretty well off before. We could keep some few sheep and some ponies, but we cannot keep them now.
20125. Were you able to make your living out of the croft formerly?—No.
20126. Much less can you do it now?—A good deal less.
20127. Has there been a good deal of this kind of work done in Unst,—taking away the scathold land from the small tenants and making it into farms?—Yes; a great many crofts have been taken and put into sheep farms.
20128. Has that impoverished the people generally?—Yes.
20129. Has it not been prejudicial to the interests of Shetland generally that the native wool is decreasing?—Yes, it is decreasing greatly.
20130. Is that not prejudicial to the island generally?—Yes.
20131. Are you not aware that there is a great demand in the South or elsewhere for Shetland wool and work?—Yes.
20132. And it is growing?—Yes.
20133. And are there not several women outside the crofting class who make a considerable living by knitting?—Yes.
20134. And they have now to pay very dear for the wool?—Yes; the wool has to be brought; they cannot get Shetland wool to buy at all.
20135. Does this system of sheep farming at the expense of the crofter act prejudicially in two ways—first by impoverishing the crofters, and then reducing the quantity of native wool?—Yes.
20136. Do you know the price of Shetland wool as compared with other wool?—No.
20137. But strangers, and those coming to buy wool in Lerwick, would not buy Cheviot wool?—No.
20138. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know what the women earn at this knitting?—They earn a good sum; I think Shetland shawls used to sell high.
20139. Do you know what the women earn per week at knitting?—No.
20140. Therefore you are not so well able to know whether it is a gain or a loss to the people?—No.
20141. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What is the reason why you were not at the fishing this year?—Because I was working at the land.

THOMAS ABERNETHY, Pettester, Unst (60)—examined.

20142. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been appointed a delegate in your locality?—No, I came of my own accord. I never heard of the inquiry until this morning, and my neighbours were all away at the fishing and never heard of it at all.
20143. What have you to say?—All I have to say is that my rent is more than double what it was when I came to the property.
20144. Who is your proprietor?—Mr George Henderson, Burravoe, Yell.
20145. What was your rent?—£2, 3s. 6d., and now it is £4, 14s., besides road money and poor rates.

UNST.
BALTA SOUND.
Thomas Abernethy.

20146. What advantages did you get when this rise was put upon you?—None at all.

20147. How long is it since the rent was raised?—I came to this property at Martinmas 1845, and he has lifted the rent three times since.

20148. The same gentleman?—Yes, the same gentleman.

20149. How many merks of land have you got?—Three.

20150. What stock have you at present?—I could keep five cows; I have no ponies.

20151. Any sheep?—About a dozen head.

20152. Are you by yourself, or is there a township around you?—There are seven neighbours and myself.

20153. Were their rents all raised?—Yes.

20154. And although you had no time to consult them, if they were here they would say the same?—Oh, yes, they would say the same.

20155. Are your rents all the same?—No, they are not all the same. There is only one the same as mine, but it was all a general lift at the same time.

20156. Have you got any scathold land?—We have the hill property; we have it as we had it before.

20157. Your complaint here is really that the rents have been raised more than the place is worth?—Yes, far more.

20158. Does you landlord live in the island?—No, in Yell.

20159. Have you ever remonstrated with him against this rise?—He won't lower them a bit; that is his talk.

20160. You must either pay the rent that or go?—Yes.

20161. And you don't want to go?—I don't know.

20162. And you don't want to pay the increased rent?—It has been paid in time past.

20163. Are you a fisherman also?—I have been a fisherman up to this year, but I am not fishing this year.

20164. How much meal do you require to buy in a year for your family?—I had very few of a family.

20165. Do you require to buy anything at all?—Oh, yes.

20166. How much on an average?—Four bolls of the meal. But I had no family worth mentioning.

20167. Is that about the average you require to buy?—I have only three of a family.

20168. But from year to year, is that the average?—Some years I had hardly anything to buy at all.

20169. Do you crop the whole of your arable land?—I cropped the whole of it this year.

20170. Had you some this year at fallow?—This year I am giving up a lot of it.

20171. Do you mean leaving it to run out?—No, my wife died last year, and I had to give it up to one of my neighbours.

20172. But, formerly, did you use to leave some of it fallow?—No, I cropped it.

20173. Is the soil as productive now as it used to be?—No, there is a great failure in the potatoes.

20174. But is the white crop as good as it used to be?—Just about the same.

20175. *Professor Mackinnon.*—In what direction do you lie from Burrafirth?—About south-and-by-west.

20176. Are you near the sea?—It takes about an hour to go to Burrafirth from our place.

20177. And is it at Burrafirth your people fish?—Yes.

20178. Is there much fishing there?—This year only four boats.

20179. How is that?—I don't know; they are leaving and going into big boats.

20180. And big boats don't suit Burrafirth?—No.

20181. That is because of the wild beach?—There is a great current outside, and it is a wicked place to get into.

20182. Where do your children go to school?—Some to Burrafirth, and some come here to Mr White.

20183. That is a long way?—Yes.

20184. But still they go?—Yes.

20185. The young children don't go in winter?—No, they are not fit.

20186. But the big ones do?—When they come to fourteen they are not caring whether they go to school or not.

20187. I thought they cared to go to school?—But the schoolmasters are not caring; the children are desired to go to school when they are not fit; and when they are fit, the schoolmaster don't care whether they go or not.

20188. What do you think would be a suitable age for them to go to school to begin with?—I think they are not fit for much schooling before they are seven or eight years old.

20189. And then they should be kept at school until they are fourteen or fifteen, would that be the proper age?—Yes; for they are not fit, when they are so young, to travel through the snow without roads. There are places where there is no road at all; nothing but wild moors.

20190. Where do you get your stores?—We have to get them from Balta Sound.

20191. How do you carry them?—On our backs.

20192. There are plenty of ponies in the place?—Some have them, but a great many have none.

20193. But those who have them use them?—Yes; but there are no ponies in our place except two belonging to one man.

20194. Do they use the ponies, where they have them, to plough land?—Yes, those who have big farms.

20195. How do they till the land in your place?—We delve it all with a spade.

20196. Suppose you had your croft at the old rent, is it big enough to support your family?—No.

20197. You must, therefore, depend for your living upon the sea?—Generally. Only the proprietor has split every farm in two to increase it for fishermen, and that has made the holdings far too small.

20198. Is he a curer himself?—He did cure, but he has given it up now.

20199. When did he give it up?—About ten years ago.

20200. Has the rent been raised since that time?—No; but it was raised before that.

20201. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Did you ever sell the wool of your sheep?—Yes, several times.

20202. What did you get for it?—I have had to buy for some time; but when I was selling it, I got 8d. and 10d. and 1s. a pound.

20203. What do you pay now?—Last year we were paying 1s. 6d. and 2s. for good wool.

20204. That is for Shetland wool?—No, for Cheviot wool.

20205. And what would you pay for the old Shetland wool?—I know it has been sold for 1s. 2d.

20206. At the same time you were paying 1s. 6d. for the wool of the big sheep. Then the wool of Shetland sheep is cheaper than that of the big sheep?—It was cheaper.

20207. Was it cheaper last year?—Yes; but this year I don't know what it is.

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BALTA SOUND.
Thomas Abernethy.

20208. From whom do you buy your wool?—I bought some from Mr Hamilton this year,—blackfaced wool.

20209. And you paid 1s. 6d. ?—No, not blackfaced wool. Cheviot wool is cheaper this year; Mr Edmonston has been selling it at 1s.

20210. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you do with the Cheviot wool when you get it?—I never bought any of it.

20211. What did you do with the blackfaced?—I sent it South and got stuff made with it.

20212. Has Mr Hamilton got a stock of blackfaced sheep?—Yes.

20213. What did you pay for the blackfaced wool?—I could not say; I have not settled for it.

20214. Do you know what you will have to pay for it?—I could not tell; he is here.

20215. But haven't you some idea of the price?—Well, Mr Edmonston sold some Cheviot wool this year for 1s.

20216. But I am talking of what you have bought,—have you no idea of what you will have to pay?—I think it will be about 7d. per lb. for blackfaced wool.

20217. The sheep which you keep are small Shetland sheep?—Yes.

20218. Would your land keep a better class of sheep—bigger sheep?—No, it is not adopted for that, it is heathery hills.

20219. Is there any land in your neighbourhood adopted for that?—No.

20220. Not even blackfaced sheep?—Yes; but Shetland sheep are the hardiest.

20221. At what age do you sell Shetland sheep?—They are generally kept until we cannot keep them longer.

20222. You allow them to die of old age?—The greater part of them died of old age some time back we keep them until they are eight or ten or twelve years ago.

20223. Is not that a rather primitive mode of farming?—They were always kept for their lambs and their wool.

20224. When they sold them at all, what price did they get for them, and to whom did they sell them?—Just one neighbour to the other.

20225. What price did they get?—7s. for a Shetland ewe—they thought that a good price—and 5s. and 2s. 6d. for a lamb.

20226. And for a wether sheep?—They could be somewhat dearer.

20227. How much?—I have seen them sold at 8s. and 9s.

20228. Have you no idea what the value of a blackfaced sheep would be?—No.

20229. Did you ever inquire as to whether it would not be more profitable to keep a breed of blackfaced sheep?—No.

20230. Supposing you were told that a blackfaced wether, after keeping it so long, would sell for about £2, would you think that a profitable bargain?—I do not know, I am sure; blackfaced sheep are things we are not much used to; we have always had the old Shetland sheep.

20231. But, apparently, Mr Hamilton has a breed of blackfaced sheep?—Yes.

20232. Is his land much better than the land you have?—His is a farm laid down for sheep.

20233. Are you aware that in Scotland crofters who hold the same quantity of land, as you do, keep a breed of blackfaced sheep and sell them at the market prices, whatever they may be?—I don't know.

20234. Don't you think it would be worth while to inquire whether you could not raise sheep, and which would sell for £2 rather than 7s.?—It would be, if we had only the property to raise them on.

20235. Does anybody in the island keep blackfaced sheep except Mr Hamilton?—Yes; Mr Edmonston.

20236. Do they seem to answer?—They are hardy animals.

20237. Do you see any reason why they should not be introduced into Shetland?—Because the wool of them is awful coarse.

20238. But if you can make as much as I have stated off the carcase would not that compensate for the inferior quality of the wool?—Yes; I should say the one would pay up what the other wanted.

20239. You said your wife had died and that you had to give up some of the land; what did you mean by that?—I could not get it managed; I could not get people to work, because they are getting scarce.

20240. Who did you give up the land to?—I told it off to my master.

20241. You gave it up to your master?—Yes.

20242. By what did he reduce the rent?—I do not pay the half now, because I am not using the half; but I only have it for one year.

20243. And do you get back the rest of the land next year?—No; I am going to give it all up, because I cannot manage it.

20244. What are you to do with yourself?—I do not know. I will have to try and go to another country.

20245. Will you try and take land at a less rent?—No, a bare man has no need to take a farm now unless he has a family.

20246. Have many of your neighbours got leases for their lands?—None have got leases at all.

20247. What are the poor rates and school rates?—About 2s., I think, in the £.

20248. For each?—For poor rates and school rates.

20249. That is the tenant's share?—Yes.

20250. Four shillings between landlord and tenant?—Yes; and we pay 6d. in the £ for road money, and there are no roads at all.

20251. Is there any road in the island?—There is, in the island, but not to our place.

20252. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far are you from the high road?—A couple of miles.

20253. Do you bring your goods from Balta Sound?—Yes.

20254. On your backs?—Yes.

20255. How many miles is it from this place?—Five miles.

20256. *The Chairman.*—What of the three kinds of wool—blackfaced, Cheviot, or Shetland wool—makes the best cloth or clothes for the use of the working people?—The Shetland wool is said to be the best; the softest.

20257. Do many of the people still make their clothes of the pure Shetland wool?—Yes, a great many of them used to have it, but now they cannot get it manufactured in this island. There are no weavers in this island—not one.

20258. Do none of the women weave?—No, unless working stockings and shawls.

20259. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Did they use to weave?—No.

20260. Where did they get their cloth woven formerly?—Here amongst the Shetland people themselves.

20261. Was it the men or the women who did the weaving?—The men.

20262. *Mr Cameron.*—Why did you buy blackfaced wool to make cloth, if the Shetland wool makes the best?—Because I had not enough of it. I bought blackfaced and mixed it, and that made it, at least, a little better.

20263. If you could have got Shetland wool, would you have preferred it?—Yes.

20264. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many weavers do you recollect in your young days?—Seven.

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BALTA SOUND.
Thomas Abernethy.

20265. All in constant employment?—They always were in the winter, but not much in the summer.

20266. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What became of them?—Some of them died and some gave it up.

20267. It would not do?—No; 2d. a yard was what they charged, and that would not pay them.

20268. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—And what do you pay in the South for it?—2s. last year.

DAVID CHARLES EDMONSTON (*46*)—examined.

David Charles Edmonston.

20269. *The Chairman.*—Are you a proprietor?—No; a factor.

20270. Do you occupy any land yourself?—I do.

20271. Then I may say you are a factor and farmer?—Yes.

20272. You have no other factor?—I am, in fact, lessee of the estate, too—lessee and factor. I pay a free rent to Mrs Edmonston for the estate of Buness.

20273. Have you been long resident in the island?—All my life, with the exception of a few years.

20274. And engaged both as factor on estate management, and in farming on your own account?—Yes.

20275. Have you had any other commerce,—as a fish-curer, for instance?—Yes; I started business when twenty-one, as a fish-curer and general merchant. I continued that for eight or nine years, and then gave it up.

20276. You have heard what has been stated by the small tenants here to-day?—I have.

20277. Is there any statement you wish to make in consequence of what you have heard?—There are one or two statements I might make. When I heard the tenants were to come here to-day, I drew up a statement which I shall read:—'Previous to about the year 1820, the land in Shetland 'was let in small crofts and the rents paid in kind—part in fish, butter, oil, 'and money. The lands were low rated, and the price of produce was also low, 'so that the proprietors looked for their rents out of the sales of what they 'got from the people. It sometimes happened that the price of Shetland 'produce was very low in the southern markets, and in such times the nett 'rentals were very small. The proprietors generally managed their own 'estates, compelling the men to fish for, and deliver to them, the whole of 'the produce, both of sea and land, and were thus fish-curers and merchants. 'In some cases, however, they let their properties to middlemen, or tacks-'men as they were called, getting a slump sum in money, and allowing the 'tacksmen to make what profit they could out of the people, the tenants of 'course, being bound to fish for and deliver their produce to them. During 'last century the population was only about half what it is at present. 'There were few or no large farms, as the great object was to increase the 'number of fishermen, and thus the land was sub-divided into small lots; 'and there being little or no emigration, the population naturally increased 'very rapidly. Under this old system, the people were generally well to do, 'and there was little or no debt due on the land. The ground was well 'cultivated and almost self-supporting; little or no meal was imported. 'As intercourse with the South became more frequent, and people began to 'know the prices of sea and farm produce, the old system engendered 'discontent, and, forgetting that if they were selling their produce cheap, 'they also had their farms at a nominal rent, the tenants called loudly for 'a fairer market value being put upon all. Between the years 1820 and '1830, or in some cases before that time, most of the proprietors had

'revalued their lands and given up the old system, allowing the people to 'fish for whom they chose, and sell their produce to the highest bidder, 'merely asking payment of the rents when they annually fell due at Mar- 'tinmas. The result of this free trade was that innumerable shopkeepers 'sprang up, and the people were induced to barter their produce from hand 'to mouth, for luxuries which they could not afford, thus acquiring a taste 'for articles which superseded the coarser and healthier produce of their 'farms; the land was neglected, and refused to produce anything like its 'former increase. The home-spun and comfortable woollen clothing was 'superseded by the light and cold cotton textures of the present time, the 'native wool being made up into finer articles for the southern markets, and 'bartered for light clothing and eatables, and thus the people were neither 'fed nor clothed like their ancestors. The consequence of all this was that 'they got seriously into debt both to landlords and merchants, and one of the 'largest and first of the free trade proprietors emphatically declared that had 'he been a younger man, he would have put his "shoulder to the wheel," and 'gone back to the old and paternal government of his estate, as the best 'suited at that time for both landlord and tenant. Up to 1867, the crofts 'on the Buness estate were mostly "runrig;" and in that season the whole 'property was carefully gone over and divided out in separate lots, so that 'each tenant got his farm by itself. At the same time each holding was 'valued at what was considered a fair money rent, and the tenants without 'exception all took their holdings and seemed satisfied. Up to this time 'the scatholds or hill ground were pastured by the people in common, and 'it often happened that the principal stocks belonged to tenants of other 'proprietors, shopkeepers, and squatters. Those who were not Buness 'tenants were requested to remove their animals. A certain proportion of 'the scatholds were enclosed and let out as sheep farms, but in nearly every 'case a portion next the town lands was reserved for the crofters. An 'attempt was then made to induce the people to take leases and improve 'their holdings, by breaking out more land draining, sub-dividing, and 'rotation of crops; but while many adopted a sort of rotation, and with the 'most marked benefit, others have not done so, and in all cases the 'leases were emphatically refused. Many would have taken them 'with a clause binding the proprietor, but leaving the tenant free to 'remove any year he chose; but this one-sided agreement was not 'granted, and so the crofts on the Buness estate are mostly all held 'on yearly tenancy. Almost contemporaneous with this rearrangement 'of crofts, came a run of good fishings and high prices for cattle 'of all kinds, and so the tenants have generally paid their rents with 'moderate regularity. Another help to this is the fact that since 1867 'the breed of horned cattle has been greatly improved throughout the 'island. Previous to 1865, the poor rate was voluntary and entirely paid 'by the proprietors. In that year this rate alone rose to the enormous 'sum of 7s. in the pound of gross rental; this was owing to all the 'small proprietors, who hold about a fourth of the parish, refusing to pay 'their proportion, and in that year the rate fell on Lord Zetland, Garth, 'and Buness. This was found to be such a grievous burden, that it was 'resolved to adopt the Rowland Act of 1845 in its entirety, and the rates 'at the present time are 3s. 6d. for poor and 1s. 6d. for school, levied half 'on proprietors and half on tenants. A large proportion of this rate goes 'to maintain six pauper lunatics in Montrose Asylum. The whole houses 'on the Buness estate are built and repaired by the proprietors without 'charging any interest or additional rent. An average Buness croft may 'be stated at £5 rent, which consists of from five to ten acres of town 'land, a house, peat ground, liberty on the hill for ponies, cattle and sheep, 'and an average stock that may be kept on such a holding may be stated

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'at three milk cows, two young cattle, three breed mares, and six to twelve 'ewes, besides pigs and poultry. Whilst many have this stock and more, 'there are no doubt many who do not have it; this is owing to a variety of 'circumstances, amongst which is inability to purchase a stock to start 'with. There has been no rise of rent on the Buness estate since 1867. 'In 1874–5 the islands were stumped by emigration agents from New 'Zealand, and a great many people were induced to take advantage of the 'assisted passages, and went out to that colony. Several of the Buness 'tenants were of the number, and in most cases each carried with him a 'clear sum of from £30 to £200 as the result of their savings here. In 'cases where townships were partially left vacant, several tenants were 'moved from one place to another and concentrated, in order that some-'thing might be made of a whole township, when nothing could be got out 'of a vacant portion. There is not a croft vacant at present on the estate. 'In 1867 it had 118 holdings, and at present there are 106. A great por-'tion is expected for trust, in consequence of the new enterprise in fishing 'which has lately been started by South country as well as native curers. 'The small native boats are being fast superseded by larger decked ones, 'and many of the men are hiring themselves as hands in the larger boats. 'Men, women, and children are all at present remuneratively employed, 'and the result is showing itself in many ways. The present rental of the 'Buness estate, as appearing in the valuation roll, includes sums of over '£100 for interest on Government loans of money laid out on the estate. 'This goes to swell the rental, and is not actual rise of rent.'—I prepared this statement hurriedly, and it may be to the point or not.

20278. You spoke of an improvement in the cattle; what was the nature of the improvement which has been effected—has it been an improvement in the native breed by selection, or has a new breed been introduced?—It is a new cross breed; better breeders have been got.

20279. What is the cross which was used principally?—Principally shorthorn with the Shetland, and it makes a most admirable cross.

20280. A direct cross between a shorthorn bull and a Shetland cow?—Yes.

20281. And it produces a good animal?—Yes; an animal which, if well fed, comes to be heavy and hardy at the same time.

20282. A good *milker*?—Yes.

20283. Has the improved breed extended to the small tenants, or is it in the hands of the small farmers?—It has extended to the small tenants.

20284. Is there any export of the young cattle at one and two year old?—A large export.

20285. What prices are they realising for the one and two year olds?—I could not say—perhaps from £5 to £9.

20286. £5 for a stirk, and for two-year-olds up to £9?—Yes.

20287. What was the original price of a stirk and two-year-old of the old original breed?—The price has been increasing during the last few years. A stirk is scarcely a saleable animal in Shetland—it is so small; but two and three year olds have been selling at from 40s. to 60s.

20288. Is this improved breed exclusively adopted all over?—More or less in this island especially.

20289. And is it progressing?—I should say so.

20290. How do they winter their improved cattle; do they stand out all the winter?—No, they always house them.

20291. The native cattle go out all winter?—All the Shetland cattle are housed.

20292. You mean really housed for several months?—Oh, yes; from October until May all night. I daresay they are run out every good day for a few hours.

20293. What is given to them in winter?—Straw principally.

20294. Should that not increase the area of the arable cultivation?—It ought to.

20295. And is there no increase in the area of arable cultivation?—I don't think so; in very few cases.

20296. Is the corn which was originally threshed for consumption by the people now given without threshing to the cattle, or do they prepare as much for domestic consumption as ever they did?—I think they thresh as much for domestic consumption as they used to do. I do not think in ordinary seasons they have to give the corn unthreshed to the animals.

20297. Is there an improvement in the ponies, or a greater demand, or is the demand falling off?—There is a great demand for them, but there is no change in the breed. In fact they do not want a change, because they cannot be got small enough. The small ones always fetch the highest prices in the market.

20298. Is attention paid to the selection of the breeders?—I don't think so. It may be by a few of the gentlemen who have pony farms; they may attend a little to selection; but I don't think there is any selection amongst the crofters. In fact, it is the 'halt and maimed' that are kept for breeders.

20299. We have heard a good deal to-day of the withdrawal of the hill pasture from tenants, and the consolidation of them into sheep farms; has that been the practice upon Buness estate?—Yes.

20300. Has that been prejudicial to the condition of the small tenants?—I don't think so at all.

20301. In the case of the withdrawal of the hill pasture, has there been any proportionate reduction of rent?—No, because in all the cases where we enclosed hill pasture it was very extensive, and far more than our tenants could occupy. It was occupied by the tenants of other proprietors all over the island, and we, in almost every case, left some scathold for the tenants.

20302. Almost in every case?—Almost in every case.

20303. And when none at all was left, in this exceptional case was a reduction of rent made?—No, because it was the same year that the scatholds were enclosed that the rents were all gone over and equalised. They had never been looked after for perhaps fifty years, and in many cases they were reduced, and in other cases increased, in order to equalise them. I would find two men sitting in the same town and having the same quantity of ground and advantages, the one paying perhaps half as much as the other, that having arisen no doubt long ago by the demand for land.

20304. When the house of one of your small tenants becomes ruinous or dilapidated, he applies, I suppose, for repairs; in that case, is the expenditure in repairing the house entirely at the charge of the landlord?—Entirely. About that man Robert Johnston, he applied to me last year saying that the roof of his house was bad. I sent a man, and had it partially repaired, because there was such a demand for labour on the island I could not get men to repair it. On Friday last I got a note from him, to say that the couples of his house were bad, and I am just waiting for a mason to go and get it repaired.

20305. In the case of repairing such a house, what amount of money expenditure does it imply to the proprietor?—Often three years' gross rent. A new house will cost on an average about £20.

20306. Not more than £20?—A new cottage.

20307. In the case of a cottage which costs £20, what is the description of building? Is it built with stone and lime?—Stone and lime. Since I had anything to do with them, I have been building them with lime, because they stand better.

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20308. Is it really possible to build a two-roomed cottage with stone and lime walls and a weather-tight roof for £20?—Either a turf or thatch roof. The rafters are of wood, and then the turf is put upon the top, and straw over that.

20309. In the case of a house so built, does the tenant pay the first thatch?—He does first the whole thatching; that is all he does.

20310. Does he also do, the divisions in the inside of the house?—We just build the walls of the house and put the roof on. The tenant puts in box beds, which make a division, and we have nothing to do with that.

20311. There are two chimnies in the house?—Yes, in a new house, and windows and doors. We supply the doors.

20312. How many years' rental of the croft do you estimate it would cost?—About four years' gross rental on an average; and that means about eight years, the landlord gets nothing, and his taxes will be well on to 10s. in the £.

20313. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you been in charge of the property since 1867?—Yes, and before that.

20314. Then it was under your charge when the scathold was taken off the crofters?—Yes, it was.

20315. The principal complaint we have had to-day seems to be the loss of the scathold. Do you think there is good ground for that?—There may be in some cases, where the tenants have no scathold at all.

20316. But, on the Buness property, you think they have scathold, generally speaking?—They have all, with two exceptions, sufficient for their arable land; of course, not to keep 200 or 300 sheep, as they used to do, but sufficient to run out young ponies and cattle, and a few sheep.

20317. But if they used to keep 200 or 300 sheep, won't they feel it to be a hardship to have lost that power?—They do.

20318. It is an actual loss to them, because they pay the same rent as before?—In some cases they do, and in some cases more.

20319. But you have not taken into account, in their new rent, that they have not that power of grazing 200 or 300 sheep?—No; we valued their croft and the privileges outside, and put on what we considered a fair thing for the man to pay. A man having six, eight, or ten of a family, and paying £3 to £5 of rent, would scarcely be supposed to live entirely on a croft of that size. He must work outside to supplement his living.

20320. Do the women make much money by knitting?—They have made a good deal in years gone by.

20321. Have they a chance of doing so now?—Not just now; Shetland hosiery seems a drug in the market.

20322. There is no demand for it?—I believe the merchants who have been buying it have great difficulty in selling it, and have stocks which they cannot dispose of. There is so much cheap woven stuff in the market, that people won't give the prices for hand-wrought shawls.

20323. Have they any difficulty in getting Shetland wool for their work?—I think there is enough Shetland wool for the demand, and for coarser articles of underclothing; they buy a considerable quantity of Cheviot wool, of which we allow them—at least I do—to select the best fleeces at clipping. It is the same to me; I get the same price for a fine fleece as for a coarse, and for many years I have been selling it at about 1s. per lb., for the last four or five years at least.

20324. What does the Shetland wool sell at?—I have a few Shetland sheep on the land, and I sell it at 1s. 8d. per lb.

20325. Is that white or coloured wool?—White; and 2s. for black.

20326. The yellow wool sells highest?—I don't know; I have none of it.

20327. *Mr Cameron.*—You stated that some of the scathold land was

turned into sheep farms; where did the sheep farmers come from who took the land?—I occupy two.

20328. Did any come from a distance?—Mr Sievewright, writer, Lerwick, took one.

20329. Did they find houses on these places, or were houses built for them?—We don't require a house. There is only a shepherd on the farm, and one of the old cottages did for him.

20330. And they just work it as a sheep farm?—It was enclosed by the proprietor, and sub-divided, and he wrought it as a sheep farm.

20331. Is there any arable ground attached to these farms,—has the large tenant got arable ground along with the grazing ground?—Yes; Mr Sievewright got a good deal of the crofters' arable land and it was all laid down in grass.

20332. Does he plough any of the land on the sheep farm now?—No; he gave it up two or three years ago, and it is let to another tenant.

20333. Have any of the sheep to be wintered away?—Well, a number of the blackfaced sheep have grass. The grey-faced lambs, from Leicester tups, are all sold; a few have pure blackfaced lambs, and they are kept for stock.

20334. But none of the pure blackfaced stock require to be sent away for wintering?—No; they are wintered here, both ewes and wethers.

20335. And the scathold which remains to the crofters is equally good land with that which is now occupied by the sheep farmers?—Yes, it is just a slice off it.

20336. If the land is sufficiently good to enable them to graze blackfaced ewes and Leicester tups, would not the remaining land be able to support a better class than the Shetland sheep?—I should doubt the crofters being able to support that class of sheep, because in the case of Mr Sievewright and myself, we have old town lands, and keep the ewes with the cross lambs there, and the pure blackfaced sheep on the hill.

20337. Then this ground taken from the crofters was the best?—No.

20338. Then why should not the crofters use what remains, the same as the sheep farmers does?—Because with the scathold left him he has no old arable land, whilst the large farmer has.

20339. Then where does the large farmer get this arable land?—It is included in the scathold; it is attached to the scathold.

20340. That would show that the large farmer got the best of the scothold, because he got this town land with it?—The town land was not scathold.

20341. What was it then?—That is where the emigration took place from when the tenants left.

20342. But he got the vacant crofts?—Yes, and he keeps the cross sheep on these places.

20343. Speaking generally, do you consider that the crofters might work their common land in conjunction with their crofts in a more profitable manner that they do now?—I think they could. I think they could get much more out of it if they were to put blackfaced sheep on it, and employ one man to herd them all. The native sheep are so very wild, that really I do not think there is much profit in them.

20344. Although the wool of the native sheep appears of a higher class than that of the blackfaced sheep, don't you consider that the difference would be more than made up for by the price they would get for the mutton?—No, I do not; because the few Shetland sheep I have will only average about 1½ pounds of wool, whilst the blackfaced would be more.

20035. What I meant was, even supposing the Shetland wool to be more valuable than the blackfaced, would it not be more profitable for a crofter to keep blackfaced sheep in respect of the price which he would get for the carcase?—I think so.

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20346. And besides that advantage he would also reap a benefit in the greater weight of the wool which he would get from a blackfaced sheep?—Yes.

20347. Do you consider there is anything in the climate or soil to prevent him growing average blackfaced stock?—No; I think the blackfaced stock improve here on similar land.

20348. Have any of the crofters, so far as you know, through Shetland, adopted this mode of pasturing their land with blackfaced sheep?—I don't think so, so far as I know. Some of them have crossed them with the Shetland, but they do not make a good cross.

20349. You say that in 1875 many people went to New Zealand; have good accounts been heard of those who went?—A number of them have done well.

20350. Have they written home any good accounts to their friends?—Yes.

20351. Has that encouraged more people to go?—No.

20352. The population here does not require thinning?—No; because it is not the land they depend upon, but the sea. We don't want the population to decrease, and never did.

20353. Is there any disinclination on the part of the people to take leases when they are offered to them?—Yes; they will only take them on one condition, so far as I can speak to, and that is that they shall be at liberty to leave when they like.

20354. That there is to be a break in favour of the tenant, and not in favour of the landlord?—Exactly.

20355. Why do they object to leases in the ordinary way?—They just say that something may occur, and that they would like to leave, and would not like to be bound for five or seven or ten or nineteen years. That is the invariable reply.

20356. Besides the ordinary fishing which the people occupy themselves with, do any of them go to the whale fishing?—Not many from Unst.

20357. Did they use to go?—Yes; perhaps forty or fifty years ago.

20358. Not subsequent to that period?—Not in my memory; very few.

20359. Do any of the whaling vessels come to Lerwick to pick up crews?—Yes, from Peterhead and Dundee.

20360. Have you any idea how many whaling seamen go from Lerwick?—No, I could not say; perhaps ten or fifteen ships call to pick up crews

20361. Do they engage them through a broker, or do the people engage themselves?—They engage through an agent in Lerwick.

20362. And do they settle with this agent for wages on their return?—I believe so. They got so much in advance, and then they are paid a stated wage by the month, and so much oil money.

20363. That is all done through the broker?—It is all done through the broker and captain.

20364. Where are the ships paid off—at Peterhead or Dundee?—They generally call and leave the Shetland portion of the crew where they can.

20365. Do they settle immediately for what is due?—They go to Lerwick and settle with the broker.

20366. Immediately?—I don't know whether or not it lies for a little time.

20367. Does the broker supply them with clothes or other articles in advance?—Yes.

20368. Have you ever heard any dissatisfaction expressed with the method of engaging these whaling fishermen?—No, I have not.

20369. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have had charge of this property since 1867?—Yes.

20370. You seem only to have been twenty years old then?—No, I was thirty; but I have had the management of the property since 1860.

20371. What relationship is there between yourself and the proprietor?—First consin.

20372. Explain what you mean by stating you are the lessee of the estate?—I have a long lease of the whole estate from Mrs Edmonston. I pay her a free money rent annually for it, and take my chance of the rates; I do all the building of the houses, and meet all the expenses on the property, and give her a free money rent annually.

20373. Does the return in the valuation roll show all that is received from the tenants?—I return all the rents I receive to the valuation roll.

20374. What advantage do you make then by holding the lease?—I have a proportion of the rental; I have something off it.

20375. You derive no rental from the occupation of the crofters?—An average was taken, and I pay so much a year and make the best of it; and I hold two farms in my own hand.

20376. Do the returns of the valuation roll show the full rent the crofters pay to you?—Yes.

20377. You mentioned the number of holdings in 1867 upon the estate?—118; and 106 now.

20378. Can you inform us how many people were shifted in 1866 in order to constitute the two new tacks?—I could not say really.

20379. Would there be as many as sixty families?—No, not the fourth of that.

20380. At any time since 1867 there has not been that number?—Not that number; but I could not say how many, unless I were referring to the books.

20381. What was your object in making that change; was it to benefit the condition of the people then on the estate, or with the object of introducing the sheep farms?—No; I was factor on the estate, and the fact was that Mr Edmonston was not getting a couple of hundred a year out of the estate, and something had to be done in order to give him something to live upon.

20382. And the rental is now £900?—Yes.

20383. You have mentioned the price of Shetland wool as 1s. 8d. to 2s. for black; what is the price of the blackfaced wool?—What I have sold was sold at 7d. per lb.

20384. And how is it you say the blackfaced would be more profitable than the native?—Because there is no comparison between the carcases of the two—of the blackfaced and Shetland sheep. The blackfaced is worth, perhaps, four times the amount of the Shetland, or five times as much.

20385. Can you give us any idea of the number of acres of land once under cultivation, but which is now out of cultivation, in the farms occupied by yourself and the other tenant?—No, I can scarcely tell; I do not know that I could give anything like an idea. Do you mean what was held by crofters and cultivated?

20386. Yes?—A considerable lot; but I could not tell; several hundred acres, I should say.

20387. That is lost, then, to the island for producing grain?—I do not know that it is lost; I am producing grain on one of the large farms where it was not producing grain before.

20388. How many acres have you under cultivatiou?—About sixty; but it is under rotation of crop of course.

20389. But on the other farm the tenant was non-resident, and had no cultivation?—Yes.

20390. With regard to these small crofters, don't you think it was expected that they should make their living out of it, or that they must

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make their living elsewhere?—I said so. I do not think a man with a large family could expect, with a £3 or a £5 croft, that he should be able to live on it.

20391. Did it never occur to you that it would be better to increase the crofts of these people to such an extent that they might live on their produce?—Yes; they had full liberty to get as much land as ever they wanted. The reason why we laid out sheep farms was that a number of the men had been lost by boat accidents, and a number had died, and there were no young men coming up wanting crofts. We had crofts vacant over the whole estate and we had to concentrate; the proprietor was getting very little rent, and we had to concentrate, and we removed tenants—perhaps two or three from one town—and put them into vacant places in another town, and then utilised these vacant towns by enclosing them for sheep.

20392. In the case of these removals, did you increase the holding?—If they wished it we did.

20393. How do you mean—did you give then a larger area?—Some of them took two crofts.

20394. And are in possession of them now?—Yes; and some may have taken one and a half and so forth, if they wished.

20395. Are you satisfied that these operations which were carried through have been for the material benefit of the people?—I don't think it has done them any harm.

20396. You don't think they have any ground of complaint?—I don't think so.

20397. Are you aware that they did complain?—Yes.

20398. Would you give us a little information about the small property called Hammer; is there not such a place?—Yes; on the north side of the Sound.

20399. It seems to be going to wreck, and the farm house to be in ruins?—The proprietrix, Mrs Spence, was a widow lady who emigrated with her two daughters to New Zealand, and left it in the hands of her nephew in Edinburgh, who is a lawyer.

20400. I want the reason generally of this state of things?—Asking too much rent.

20401. Were the tenants removed against their will?—No, none; it was a home farm, and not occupied by tenants at all.

20402. Not towards Haroldswick?—No tenants have been removed between this and Haroldswick.

20403. There are considerable ruins of houses?—People have died or left; none have been dispossessed.

20404. You made use of an expression which I should like you to reconsider; you said that Shetland hosiery was a drug in the market?—Just now.

20405. You don't mean that to apply to pure Shetland wool?—I mean it to apply to fine articles, such as shawls and veils.

20406. Which are entirely of Shetland wool?—Yes.

20407. Not mixed?—I understand so; I mean in market buying and selling. I hear people coming, for instance, to Mrs Edmonston with things and asking very low prices; they will take anything almost, because they cannot get them sold; and I am told by merchants that they have large stocks and cannot dispose of them in the southern markets.

20408. Have you heard any complaint by those who knit them that they have great difficulty in getting wool?—I cannot say that I have.

20409. Have the prices of pure Shetland wool products fallen or not of late?—I believe they have fallen.

20410. In consequence of over-production?—I do not know what it is

the consequence of. I rather think it is from the fact of machine goods being made. I see fine Shetland shawls selling for 1s. 6d. and 5s.

20411. But you know these are machine made?—Yes, I do.

20412. In fact, the Shetland people have to complain of these machines?—Certainly; I think they have no right to mark these things Shetland; they never saw Shetland at all.

20413. Are there any arrears of rent upon your estate, or do the tenants pay pretty well?—They pay pretty well, but there are always some arrears.

20414. Are most of them engaged in fishing as well?—A number are.

20415. Do you find those engaged in fishing pay you better than those who are not?—I don't think they do, but they have paid with fairly good regularity for a number of years back.

20416. Is there any land in Unst occasionally for sale in small portions, whereby the people who have a little money may become proprietors?—There is; there is some for sale just now—small pieces.

20417. Do they sell high or low?—Last year there were one or two small pieces sold here very high. Perhaps that was owing to the situation; but I have seen small properties in the market for a long time without a purchaser.

20418. What would be a fair purchase taking it by so many years—what do you consider a common thing?—Twenty years used to be considered a fair rate.

20419. No more than that?—No.

20420. Are you speaking of net or gross rental?—Gross rental; there is a very great difference between net and gross rental in Shetland.

20421. So that, when you say twenty years, you speak of gross rental?—Yes.

20422. Is this locality of Balta Sound coming into considerable importance?—It is, owing to the fishing.

20423. Is there any intention, upon the part of the proprietor or yourself, of erecting any harbour or quay accommodation?—I don't think so; not at present.

20424. Would it not pay you to do so?—I think it would, if we had the money, but we have not the money to do it. I would do it at once if we could get money cheap, and it would be a very great accommodation to the fishermen and fish-curers.

20425. Supposing anything were done in the way of accommodation—that Government should do something by making a quay for vessels coming in here—would there be sufficient revenue to pay a fair interest upon it?—I think there would, if the fishing held good; and I think there is every prospect of the fishing increasing instead of the contrary.

20426. Within your own knowledge, during the last few years, it has increased considerably?—Very considerably.

20427. Is the number of boats we now see up to the average or beyond what was here last year?—They are far beyond. There were only eleven here last year, and there are something like 180 just now.

20428. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I think you stated that, at the time of Mr Edmonston's death, he drew only £200. Does that mean that the rental was only £200?—Clear rental; he had only that to spend for some years.

20429. What was the rental in the valuation roll at that time?—Between £500 and £600.

20430. So that it has been nearly doubled since then?—Not nearly.

20431. Is it not £962 now?—But that is including the fishing stations. There was a lot let off for fishing stations last year.

20432. At what rate is the charge for fishing stations?—£10 to £12.

20433. Upon whom is the charge levied for these stations—how is the

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money raised?—From the curer; I let them so much ground for a station.

20434. Whether is the bulk of the rent paid by the sheep farms or the smallers farmers or crofters?—The bulk is paid by the crofters, I should think.

20435. Has there been any considerable increase of their rents since 1867?—No increase since that time.

20436. So that the whole increase of rent was at that time?—It was put on at that time.

20437. What is the rental of these two sheep farms?—I have not the valuation roll, and can hardly say. There are four large farms on the estate.

20438. What proportion of the total rental on the estate was paid by the crofters?—I cannot very well tell from memory; the valuation roll, of course, shows.

20439. Sheep farming on a large scale is quite recent in this island?—Since about 1867 or 1868.

20440. Were there no large sheep farms in Shetland before that?—Yes, a few, but none in this island.

20441. You removed a good many people from the south side of Balta Sound?—Not many.

20442. How many, do you remember?—I don't remember; we removed some.

20443. Against their will?—No, they went quite readily. There was a boat accident happened there, and a lot of men were lost, and people gave up their crofts; and then some others emigrated, and two or three gave them up and wanted to take a small place, and the place became almost vacant, and we removed the remainder.

20444. You have not removed any against their will?—No.

20445. Or put them into a worse place than that they were in before?—I don't think so. In fact we paid some of them for removing, and gave them lower rents in consequence.

20446. Perhaps your idea of a better place might be different from theirs?—Of course it might.

20447. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—There is not one upon Balta Island now?—No, and has not been for a couple of centuries.

20448. Is that part of your tack?—Yes.

20449. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you were lessee of the whole estate?—Yes.

20450. So that you stand, in reference to the tenantry, very much in the position of a proprietor?—I do.

20451. The whole administration of the estate is left to you without any restriction?—Yes.

20452. It is open to you to raise rents or diminish them, or shift tenants in holdings, or do anything you like?—So far as that is concerned, I am in place of the proprietor.

20453. There is no restriction put upon your action?—None in the least.

20454. Are you permanently interested in the welfare of the estate?—I am the next heir after Mrs Edmonston.

20455. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You said the fourth of Unst was in the hands of small proprietors?—I think so.

20456. Do you know if there are any of them here to-day?—Yes, I see one; not one I would apply the statement I made about the payment of poor rates to; but I see a gentleman here who has lately purchased land.

20457. Is he a native of the island?—No, but he has been a long time in the island.

20458. Is he a native of Shetland?—Yes.

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20459. What is his name?—Mr Sandison, of Uyea Sound.

20460. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other statement you wish to make?—In regard to the statement of Robert Robertson, I would say he was turned off the mainland—I think he said he was put off for sheep. He was a moving blade. He moved several times of his own accord, and seemed never at rest. He was not put off; he asked to be moved, and took another croft, and he got what he thought a better bargain and went to it.

20461. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—He had only been five years there?—I forget how long.

20462. *The Chairman.*—What more? Another statement was that he was keeping a daughter and the family of a son-in-law, whereas the daughter and whole family have been kept by the parochial board, and I am not sure that they are not getting something yet.—I wanted to state that, because it seemed rather hard that he was keeping a family of orphans, when he was not.

20463. *Professor Mackinnon.*—He said he had to take charge of them and provide for them, but they are now doing work; at least, it implied that?—It seemed to me that he was supposed to be keeping them. The only thing else I might say is with regard to the merk of land, as they are speaking so much about it. A merk is not measurement at all. It is a shene, an old Norse portion or share. In some towns a merk may not be an acre; in others it may be an acre, and in others it may be three. It is a most indefinite thing a merk.

20464. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It was a value of land?—Yes, a share.

20465. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is a portion of a town?—Yes. There may be two townships of 100 merks each, and the one may measure 300 acres and the other not 100.

20466. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It is the value at the time?—Yes. And thus when scatholds are divided, they are divided according to the merks of land. One may hold twenty, another forty, and another ten, and so forth, and it is all divided into merks; a town having say 100, the whole is divided into 100ths, and each man gets so many hundredths per merk.

20467. Does the property descend here to the eldest son?—Yes.

20468. *Professor Mackinnon.*—A merk has a value with reference to the scathold?—Yes, and stipend; a great many things are paid by the merk; and some of the crown taxes are paid by merks also.

ALEXANDER HARPER HOMERON, Westing (72)—examined.

Alexander Harper Homeron.

20469. *The Chairman.*—What is your complaint?—I think the grazing has been ruined, and that we have poor bits of land. The poor were wont to live amongst us, and now they have a little from the parochial board, but it cannot keep them. The poor before lived amongst the poor. One half of the island is now under grazing.

20470. Your complaint is that the island is now under sheep farms?—I complain that the best of the land is now under sheep farms.

20471. What are you—a crofter?—No, a boat-builder.

20472. You live here?—Yes.

20473. Has your trade improved?—No, it was the little boats I built. I built decked boats, but then they were not used, and now that decked boats are coming in, I am not able to build them.

WILLIAM SPENCE, Crofter and Fish-Curer, Ballista (60)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LI.*)

William Spence.

20474. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You asked to be examined; what do you wish to state?—About the grievance I had—the want of scatbold and grass in the meadow along with the farm.

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William Spence.

20475. From whom do you hold that land?—Major Cameron.

20476. John Harrison was here to-day; is your complaint the same as his?—Yes.

20477. Have you anything to state beyond what he said?—No; I think it is just the same.

20478. What rent do you pay?—£4, 10s. 6d., including the poor rates.

20479. How long is it since you lost the scathold?—Fourteen years.

20480. What did you pay before that?—I was not in the same farm then; I paid £6 before.

20481. There has been no scathold since you went there?—No; none since I went to the property.

20482. You took the place with no scathold?—Yes.

20483. And you would like to get it now?—Yes, if I could.

20484. Where were you before you came to Ballista?—I had a farm from the same man at Woodwick.

20485. What made you change?—My croft was laid in a sheep farm, and I was warned out of the place.

20486. Were there many people warned besides you?—One man in the same neighbourhood besides myself. The town was laid in with hill as a sheep farm.

20487. There were only two people in the town?—No more; sometime before there were three, but only two when I went.

20488. You two had the whole of the land?—Yes.

20489. And you had pasture there?—Yes.

20490. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were well off there, were you not?—Very well.

JAMES WILLIAM BRUCE, Mason, son of a Crofter in Ballista (13)—examined.

(*See Appendix A. LI.*)

James William Bruce.

20491. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make?—I beg respectfully to make the following statement on behalf of my father, who has occupied the farm on which we live since 1839, and in so doing will crave that protection from after consequences which the crofters in the Western Islands asked and received:—In the year 1839 the rent of the farm which my father then and still occupies was £4, 12s. We had then the right to the scatholds for our sheep, cattle, and ponies, with six or seven acres, part of it meadow grass, the value of which when made into hay would be from 20s. to 25s. This continued up to 1867 or '68, when the proprietor leased his lands to a company of merchants, and then the scatholds were taken from the tenants. My father then had to pay this company some 30s. for right to graze his animals on the scathold, and about the same time the proprietor also deprived him of the right to the meadow. When the company broke up in 1876, and the farms were again in the hands of the proprietor, the same rent was exacted as he had been paying to this company, notwithstanding the loss of scathold and meadow grass. The present rent is over £7. The dwelling-house was in disrepair, the walls being in a bad condition, as also the roof; and the proprietor, at my father's suggestion, repaired the walls and put on a slate roof; formerly it was thatch. My father, according to agreement, paid £5, and was further to pay a pound yearly for twelve years. That time has elapsed, and still we are paying this pound, which we consider a great grievance. My father's rent, as I have already stated, was in 1839 £4, 12s., with right to graze as many animals as he liked, and meadow land which yielded from twenty to twenty-five loads of hay. Now

the rent is over £7 and he has neither scathold nor meadow grass. When I spoke a year or two ago to the proprietor about the hardship entailed on my father by the loss of the commouty and meadow land, he told me he would make inquiry; but the rent is still the same, and will apparently continue to the end of the chapter. So that the rent since 1839 has been nearly doubled, besides the loss of scathold and meadow grass, which may be calculated at something like 50s. This is the statement I wish to make on behalf of my father, and I have no doubt that a great many tenants have a similar tale to tell if they would only come forward. If the Commissioners wish to ask me any questions I will be glad to answer them as far as lies in my power.

20492. *The Chairman.*—Is this your own writing?—My little daughter copied it after I wrote it.

20493. How old is she?—Thirteen.

20494. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it all your own composition?—I was assisted in doing some of it.

20495. Who is the proprietor referred to?—Major Cameron.

20496. *Mr Cameron.*—Who is factor now?—Mr Hamilton.

20497. Is he factor on other estates besides Major Cameron's?—No, I think not.

20498. This rise of rent you complain of was laid on by the former factor?—By Walker.

20499. What stock have you on the croft?—We have three old cows and three young ones.

20500. And ponies?—Four old ones and three young ones.

20501. Any sheep?—My father has no sheep; but for the ponies and cows we have we are paying for pasture to other proprietors.

20502. Have you any scathold at all?—None.

20503. Where do you graze your cows?—On the scathold belonging to other proprietors, which we have liberty to use. In the summer time we have a few of them on the grass.

20504. Inside your cultivated land?—Yes, sometimes two and sometimes three of them.

20505. What is the rent you actually pay?—£7; that is for the land we got at first; but we pay more.

20506. The £7 is rent?—Yes, for the farm my father took at first.

20507. What do you pay for the grazing of these animals in summer to the neighbours?—Owing to the number we have, so much a head.

20508. What is the average price paid for grazing a Shetland cow, on a neighbouring property?—For the hill pasture it is 2s.

20509. For how long—the whole summer?—Back and forward just through the year; we have it always in winter, but just occasionally.

20510. What do you pay for the grazing of a pony?—From 3s. to 4s.; they are only part of the year in; that is, in the pasture we are paying for now.

20511. On whose ground do yon pastnre these animals?—Different proprietors who own the ground; but we pay it to Mr Ingram.

20512. Is the land on which you pasture these animals in the occupation of a tenant or of the proprietor himself?—It is just enclosed pasture; there are several proprietors who own it. Mr Ingram appears to be the man who takes the rent.

20513. He is owner of the land?—No, he is part owner.

20514. Have Mr Ingram and the other owners any stock of their own?—They have a few.

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Alexander Sandison.

ALEXANDER SANDISON, Merchant and Fish-curer, Uyea Sound (56)—examined.

20515. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make a statement?—The place the last witness referred to is a large portion of scathold which belongs to Lord Zetland, and the rest to the Homeron property, and Mr Ingram has another portion, and another small tenant has another portion. Lord Zetland is getting no rent, and Homeron is getting none. If they are paying Mr Ingram, it is he who keeps it. It is a piece of scathold that lies inside of two enclosures, and is occupied by any person who wishes to go in.

20516. Do you say the people pay Mr Ingram for land belonging to Lord Zetland?—There are four proprietors in it.

20517. But do the three proprietors get a share of what Mr Ingram gets?—No, I know Lord Zetland does not.

20518. But they graze off their own land?—Yes.

20519—20. And Ingram keeps the rent and Lord Zetland gets none?—He gets a little.—*Mr White*, schoolmaster, Balta Sound. I think Mr Ingram may get something, but the ground is enclosed with a wire fence, and what he keeps will not more than pay the cost of the fence.

JAMES WILLIAM BRUCE, Mason, Ballista—re-examined.

James William Bruce.

20521. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who has the meadow land referred to in the paper as having been taken from your father?—It is taken into a sheep pasture.

20522. How many acres were in it?—I could not say. I have over six acres of it.

20523. *Mr Cameron.*—You say in your statement you have no doubt a great many tenants would have a similar tale to tell—who are these tenants—are they in your neighbourhood?—There are some of them here to-day.

20524. Some who have been witnesses?—Some whom you have not spoken to.

20525. But you mean tenants not in your immediate neighbourhood?—Tenants in the neighbourhood of where I am I refer to.

20526. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you do much in the way of building houses?—Yes.

20527. What is the cost of a tenant's house such as your father has?—It might be somewhere about £20, but now it would be more; wages are higher now.

20528. Do you ever take a contract to build a house of that sort?—I have never taken any contract to build a house of that sort, but I believe a house of that kind would cost between £20 and £30.

20529. For the mason work?—I believe it would.

20530. And the wood has to be put on besides that?—Yes, of course; formerly it could have been done cheaper.

20531. What wages are masons getting here now?—From £1 to 22s. or 24s. a week.

20532. *The Chairman.*—When you began work as a mason, what were your daily wages?—Twenty years ago, 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day.

20533. And what are the wages now received by a good mason working by the day?—20s. to 27s. a week.

[ADJOURNED.]

HILLSWICK, SHETLAND, TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1883. SHETLAND. HILLSWICK.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

JAMES WINCHESTER, Crofter and Fisherman (75)—examined.

James Winchester.

20534. *The Chairman.*—Who is proprietor of the land on which you are settled?—I believe now the Cheynes that stop in the south in Edinburgh; but Mr Thomas Gifford here is all the master we have.

20535. Is he the factor?—Yes.

20536. And who is the landlord?—The old laird is dead; the property is under trust.

20537. What amount of land have you got, and how many acres or merks?—It is called acres now; it was merks in our time. I believe we have 4 or 4½ acres.

20538. Arable ground?—Yes, that is the name of it.

20539. Have you got any scathold?—Yes, I have a good deal of scathold; but they are putting on five new towns upon the Assater property.

20540. You have 4½ acres of arable ground and right of common pasture on scathold?—Yes.

20541. What stock do you keep—how many cows?—I keep about eleven or twelve at the furthest, and some years one or two more, according to the crop.

20542. Twelve cows?—Yes.

20543. How many ponies?—I have three, I think.

20544. And sheep?—The sheep are not many; if I have ten or twelve that is all I have.

20545. What rent do you pay?—Mr Gifford gave me the land at £5, 3s., and now it has come up to be about £7, 10s.

20546. I don't mean with the taxes, but rent alone?—The rent alone is £6, 10s.

20547. How long is it since it was raised from £5, 3s. to £6, 10s.?—I got the land from Mr Gifford in 1851, and I got it then at £5, 3s., and now there is the 1877 receipt [showing] for £7, 8s. 3d.

20548. When was it raised from £5, 3s. to £6, 10s.?—It was raised at that time.

20549. In what year—1879?—1869 was the greatest rise.

20550. It was raised to £6, 10s. in 1869?—It may have been that year; it was about that time.

20551. And now, altogether, how much is it, including the taxes?—Including all, about £7, 10s.

20552. How many years have you been settled upon this land?—I am settled from 1851 till now.

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HILLSWICK.

James Winchester.

20553. During these thirty-two years has any of the hill pasture or scathold been taken away from the township?—Yes, these new towns have been given off the scathold.

20554. How many new towns are there settled upon Assater?—Three upon the south side and two upon the north side.

20555. That is five new towns?—Yes.

20556. Where was the land taken from to make these new townships—was the arable land taken from your old holding, or was it taken from the farm?—It was outside our dykes.

20557. Who was occupying that land before—was it the proprietor?—No, it was just outside ground not enclosed at all.

20558. How are these five new townships provided with common pasture?—They will be provided back and fore with the 'lave.'

20559. The scathold for the new townships is taken from the scathold for the old townships?—Yes; for the hills we are just the same.

20560. All the cattle go together on the hills?—Yes.

20561. When these new townships are made, and the cattle brought in on the same ground as yours, will your rent be reduced, or will it remain the same?—I have not got a halfpenny of reduction; I have had the rent raised, and no reduction at all.

20562. Since the new townships were made, are you able to keep the same amount of stock as you did before, or are you obliged to keep less stock?—No, I just strive to keep the same.

20563. Then the new townships don't do you any harm?—They do little harm, unless for the sheep; the sheep cannot have the freedom that they had before the townships were made.

20564. But will you have the same number of sheep?—Yes; but you see I only came to this township about 1851. I lived in another place before that.

20565. Where were these people brought from into these five new townships?—Mr Harrison came from Hillswick.

20566. Where did they come from generally—did they come from other townships?—Mr Harrison came from Ollaberry estate.

20567. The people came from other townships round about?—Yes.

20568. And what became of the land these people occupied before?—That I could not tell you; others gathered on these towns again.

20569. But when the people came to the new towns was the land occupied by these people turned into sheep farms, or was it given to others?—No, it was given to crop as it was before, where they came from.

20570. Have you any real ground of complaint on account of these people being brought in?—To whom shall I complain? Mr Gifford would do very little for me if I did complain, but I am just telling the state of things as they are.

20571. Have you a good road to your township?—We have a road here that comes down to Hillswick, but we have no roads to the hills for our cattle.

20572. Can you drive a wheel carriage on the public road to Assater, or is there no public road?—Yes, I believe I could drive a cart from Assaster to here.

20573. How far are you from a school?—Not far; there is a school up here.

20574. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Why did you come here to-day? Did you come to make any complaint?—Yes, I am complaining that I am paying too heavy a rent.

20575. *The Chairman.*—Twelve cows, three horses, and ten sheep for £7, 10s. including taxes; is that a higher rent than your neighbours pay

for the same land?—No, I believe they are paying much about the same as I am paying.

20576. Have you been able to pay the rent, or have you been obliged to fall into arrears?—No, I believe I have always managed to pay the rent.

20577. What do you sell off the croft—do you sell young beasts?—Yes, we sell them at the sale in the months of May and November.

20578. How many beasts are you able to sell every year—two or three?—No, the highest I can come up to is to sell one, and may be, some years, I could hardly manage that.

20579. Do you sell them at two or three years old?—Just any one I can spare best.

20580. What will you get for two-year-old beasts this year?—£2, and may be as high as £3; that is as high as we can get for a young beast.

20581. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are your neighbours complaining as well as yourself about the rent being too high?—Generally the people are complaining that the rent is too high.

20582. How many neighbours have you in the same town?—Two besides myself.

20583. Do you make your livelihood out of the croft, or have you any other business to follow?—I have no other business but the fishing.

20584. Do you fish yourself now?—Yes, still.

20585. You could not live on the croft without the fishing?—Oh, my crop would only supply me with about six months' meat at the furthest.

20586. Have you a family?—There is a family with me, but I have no children of my own.

20587. When your rent was increased were you told for what purpose it was put on?—They did not tell me what the cause was.

20588. Did you get any advantages, any privileges, you had not before when the pound was put on?—None, who should I get them from?

20589. *The Chairman.*—Did they repair your house or anything of that sort?—I have repaired it myself, but a year or two back I got Mr Gifford to repair it. But I repaired it twice before that myself.

20590. Was the additional rent put on because the house was repaired?—No, it came on about 1869; it came on after that.

20591. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it the native breed of sheep you have got?—Yes, Shetland sheep.

20592. Are there any big farms in this neighbourhood given up to sheep?—No, none about me.

20593. Has Mr Gifford all the land about here?—All the land here.

20594. Is he a good landlord?—I say nothing, only that he is taking more than the generality of us are fit to give; for to say, truth and conscience, we are paying a third above what we are able to pay.

20595. What is the name of the estate?—Busta.

20596. Is it part of the estate of Busta?—Yes, that is the name of the estate.

20597. *The Chairman.*—Is Mr Gifford proprietor or factor?—Only factor, but he belonged to the ancient Giffords of Busta.

ERASMUS DOULL, North Roe, North Mavin (70)—examined.

20598. *The Chairman.*—Are you a fisherman?—No; for forty years I was, but I am not now.

20599. Are you a crofter?—Yes.

SHETLAND.

HILLSWICK.

Erasmus Doull.

20600. Where is North Roe?—At the northernmost point of the parish of North Mavin.

20601. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you come here to-day to represent other people, or to speak only for yourself?—I was wishing to speak a little for myself, and, so far as I know, something for other people. I have a letter here which I should like your Lordship to read:—'*North Roe, July* 16, '1883. Gentleman, The bearer, Erasmus Doull, wishes to give evidence 'before you at Hillswick to morrow. He is a plain honest man, capable of 'giving you vast information regarding the usages between landlord and 'tenant, if you give him time to speak.—Gentlemen, yours respectfully, 'J. INKSTER.—Her Majesty's Commissioners at Hillswick.'

20602. Who is the Mr Inkster who signs this?—A merchant.

20603. Did anybody choose you to come here, or did you come of your own accord?—I suppose they chose me.

20604. Was there a meeting?—Yes, on Saturday night; the fishermen could not attend themselves, and for that reason they chose me to come here to give my own particulars, and, if I liked, to say anything about anybody else as far as I knew the facts.

20605. Was there anything particular that they wished you to state on their behalf, and, if so, will you be so good as to say it?—Whatever they wished me to mention, I believe they would like to have some compensation on leaving their places, or leases. They wished, if it were possible, to get some compensation if they were put off their farm, or leases when they were on them.

20606. None of them have leases?—None that I am aware of.

20607. Would they generally wish to have leases?—So far as I know, they would.

20608. Have they ever asked for leases?—I could not answer that; they are under the tacksmen generally.

20609. Are they on the Busta property?—Some of them are not.

20610. Who is the proprietor of the other part of the place?—Hay & Co., Lerwick.

20611. How many families are there in your place?—I cannot say.

20612. Is there a large population?—Yes, pretty large.

20613. And they are all crofters?—Yes.

20614. And all fishermen?—Yes, fishermen and crofters. The place is very small.

20615. Do they complain that they have too little land?—I did not hear anything about that; perhaps they might have had something to say about that themselves.

20616. Is there any large farm near them?—No.

20617. What is your own rent?—I could not exactly say; I pay the half of the rent; but I could not exactly tell you the standing rent which they pay. I think they pay about £8, 9s.

20618. Does that include taxes?—No; I pay £10, 11s. with taxes.

20619. How much land have you for that?—I could not give you an estimate of it, because I never heard it from the factor; he never told me.

20620. What quantity of corn are you able to raise off your croft?—I never counted what we call the sheaves.

20621. How long does it keep your family and animals in food?—About six months.

20622. Do you raise anything but oats and potatoes?—A little bere and some few turnips.

20623. Do you plough the ground or dig it?—Dig it.

20624. What stock do you keep—how many cows?—Eleven head of Shetland cows.

20625. How many sheep?—I have only about twelve.

20626. And how many horses?—None.

20627. No Shetland ponies?—None.

20628. Are you prevented from keeping ponies?—No.

20629. Do any of your neighbours keep horses?—No, they are all done away with; within about three miles of where I am there are none.

20630. Why were they done away with?—Disease.

20631. What sort of disease?—Scab.

20632. When did that happen?—About three or four years back.

20633. Did the whole of the horses of the place die of that disease?—A good many died.

20634. Do most of your neighbours keep the same amount of stock as you do?—Not so many cows, because I have more arable ground than they have.

20635. Have you pasture enough?—Yes, I have pasture enough to do me.

20636. You have no complaint in respect of scathold?—No.

20637. Have any of your neighbours any complaint?—I do not know.

20638. Has any of it been taken away from them?—No.

20639. Have the rents been raised in recent times?—It has been twice raised on me.

20640. What rent did you pay first?—£4, 15s.

20641. How long ago was that?—A good many years back.

20642. For the same land you now occupy?—I have more land now than I had then.

20643. What was the first rise?—Eight shillings and some odd pennies.

20644. What was the next?—Five shillings.

20645. How long ago was that?—About nine years back.

20646. There has been no further rise?—No.

20647. And you have more land than you had at first?—Yes.

20648. When did you get the additional land?—About eight years back.

20649. Do you complain that the rent is too high?—I do think it is high enough; as times are going, it is over-rented altogether.

20650. If you were laird yourself, do you think you would give it at a lower rent?—I do not know. I might be like more of them—look for as much as I could get.

20651. Do your neighbours think the rent is too high?—I don't know.

20652. Have you difficulty in paying your rents?—Yes, great difficulty some years.

20653. Are your people much in arrear, or do they pay their rent pretty well?—Pretty well.

20654. Are there any poor people amongst you?—Yes, a good many poor people.

20655. I don't mean paupers, but people amongst you in a poor condition of life?—Yes, some families.

20656. Is that owing to circumstances over which they have no control themselves?—Partly that, I believe, and partly from getting low in means.

20657. What fishing do the people in your district engage in?—The ling fishing, and some are now engaged in the herring fishing.

20658. Where do they go to the herring fishing?—Lerwick and Unst and Yell.

20659. Have they large boats of their own?—Yes, some have and there are a few small Shetland boats.

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20660. Do they still go to the fishing with these small boats?—Yes, they go with a few.

20661. Are some of them engaged in boats belonging to fish-curers?—Yes.

20662. Some of them, you said, are on Hay & Co.'s property?—Yes.

20663. What is the name of the property?—Gossaburgh; but I suppose, as far as I know, it was sold over to the estate of Busta.

20664. On that property do the people fish for Hay & Co.?—Yes.

20665. Do they fish for anybody else?—Formerly they were not allowed; I cannot answer for that just now.

20666. You are not a fisherman yourself?—Not now.

20667. You used to be?—Yes.

20668. What property are you on?—Busta.

20669. Whom did you fish for?—For curers.

20670. For any curer?—Yes; I was not bound to fish to any man.

20671. Are there any curers living in the place?—Yes.

20672. So far as you know, are the crofters on Hay & Co.'s property not allowed to give their fish to others?—At one time they were not, but I cannot say for now. I knew that three years back one was threatened, and another's land was advertised if they did not go back and fish for Hay & Co.

20673. What were the names of the persons?—Arthur Mowat and Robert Inkster.

20674. Had they been giving their fish to somebody else?—They were giving their fish to another man.

20675. And they got that threatening notice?—Yes.

20676. How long ago was that?—Three years back.

20677. Do these fish-curers keep stores in the place?—Yes.

20678. And supply the fishermen?—Yes.

20679. Are the fishermen obliged to take their goods from them?—I don't know; I don't think it.

20680. In point of fact, they do take their goods from them?—Perhaps they are obliged to do it, if they have no ready money to go anywhere else.

20681. How did you do yourself—did you get your goods from the fish-curer?—Yes.

20682. Were you charged more than you would have been by another shopkeeper?—It is a good while since I had a chance to know much, but I thought they were much about the same. I did not see any difference in the goods any way I could take it. There is another thing I may mention, my chief reason for coming here was for this; we have no roads—there are twelve miles where there are no roads—and I am paying road money, and I suppose every one about us has had to pay it since 1851. Then there is a school in North Roe, but there is no road to it, and the children cannot get to it in winter time. An application has been made to get a road, but without effect.

20683. Is there no high road at all through North Roe?—No.

20684. Where is the nearest point of the high road?—About eight miles.

20685. And you have no horses?—No horses.

20686. So that any carriage or traffic with other places has to be done on people's backs?—Yes.

20687. Have representations been made to the road trustees upon that subject?—Yes.

20688. More than once?—I think so.

20689. And has there ever been any proposal to make a road by them?

—Yes, but they have never carried it out, and the school is at a disadvantage, losing the Government grant by reason of the pupils not being able to get to it during three months of the year.

20690. Are there many of the children far from the school?—A good many.

20691. Is the school badly attended in consequence?—Very; and we have no doctor within fifteen miles.

20692. Where does the doctor live?—At Busta.

20693. Do you find that a hardship?—Yes; and when we require him he comes as far as the road and can get no further, and then he has to take a boat, and perhaps he cannot get over at all.

20694. You are not obliged to pay a tax for the doctor?—I think we are.

20695. Is it included amongst your assessments?—I think it is; but some person here may be better able to speak to that.

20696. When the doctor visits any of you, have you to pay him yourself?—Yes.

20697. *Mr Cameron.*—Are there any other shops in North Roe besides the one the fish-curer keeps?—There are three.

20698. Have the fishermen not liberty to go to any shop they like?—They can go to any shop they please.

20699. You said that some of the ponies got scab, and died; did your sheep get the scab too?—No.

20700. Is the scab a new complaint among the ponies?—Yes, it was a new complaint to us.

20701. Did you ever try any remedy for it?—Yes.

20702. Did you try and dip them?—Yes.

20703. Did it do any good?—It did good latterly, when people got into the knowledge of it.

20704. Do you dip your sheep regularly?—Yes.

20705. Twice a year?—Yes, or oftener.

20706. Do you manufacture cloth from the wool of the Shetland sheep?—Yes.

20707. Is that coat you have on made of it?—Yes.

20708. Where was it woven?—North Roe.

20709. And spun?—Spun in the Roe, where I live.

20710. And who is your tailor?—A man about eight miles away to the southward.

20711. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What price were you paying for meal last year?—From 22s. to 24s. a boll.

20712. Was that for ready money?—Yes, I believe it was.

20713. Do you know what the price was to those who had to get it on credit?—That I cannot tell you; I do not think there was much difference made, so far as I know.

20714. What are you able to sell of the produce of your stock in the year?—I generally sell two cattle, an old and a young one.

20715. What do they fetch?—Some years they are very low, and some years very high.

20716. Do you make £8 in a year?—One year with another, I may make that.

20717. Not more than that?—No, I don't think so.

20718. Are you able to sell any sheep or wool?—No.

20719. Then you don't sell off the croft what would pay the rent of the croft, besides what you consume yourself?—I sell what cattle I can spare, and the rest I make out anyway I can—anything I can do to turn in a little money—such as butter, and things I can afford from the place.

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20720. Do you sell butter?—Yes.

20721. How much in a year?—Not much.

20722. Fifty pounds?—No.

20723. Twenty pounds?—About that.

20724. What is the price of butter in Shetland?—From 10d. to 1s. as far as I know.

20725. Do you use the wool off your own sheep?—Yes.

20726. Is it spun at home?—Yes.

20727. Do you make the cloth too?—Yes; my coat is made of it.

20728. Are there weavers in the parish of North Mavin?—Yes.

20729. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are there many people of your name in the island?—Not one but myself.

20730. Have your people been long in the island?—Yes, about 300 years.

20731. But you don't know anybody else of your own surname?—Yes, plenty.

20732. You stated that you don't sell any of the wool off your own sheep?—No.

20733. Have you enough wool from your own sheep to clothe your family as well as yourself, or are you obliged to buy?—It is sufficient for me. I have not many of a family; I have only myself and my wife, and a son, who lives with me.

20734. Is there enough from the twelve sheep to keep you?—My son has some sheep besides these.

20735. You have told us you were fishing at one time, and that you dealt with curers; when there was a settlement between you and the curer, and you had any money to get, were you paid in money?—Yes, I was; or an order to Mr Gifford for rent—the same as money.

20736. They did not compel you to take out the balance in goods?—No.

20737. Was the disease among the horses the cause of great loss to the township?—To some it was, and to some it was not.

20738. What were people saying was the cause of it—was it something bad in the grass, or what?—I could not answer that; the disease just came in.

20739. In the letter you brought it is stated that you are capable of giving vast information regarding the usages between landlords and tenants; you have told us only about Hay & Co.—is there nothing else you have to tell us about the usages between landlords and tenants?—Nothing but what I have stated about myself. I have paid rent since 1845, and I have had rises twice.

20740. Has anybody a lease upon Hay's property or on the Busta property?—None that I know of.

20741. Do the people all want leases?—Yes.

20742. Would they improve their lands more if they had leases, and were sure of not being turned out?—I think so, certainly.

20743. There has been no progress made in improving their crofts, in consequence?—Not a great deal, unless what I have made myself.

20744. What length of lease would you and other people like?—I could not tell you what other people would like, but I should like some length of time. But I am now old, and it will not matter much.

20745. If you were a young man, what length of lease would you like?—I thought when the factor came in, every one was to have a nineteen years' lease; but we never got them.

20746. You did ask for the lease for yourself?—I did, and got very little satisfaction.

20747. What did you ask?—I asked for a lease.

20748. And you didn't get any satisfaction?—No.

20749. *The Chairman.*—You said that you never sold any sheep?—No.

20750. What becomes of the old sheep?—I kill them.

20751. You eat them in your own family?—Yes, and very glad to get them.

20752. You said you raised about enough corn to last for six months in the family?—Yes, not much more than that; some years more, and some less.

20753. Do you grind the corn at home or at the mill?—A little at home, and the rest I put out to the mill.

20754. You are not obliged to carry the corn to any particular mill?—No. I could not get any milled but for the steamboat bringing it. I could not get a road for a cart though you were to give me a thousand pounds—nothing but bogs and hills.

20755. Did the old people grind the corn?—No; they ground it in small declivities in the hills where the water came down and heaved it round.

20756. Are there any of those mills left in the country?—Yes.

20757. Why do you not use them?—We do so; but it is only sometimes we can use them for want of water.

20758. You stated that the children could not go to school on account of the want of roads; cannot children walk over the grass as well as along the road?—They can walk in summer.

20759. Is it on account of the want of bridges over the river that they cannot go?—There is a small river, but lately they have got a wooden bridge across, and there is a little more safety; but before that their parents had to go with them till they got by that place.

20760. Is there still any dangerous river without a bridge between you and the school?—No, but it is very marshy wet ground for children to go over in winter—about two and a half or three miles.

20761. Is the disease among the ponies extending all over, or is it only in your place?—I cannot say; I never made inquiry.

20762. Who built your house?—Mr Gifford.

20763. How long ago?—About seventeen years back.

20764. Did it cost you any money, or did he pay the whole of it?—He put up the walls 6 feet high on the one side and 5 feet 4 inches on the other, and upon the rise on the upper side 5 feet 4 inches, and 28 feet long and 12 feet broad. He did no more; the rest of the work I did myself.

20765. Who paid for the timber?—He gave me the wood, and I had to put it on and paint it; and I put on the lime, and made the house fit to live in.

20766. Did he supply the lime?—Yes.

20767. Did he carry it up to the place?—No; I flitted it from the place, as far, I suppose, as from here to Busta.

20768. How did you flit it?—In a boat.

20769. Was the rise of rent after the new house was built?—Yes.

The Rev. J. R. SUTHERLAND, Minister of North Mavin (66)—examined.

20770. *Mr Cameron.*—How long have you been resident in this parish, Mr Sutherland?—About thirty-five years.

20771. Are you a native of this place?—No, I am a native of Morayshire.

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20772. What is the population of your parish?—About 2500, or a little more.

20773. Has there been an increase in the last decennial period, or a decrease?—I think a slight decrease.

20774. How are the people chiefly occupied?—In general they are occupied in fishing and farming.

20775. There is no other occupation in the parish?—There are tradesmen, such as shoemakers, tailors, and carpenters, and masons, but every one of them holds land.

20776. Can you give us any idea how many of these tradesmen there may be in the parish?—No, I cannot say.

20777. I mean as indicative of the work which is going on—is there much labour employed?—The most of the labour is connected with the fishing directly or indirectly, in building or repairing houses, and making shoes and clothes for the people. There is nothing more that I know of.

20778. Are there many new houses being built in the parish?—Well, the houses don't stand very long, and are generally requiring something to be done to them. There are not many new houses.

20779. When a new house is built, is it made of stone and lime, or dry building?—Generally stone and lime, I think.

20780. And what roofing do they put on?—Just a common roof—wood and felt.

20781. Not slate?—Sometimes there are a few slated houses now.

20782. Are they thatched at all?—The people thatch them with straw.

20783. Is there any natural thatch in the country, such as heather or bracken?—No.

20784. Are the houses pretty comfortable compared with other parts of the island?—Yes; I may say in general about the people that I don't know—and I have been over all Scotland—any people who should be more happy or comfortable if they would be industrious and took care of what they make. I do not mean to say they are not industrious, but I do not know any people who would be more comfortable and happy if they would take care of what they make.

20785. Have the people who occupy land, in your opinion, got a sufficient amount of pasture land for their animals?—So far as I know, they have an amply sufficient quantity of common.

20786. What extent of pasture land or common grazing have they got? I could not condescend upon the particular quantity. But if I took one of the places, and had money in my pocket to buy sheep and cattle, I could keep as many as I chose without any person interfering with me. The pastures are free and open, not a piece here and there for you and me, but pastures all open.

20787. Is that the case in every town in the parish?—It is the case in almost every town in the parish, so far as I know.

20788. Is the result of that system that they keep too many animals on the grass, and that therefore the animals deteriorate in size and quality?—Some may keep more—the poorer people are not able to buy them; but some may keep more than they would be justified if there was a strict inquiry made; but there is no such inquiry.

20789. Have you observed any discontent on the part of those who don't keep as many cattle as their neighbours?—No; but there will be discontent, do whatever you may in any part of the world.

20790. But in this particular instance, might it not occur that where you have common grazing, and where every one has an equal right to

put as much stock upon it as he can, that some of the tenants might complain that the ground was overcrowded and the grass eaten up by animals belonging to their neighbours?—I cannot say I have heard any complaint.

20791. You have never heard of any movement amongst the tenants to do away with the present system, and establish a club farm in place of it?—No, certainly not. I don't think any system could be better for poor people than the system they have here.

20792. And you are convinced that the system satisfies the people themselves?—I am satisfied that the people who are well-doing and industrious could not be better in their position. That is my experience.

20793. Comparing the condition of the people at the present moment with what it was when you first came to the parish, what is your opinion—are they in a better position?—They should be in a better position. The price of cattle is double what it was when I came here. The price of cattle and sheep and horses has doubled, I am certain, since I came here; and if the people are not better off, it is themselves who are to blame.

20794. Are they tolerably well clothed, and comfortable in that respect? I will give you an illustration, if you will allow me. An old gentleman, minister of Stonehaven, came to Shetland, and he said when he came to Shetland and went to church, he held his head down and looked round, thinking he would see a congregation clad in skins; but when he looked round he saw a congregation that might have been in London. And I can say that, in this church where I have been minister so long, there is not a better clad people in Scotland than they are.

20795. Does that remark apply equally to the children?—The children who are able to come to church are well clad. Of course, there are exceptions; but that is the general appearance of this congregation, and I suppose it is the same over the whole country.

20796. You have not found the want of clothing keeps any children away from school?—I have not had much experience of that; but I should not think so.

20797. You think the children are fairly well clad?—I think so, but of course there are exceptions.

20798. Are you a member of the School Board?—I was, but I am not now.

20799. Who are the members of that School Board?—I don't know.

20800. Have you any remarks to make upon the education of the people?—Taking them all in all, they are exceedingly well educated for the situation of life in which they are. I don't know any person with whom I have had dealings who cannot write his name and read. Taking the people altogether, they are a nice kind-hearted, good people?

20801. You heard the evidence given by the last witness about scab among the ponies: was that ever brought under your notice before?—It was just for one winter or so; it was not general at all.

20802. You think it need not interfere with the re-introduction of the ponies?—Not at all.

20803. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You spoke guardedly when asked about the condition of the people by saying that 'if they took care, &c.,' what meaning do you attach to that? You say they would be very comfortable if they took care?—It would be an exceptional number that would not be taking care; and there would be the same south and north. I mean that you will find people who don't take care of the means they have, and you will find that in every community, south and north. I don't mean anything more than that.

SHETLAND. HILLSWICK. Rev. J. R. Sutherland.

20804. What is the average attendance at your church?—I don't know; it depends very much upon the weather—400, 500, or 600, and at communion there would be a great turn out.

20805. One of the preceding witnesses spoke about the great distance they were from a road; are other townships in the parish in want of a road?—Yes, there is only one general road from Lerwick. When I came here there was not a single inch of road, but the country has very much improved since then. I can now drive sixty miles on that road now; I can drive to Dunrossness; and there are roads being made through the country, as they have means to do it. But it would be very difficult and costly, taking the rental of the parish, to make roads wherever they may be required.

20806. Is this bay of Hillswick likely to be improved as a fishing station?—I think so, and hope so.

20807. Is it growing under your own observation?—It has always been a chief fishing station. Perhaps the fishing station for herring has only been here about a year, but I have reason to believe the herring fishing has been increased.

20808. Is the proprietor inclined to give facilities to the fish-curers if necessary?—The principal property in this parish is under trustees, and I don't know in what capacity they are to do such a thing, but I know they will be very happy to make it as easy as possible for anybody.

20809. Is the heir to the property under age or under disability?—The late proprietor, who died about twenty years ago, had no children, and he left his estate, which was considerably encumbered, under trust, mentioning that the son of a niece of his, who is still unmarried, should succeed when he became twenty years of age, and mentioning another niece's son who, when he came to twenty years of age, should succeed in the event of the other failing. Neither of the nieces has had any son. The trustees are, I think, Messrs Hay, Lerwick, who are nephews of the late Mrs Gifford, Busta. The ultimate destination is to Mr Cheyne, sheriff-substitute, Dundee.

20810. How long is this likely to be in suspense?—Nobody can tell that.

20811. How long were the Giffords connected with this place?—They came here upwards of 200 years ago to be managers or factors, for, I think, the Earl of Morton, and like every other body in Shetland, they bought a piece of land, and got up in that way. But I don't think the people could be better than they are. I may explain about the houses that the people may have reason to complain of them not being as they should be. But if I get a piece of land and pay 50s. or £3, and call upon an heritor to give me a new house, costing £40 or £50, my rental would be raised 10 per cent. for the material of the house; and that is the explanation of how heritors cannot give the people the houses they think they ought to have; it is impossible.

20812. *The Chairman.*—What is the poor rate in the parish—how much in the pound?—I almost never attend the meetings of the Parochial Board, but all collections taken up in this church are expended by the kirk-session in aiding a number of people who are now on a list of their own, and nearly as numerous as those under the Parochial Board. We take care not to let into our list recipients of parochial relief, but only those who soon would be recipients, and we divide the whole collection amongst them.

20813. When you spoke about the people being careful, or the contrary, was it implied that, on recent years, there has been extravagance in food or dress among the people which was not the case before?—No, I don't think it; I think, maybe, they depend a little too much upon tea. But

there are a hundred ways in which I could spend my little means, as a labouring man, which I could not find much fault with, and yet it might be better administered.

20814. Is there more intoxicating drink consumed than there used to be?—I have been here thirty-five years, and never met a drunken man. There may have been drunken men, but I have never seen one.

20815. How many public-houses are there in the parish?—There are no public-houses in the parish. A merchant or two may have a licence, but that is merely for selling over the counter.

20816. There is no public-house where drink could be sold for consumption?—No.

20817. Is that to the people's satisfaction?—I never heard any expression that they desired to have one. They are a very temperate people as a whole.

20818. In connection with the increasing fishing industry, is there any importation of labour, especially female labour, from outside?—There may have been this year and last year for gutting the herring.

20819. What lodging is provided for the women who are brought over here; are they treated with decency?—Oh, certainly. There were some came here who were lodged in a very comfortable nice place.

20820. And do the women of the local population also take a part in the gutting work?—A few of the women here are employed in knitting; they are perhaps the best knitters in the kingdom.

20821. The hosiery trade?—Yes.

20822. Is that increasing or decreasing?—Every one of the women is engaged in it. You cannot get them to be servants or anything else.

20823. There is a large property in the parish which has been a long time under trust?—About twenty years.

20824. Was there a residence for the family on the property recently?—At Busta—a nice residence.

20825. Who is that occupied by now?—The factor is lodged there; and Miss Gifford, the late proprietor's niece, has apartments assigned to her.

20826. Do you think the estate suffers from the want of a resident proprietor—I mean are the trustees restricted in their expenditure more than a resident proprietor would be?—I do not think so; I never knew that there was any difference.

20827. You think the trust expend just as much in making new houses and other improvements as the proprietor made?—As far as I know.

20828. The importation of these strangers for the fishing is not producing any disorder or immorality of any kind?—Not, so far as I know; that is a new thing here.

20829. Do they go to church?—Yes, I saw several on Sunday.

20830. Are there any missions?—I have a missionary, and there are several other denominations in the parish.

20831. And they hold religious services during the fishing season?—I suppose so.

JOHN ANDERSON, Farmer, Merchant, and Fish-Curer, Hillswick (66)—examined.

20832. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You have been connected with this place for a long time?—Yes, thirty-five years.

20833. And were you here before that?—No; I am a native of Delting, and came here in 1848.

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John Anderson.

20834. Are there any who own property in the parish except those we heard of—this trust and the Messrs Hay?—Yes; there are other proprietors.

20835. Who are they?—Gideon Anderson is the next largest proprietor.

20836. Is that a connection of your own family?—My brother, who is in Ollaberry.

20837. And Lord Zetland has a little?—Yes; and there is Mr Cheyne of Tangwick, and Mr John Cheyne, sheriff-substitute of Dundee; Mr Anderson, Ollaberry; Mr Joseph Leask, Lerwick; and Mr John Harwick.

20838. Are there any small holdings?—John Harwick's is the smallest; it has a rental of about £6 or £7.

20839. Does he work the place himself?—Yes.

20840. By far the largest property is the Busta estate?—Yes.

20841. Does the factor rent it himself, or does he let it out?—He lets it out.

20842. He just acts as factor?—Yes.

20843. What is the poor rate?—3s. on the gross rental, and 4s. on the net rental.

20844. The school rate?—2s. on the gross rental; but it will be 2s. 3d. this coming year.

20845. Are these rates decreasing or increasing?—Rather increasing.

20846. The school rate is to be 2s. 3d. on the gross rental next year; will it attain its maximum then?—We hope so.

20847. Is the parish well provided with schools now?—Yes, we have five schools in the parish.

20848. Are all these schools erected since the Education Act came into operation?—There was an old parochial school which has been renewed.

20849. And there are four others?—Yes, one was handed over two or three years ago from the United Presbyterian Church at Ollaberry.

20850. Are these schools fairly taken advantage of by the people?—Oh, yes.

20851. The children of to-day are receiving education in greater numbers than before the new Act came into operation?—Yes.

20852. But still, I suppose, they are not able to attend so regularly as you would wish?—Not so regularly as we would wish, but the officer does what he can to get them out.

20853. Do they attend as regularly as you think they could?—No, I think not.

20854. Are they improving in that respect?—They are improving since the schools were built.

20855. Of course, it will take some time?—It will.

20856. Is the qualification of teachers under the new administration higher than it was for teachers under the old administration?—I could scarcely say; the qualification is somewhat different.

20857. I don't refer to the parish school, but other schools in the parish; are teachers who have succeeded them of higher qualifications than their predecessors?—Oh, yes, certainly they are.

20858. Of course, the buildings are better?—Yes, the buildings are the best in the parish.

20859. I suppose there is no fish-curer in this place but your own firm?—Yes, there is Mr Lawrence Smith, Mr Inkster, and Messrs Adie; and there used to be one Williamson, and Hay & Co., North Roe.

20860. I mean in Hillswick?—There is nobody here but myself just now.

20861. And you cure the fish for all the people here?—I don't cure for all the people.

20862. Whom do they get to cure for them?—They have six other curers in the parish; at Stennes Mr Inkster and Messrs Adie have each a station.

20863. You cure for all the people who bring their boats in here?—Yes.

20864. And of course you also provide them with stores?—I buy the fish from them.

20865. And provide them with stores?—Yes; but sometimes they get them at Lerwick.

20866. Have you communication with Lerwick?—Yes; the 'St Clair' comes in here, and that has been a great boon for us.

20867. Are there any crofters upon the property you rent?—No.

20868. It is in your own hands?—Yes.

20869. Is there as much sub-letting of property by tacksmen now as there used to be?—I have the property at Ollaberry belonging to my brother; I sub-let that.

20870. Does your brother stay at Ollaberry?—Yes.

20871. And you rent it from him, and sub-let it?—Yes.

20872. Are your tenants fishing for you?—Chiefly; but there are a good many otherwise engaged.

20873. And do those who are engaged in fishing fish for your firm?—No, only some.

20874. Some fish for other people?—Yes; they are quite at liberty to fish for whom they like.

20875. But when you cure yourselves, the most of them naturally come to you with their fish?—Yes, I am glad to get as many of them as I can, as long as they are content.

20876. The chief fishing here is cod and ling?—Ling fishing principally.

20877. It is a good station for that?—Yes, it is a good station; but the fishing stations for ling used to be at Stennes, Hama Voe, and Roeness Voe.

20878. And the herring fishing is a recent industry?—This is the first year we have tried it at Hillswick.

20879. Where do you go for the herring?—Mostly within the bay, and they have gone about fifty miles off, right into the ocean.

20880. There is scarcely any family at all without more or less land, I suppose?—Not many. There may be a few individuals who have rooms.

20881. Of the natives of the place?—Yes, who occupy rooms, without land.

20882. The crofters who have spoken to-day, spoke about the rents being somewhat high; do you think that the rents are too high upon the Busta estate?—I scarcely think they are over-rented. So long as they have liberty of scathold, I think they may do. There may be individual cases where the rents are too high.

20883. You mean where the rent is too high for the croft, but not for the croft with the scathold?—Yes.

20884. When there is common pasture, is every crofter entitled to put as much stock upon it as he pleases?—Yes, that is true; but then they are necessarily restricted, because they can only put stock on in summer; they could not live in winter if everybody put on as many as they could.

20885. So that they are restricted by the number of stock they can keep in winter?—Yes.

20886. But I suppose they don't give any winter feeding to their sheep?—Oh yes, they sometimes do; during snow they must either give them feeding, or lose them.

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20887. But there is no rule where there is common pasture, that there is a summing, and that no crofter is allowed to put on the pasture more than a certain number of sheep and cattle?—No.

20888. And the proprietor does not interfere at all?—No, he has not interfered yet.

20889. So that the one who can buy stock can summer as many as he can keep?—That is true.

20890. Take two neighbours—one who has capital and has put a good deal of stock upon the scathold, and another neighbour who has no stock to speak of, does the poor one not consider the possession of stock by the other a grievance?—Yes, I have heard that said; I have heard a farmer of that kind express himself to that effect, that he thought it would be a good plan if the proprietor restricted everybody to so many cattle, or charged them for what they occupied.

20891. Make them pay?—Yes, for each head.

20892. Those who had so many over a certain number?—Yes.

20893. Are the Shetland sheep still kept in large numbers in the parish for the purposes of the hosiery industry?—Yes, in considerable numbers.

20894. And the wool which the women of the place knit is Shetland wool?—Mostly; it is preferred by those who buy.

20895. And they get a good market for their goods?—I think so.

20896. And a ready market?—Yes, hitherto.

20897. We were told lately that Shetland goods were a drug in the market, more or less; is that your experience here?—I don't think that is my experience; the refuse sort of stuff may be a drug in the market, but not the good hosiery.

20898. What kind of articles do they knit in this parish?—In this district we only knit underclothing for ladies and gentlemen—that is the chief branch of the trade here.

20899. No stockings or gloves?—No.

20900. And there is quite a ready market for the goods?—Yes, we have always found that.

20901. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you in the habit of dealing with the people for hosiery?—Yes.

20902. Do you supply them with the wool?—Sometimes we sell them the wool.

20903. Are you able to purchase Shetland wool for them?—Sometimes we purchase it for them, in order to supply them when they have run out of their own.

20904. Do you sometimes supply them with Cheviot wool?—No, we don't like to buy it for hosiery.

20905. You are able to procure a sufficient supply of Shetland wool?—Yes.

20906. What is the price of it?—We pay 1s. 5d. a pound for the fine wool.

20907. Does the colour make any difference?—Yes, a little. We have to pay a little higher for the coloured wool,—dark and light brown—murrait wool.

20908. Have you any information as to what sort of profit a woman can make out of the hosiery business?—I can scarcely say.

20909. I suppose they only devote their odd time to knitting and spinning? They don't sit down and spin day after day?—No, they do it while they are carrying peats and walking about the road.

20910. Are there any old women in the parish without other means of support, who are able to keep themselves by the hosiery trade?—Yes, some of the women do. I don't know if they would be able to support

themselves by their knitting; they may have some other way of supplementing it.

20911. Have you any idea what such people make in the course of the year by knitting and spinning?—No, I cannot say. I heard one of the witnesses speak about the roads—that is a thing we are very much in need of. We have no roads from here all round to Asheness and Ollaberry to North Roe. And it would be a great favour to us if we had the telegraph.

20912. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the nearest telegraph station? Voe, eighteen miles from here.

20913. Is there any telegraph station at Olaberry?—No. When the telegraph was extended to the North Isles, and I spoke about extending it to Ollaberry and Hillswick, and we were told they would do it if we got up a guarantee of £50. I wrote to a good many people who, I thought, might be interested in it, and we got up a subscription of £60, and we were told it could not be done unless we got up £100.

20914. Who was it that told you that?—I could not say.

20915. Was it an official of the post office?—Yes, or the Telegraph Company, perhaps. I don't remember his name.

20916. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was that before the telegraphs were taken over by Government?—Yes.

20917. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that the price of Shetland wool was 1s. 5d. per lb., but that dark wool would be more; can you tell me the difference?—I think about 2d. per lb.

20918. 1s. 7d.?—Perhaps.

20919. Are there many Cheviot sheep in this parish?—Yes; I have some on my property.

20920. And some blackfaced?—Yes.

20921. But the bulk of the sheep stock is native?—Yes; the bulk in the parish. Some of them may have been crossed, not to their advantage, I dare say, in regard to wool.

20922. The bulk of the stock being native in this parish, as the bulk of the stock at Balta Sound was Cheviot—would that account for the native wool being 1s. 8d. and the black 2s. at Balta Sound?—I suppose so.

20923. Does the 'St Clair' go all along the western coast of Scotland?—No; she goes to Stromness, and then to Aberdeen and Leith.

20924. Would you explain why the poor rate seems so high in this parish; is it because the number of paupers is disproportionate to the rental, or what?—The chief cause probably is the number of lunatics; that is the heaviest charge we have, I think.

20925. Are these lunatics boarded out in the south, or do you keep them in the parish?—Some are boarded in the south, and others are kept at home.

20926. We were told at Mid Yell that the rate is very high there, and that it might be reduced considerably if the poorhouse test could be applied; is this parish one of those willing to go into a combination?—I scarcely think it; we believe that our paupers can be kept cheaper than by having a poorhouse.

20927. But do you think there are any on the roll now receiving relief who would not go into the poorhouse?—I scarcely think it; members of the Parochial Board are so well acquainted with people in their different districts that they know their circumstances exactly.

20928. And probably a good number of the paupers are old people?—Yes, a good many of them; but we would be the better of a poorhouse in the parish, where we could order the paupers home. We would be very much the better of that.

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20929. Has any reason been assigned why lunacy is so prevalent in Shetland compared with other parts?—I have not heard.

20930. One of the crofters' delegates complained of want of leases—are you aware that that is a general complaint?—I have no reason to complain. I have a lease; but I think that want has generally been felt.

20931. Do you think if the people had a lease of some kind they would be disposed to improve their croft?—Yes, I think so.

20932. If you were a proprietor yourself you would not object to grant leases if the terms were fair?—No, I think not. I offered to give leases to my Ollaberry tenants to the extent of my lease.

20933. And did they come to terms with you?—Some of them did, and some of them did not seem to want it.

20934. What terms did you make with regard to the buildings, with those tenants to whom you granted leases?—There is only one gentleman has a lease—Mr George Sinclair.

20935. What conditions did you propose with regard to the buildings?—Well, I supposed he would be obliged to keep up the buildings.

20936. But supposing a house could not be repaired further in a lease of nineteen years, do you think the new house should be built by the proprietor or by the tenant?—I think the proprietor should build it.

20937. That is the common way of doing in these islands?—I think so. I think I heard one of the witnesses say something about the prices of cattle. I think he was wrong in what he said; the price of cattle has been very high this year. I think I heard him mention £2 or £3 for young cattle. I buy cattle, and I have been paying from £3 to £5.

20938. What age?—Two to three years old.

20939. They are bringing this year from £3 to £5?—Yes.

20940. Do you mean crofters' cattle?—Yes.

20941. You made use of the word refuse in speaking of Shetland wool?—I did not mean the refuse of the wool, I meant inferior knitted hosiery—murat.

20942. Is that a Norse word?—I cannot tell.

[*Rev. Mr Sutherland.*—Yes, it is; it means a colour between brown and yellow.]

20943. *The Chairman.*—Is this brown wool more peculiar to some farms than to others? Does it depend at all on the soil upon which the sheep are raised?—No.

20944. Would the native breed have it in the same degree?—Yes, it is maybe more common in one place than another, because they may keep a murrait ram.

20945. Is it the pure native breed of cattle for which you pay £3 to £5?—Yes.

20946. Has any cross been introduced in this part of the country?—Yes, we have some crosses here between shorthorn and Shetland, which makes a good cross.

20947. Is that cross used by the small tenants?—No. We kept a shorthorn bull for some time, but they thought the cross breds would not be so hardy, and did not take advantage of it.

20948. But you think it might be extensively taken advantage of by the small tenants?—I think not, because unless the animals are well fed, they don't turn out well.

20949. You stated that you were lessee of your brother's property, is it in that sense that you are a farmer, or have you actually land under your own management and cultivation?—I have land under my own management besides,—here at Hillswick.

20950. And you have also your brother's property, which you sub-let?—Yes.

20951. Is the whole of your brother's property sub-let?—The whole of it is sub-let.

20952. Are there a great many tenants?—I think there will be about fifty-seven crofters; and the average rent is about £5, 11s.

20953. Are most of these crofters fishermen?—Yes, I daresay the most of them are, although I could not give the proportion exactly.

20954. Are these small tenants on your brother's property, in general, under your control and management, just as if you were proprietor?—Just as if I were proprietor, to the end of my lease, which expires, I think, in 1886.

20955. I have no doubt you are aware that a great deal was said of obligations which the fishermen had in reference to traders and curers in past times, as to the thraldom in which they were supposed to be kept formerly; we wish very much to arrive at a strictly correct impression of the relations between the fishermen and merchants at the present moment; I understood you to say that these small tenants on your brother's property are absolutely under no obligation whatever to fish for you or any other person?—None at all. I called them together when I first took the property, and told them they were at perfect liberty to fish for me or any other person; and that if they improved the land and kept the houses in repair, and kept the fences up, the rent would never be raised upon them, and I have never raised it.

20956. Those tenants who are not fishing for you lie under no disability or discouragement whatever?—None in the world.

20957. Do the whole of the fishermen on your brother's property fish for you, or do there happen to be some who don't?—There are surely some who don't. I think there are more fishing to me now than there were a few years ago.

20958. Entirely by their own election?—Entirely by their own free will.

20959. But still you can state there are some who do not fish for you, and who fish for others?—Yes.

20960. Do you keep an account current with those who fish for you?—Yes.

20961. How often is a settlement made?—Always at November.

20962. And when the settlement is made, supposing there is money due to the fishermen, is that always punctually paid to them in cash at the time?—Always.

20963. And there is no obligation expressed or understood to spend that money in your shop?—None in the world.

20964. And they, in fact, spend it where they think proper?—Yes; and I think that is the case with all the curers in the parish, so far as I am acquainted with them at the present time.

20965. Will you candidly state whether you think the relations between curer and fishermen were less easy and less liberal in former times than they are now?—I can only speak from hearsay, and I have been told by the old fishermen that was the case.

20966. You think they lay under obligations then from which they are now free?—Yes, I have been told that by the fishermen themselves.

20967. Then, in your view, are the relations between the fish-curer and fishermen easy and liberal now?—I am happy to say they are.

20968. You don't think that the fishermen at present lie under any discouragement or hardship in consequence of this rather complicated position of the fish-curer, who is, in a manner, their shopkeeper, landlord,

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and curer or purchaser, all at the same time?—No, I think not, because, for all the fish we get to cure, unless in the summer fishing, we pay down ready money. For all the fish that they catch through all the year—except summer—we pay them cash over the counter.

20969. You mean the fish which they catch in winter?—Yes, and spring.

20970. There is no account against the fish kept in your books?—No.

20971. Is that generally the case in Shetland?—I cannot tell, but I find it very much better for ourselves than to run an account for it.

20972. Part of your transactions with the fishermen is in the way of account current and part in the way of cash payments?—Yes, that is so.

20973. Is there anything else you wish to state?—Nothing, except about a pier; if we got any help with a pier here, it would be a great benefit to the whole community, and to the fishermen especially.

20974. What sort of a pier would you desire here?—Probably a pier extending for sixty yards or so would be a great accommodation.

20975. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—A wooden pier?—At present we have erected a sort of temporary wooden pier; but we wish something more substantial than that.

20976. A stone pier?—Yes; cemented.

20977. Is it a work which could be designed and executed on the spot, or would it require an engineer from a distance?—No, I think it could be done in the neighbourhood.

20978. You have plenty of stone and sand?—Yes.

20979. What would be the cost of one that would be sufficient?—I think about £200.

20980. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there no pier here except the wooden thing we have seen?—No, and it is a great trouble to fishermen.

20981. I wonder fishermen and fish-curers never did it for themselves?—Unless the pier was built substantially it would not stand.

20982. *The Chairman.*—But when the cost would not be greater than £200, should that not be done by the proprietors, fish-curers, and merchants, who would receive interest for so small an expenditure?—You see we are doing all we can as tenants, and all we can afford to do; it would come too heavy upon us to do more.

20983. What do they charge a fish-curer wanting a place?—I think the usual charge is £12 a year, besides a royalty of something like 3d. or 4d. a barrel.

20984. Is the water deep enough within one hundred yards?—Deep enough for those big boats, but not for other purposes.

20985. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How far out would the pier have to go to accommodate a steamer and deeper vessels?—Perhaps 200 yards.

20986. Measuring from the high-water mark?—Yes.

20987. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is the place where the wooden pier now is the most suitable place?—It is the most suitable place for the beach; but I fancy the place where you saw the rocks on the right coming in.

20988. *The Chairman.*—What do large boats of forty or fifty feet keel draw?—About six or eight feet when they are loaded.

20989. And you want a pier which would enable them to come alongside at low water?—Yes, that would do.

ROBERT SINCLAIR, Crofter formerly Fisherman, Hamar (77)—examined.

20990. *The Chairman.*—Have you a statement to make?—I have.—'The farm which I hold at present was taken by me in 1855, from the 'late Arthur Gifford, Esq. of Busta. The rent was then £1, 15s. At the 'end of the four years, more than three acres of ground was taken off and 'given to another tenant. The rent of this piece of ground was 10s. The 'rent ought therefore to have been reduced to £1, 5s., but instead of that 'it was raised to £2 a few years afterwards. The farm could only support 'my family for about three months; during the rest of the year we live 'by the produce of the fishing. I have been a fisherman for about fifty 'years. I am now unable to go to the fishing, and would like to get back 'the piece of ground I have mentioned. I have asked the factor to give 'it back, but was told that he had not power to do so. Not only has the 'croft been reduced in size and the rent raised, but the dwelling house 'has for many years been in a dangerous condition and unfit to live in; 'and although I have repeatedly requested that it should be repaired, I 'have never received a satisfactory answer.—ROBERT SINCLAIR, Hammer, 'North Mavin.'

20991. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How long is it since you came into possession of that croft?—Twenty-eight years ago. It was an offset the man took, and the house did not cost anything at all. He built it himself, and put it up in the silliest fashion, and I never could get it repaired since.

20992. Where were you before?—At Delting, in Roe.

20993. What stock are you able to keep?—Two beasts—a two-year-old and a young one.

20994. Any sheep?—Yes, I have a dozen sheep.

20995. And a horse?—No, no horse. It is a very little bit of a spot.

20996. At the time that part of your land was taken from you, did you complain?—Very much, but it did not signify. The late Mr Henry Cheyne was the chief trustee, and it was taken in by the other neighbour at first out of the side of the hill, and a piece given off on the place I occupied by Mr Gifford; and they wanted to have it back, and to build a sufficient dyke to hold off the sheep and cattle. But once they got the ground the dyke was never built, at least so as to be sufficient.

20997. Was the man to whom that piece of your ground was given a new comer?—Yes; he came in a few years before; he is now dead and away.

20998. The man to whom it was given had a croft of his own before this piece was given to him?—Yes, there were two neighbours of them.

20999. Had they less than you?—No, far more than I had, and they had good land.

21000. What rent does that man pay?—Near about £6.

21001. Has he a lease?—No, there is none of them has a lease.

21002. What stock does the other man keep?—Fifty head of sheep or thereabout, seven head of beasts, and two horses.

21003. What kind of ground was that which was taken from you?—The best quality of ground.

21004. Arable land?—There was some cultivation in it; good dry ground; it was better in quality than what was left to me.

21005. And was any reason given by the factor for taking it from you?—No, except that they wanted to enclose it for sheep, but Mr Cheyne did not know. There was no dyke built.

21006. I suppose your land was never sufficient to support your family?—No, never sufficient.

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21007. And now since you have ceased to be a fisherman, it is still less so?—Yes; I wanted to get out when the piece of ground was taken off, but I could not get out. I was told if I would sit still the rents would never be raised; and I began to improve a little, and added about a fourth to what was there; and then they began to raise the rent, and it was very discouraging.

21008. What improvements did you make?—I cultivated a piece and added about a fourth to what was there. But there was no way to cultivate; it was a rocky bottom—rocks and heather.

21009. Have any of your neighbours any complaints to make?—No, I don't think it.

21010. They didn't ask you to come here?—No.

21011. You have just come to state your own case?—I have just come to state my own case; but I don't think any of my neighbours have anything to say.

21012. Who is in the croft that this man had?—James Sandison and Gilbert Sharp.

SAMUEL ANDERSON, Crofter formerly Fisherman, Croagreen, Ollaberry (63)—examined.

Samuel Anderson

21013. *The Chairman.*—What statement have you to make?—About seventy years ago my father enclosed a piece of hill pasture about ten acres called the Croagreen, on the Ollaberry estate. He built a house on it, and cultivated a part of it, and paid a yearly rent of £2, 10s. up to about 1850, when the property was bought by Mr Gideon Anderson. Since then I have built new dykes, enclosing about two acres more of hill pasture. I cultivated more land, and repaired the house. My rent was then raised to £4, 15s. This is what I have to complain of; instead of being paid for improvements, I get to pay for my own outlay.

21014. You say your father took in a piece of land about ten acres in extent, and improved it?—Yes.

21015. Was that all the land he had, or had he more than that?—That was all he had.

21016. Had he any scathold besides?—Yes.

21017. He had that and the scathold?—Yes, the scathold outside.

21018. When you say that he improved this land, do you mean that he put a fence round it?—Yes.

21019. What sort of a fence?—A turf fence.

21020. You say you have enclosed two acres more?—Yes; I was employed by Mr Anderson of Hillswick to set out that part with a new foundation, and I built dykes. I knew nothing about it when I saw them setting it off, and they said I had to build dykes into the turf.

21021. Did you build the dyke into the turf?—No, I built it new the whole way.

21022. What else did you do—did you drain it?—Yes, I have drained it, and cultivated it since.

21023. Did you make stone or tile drains, or only open drains?—Open drains right up and down the park.

21024. Have you the same scathold that your father had?—Yes.

21025. You say your rent has been raised to £4, 15s.?—Yes, that is the standing rent.

21026. Has the proprietor expended any money upon building or improving your house?—Not a halfpenny.

21027. Has the proprietor spent any money at all?—None whatever.

21028. What stock do you keep now?—About seven cows, six head of sheep, and one pony.

21029. How many acres have you under corn?—Four acres.

21030. And you pay £4, 15s. standing rent?—Yes.

21031. Could you put more stock upon the scathold if you liked, or is the number of your stock upon the scathold limited?—No, I might put more upon it, if I could feed them in winter.

21032. What sort of a house have you got?—Not a very good house.

21033. Did your father build it?—Yes.

21034. Did the landlord pay anything for it?—No, my father did the whole of it, except what I have done since he left.

21035. Had you a lease?—There was a lease at first when it was taken, but I could not exactly tell you what kind of lease it was, because it was away before I got the croft.

21036. You have not got a lease?—No.

21037. Do you think your father got the place at a lower rent because he made the improvement?—The rent he paid at first was, I believe, about £2 for five or six years, and then it was 50s.; and then Mr Anderson, Ollaberry, bought it. And before that it was under trustees for four years and at that time we paid 50s. still. But when Mr Anderson bought it the rent was raised to £4, 15s. after we had improved so much of it.

21038. Is your rent higher than the rent your neighbours generally pay?—There are three towns there all of the same age, and paying the same rent that we pay, and having the same arable land inside of the hill property.

21039. You pay the same as your neighbours?—Yes, and we have the same as the arable land.

21040. And they have the same scathold?—Yes.

21041. Has the ground in your township been subdivided, or are there just the same number of holdings that there used to be?—Just the same now as there used to be.

21042. Has any of the scathold ever been taken away?—Yes; a little of it was taken away, but not much.

21043. To whom was it given?—To this same proprietor that the land belongs to.

21044. But you don't complain much of that?—No, not of that; but I complain of my rent being too high.

21045. Are you a fisherman too?—I was a fisherman for forty years, but it is three years since I gave it up.

21046. Is the Ollaberry fishing closed?—No, except for small fish. It is not a station.

21047. Have you got a road?—Yes, I am pretty near the road, but I have very little good of it.

21048. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there any possibility of your making further improvements upon the place?—Yes, if I had any security; but if there were any more improvements it might be taken away.

21049. If you got a lease, with a promise of compensation for any improvements, would you be likely to make more improvements?—Yes.

21050. Have you ever asked the landlord to give you a lease?—No, I have never asked them; but they said they would give a lease for five or seven years.

21051. Yours is on the Busta property?—No, it is all on Ollaberry.

21052. Of which Mr John Anderson has the management?—Yes.

21053. How long has he a lease of it himself?—I do not know.

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21054. He is not able to give a lease, because he has not a lease beyond 1886 himself?—No.

21055. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were any of your neighbours treated in the same way as yourself?—Yes.

21056. Men who had made improvements and whose rents were raised?—Yes, they were all raised.

21057. All over the place?—Yes, all over the place.

21058. The want of a lease or some permanency in your holdings prevents you from improving further?—Yes.

21059. Was there any cause given why your rent was raised?—No, I know of none.

21060. Had you any idea in your own mind why it was done?—No, only because there were some improvements made upon it; that there were more improvements than had been done in my father's time.

21061. Is your father living?—No.

21062. Was this rise of rent put on in your father's time?—In my time.

21063. How long had you the place before the rise was put upon you?—Not long; about half a dozen years.

21064. How long after Mr Anderson became proprietor was it before it was done?—About half a dozen years.

21065. Which Mr Anderson was it that raised the rent; was it the gentleman who is now in the church?—It was about the time the lease came.

21066. Where does the proprietor live?—Ollaberry.

21067. What does he do?—He is doing very little.

21068. Is he an independent gentleman?—Yes.

21069. *The Chairman (to Mr Anderson).*—We understood you, Mr Anderson, to say that you had declared the rent would not be raised?—That is so, and the rent has never been raised since I got the lease.

21070. Then this witness's rent was raised before you got the lease?—Yes, his rent is just the same as when I got the lease.

21071. Have you any remark or explanation to make upon what he has stated; can you explain why, if it be the case, the rent was nearly doubled upon the land improved by himself?—It must have been improved by his father, and not by himself.

21072. But you have no statement to make?—No.

21073. It has not been raised since you became lessee?—No.

GEORGE SINCLAIR, Fish-Curer and Merchant, Ollaberry (42)—examined.

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21074. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been engaged in this trade?—Nearly nine years.

21075. And have you been the whole of that time at Ollaberry?—Yes, I took up business about that time.

21076. Do you do business as a general merchant as well as fish-curer?—Yes.

21077. Not only trading with fishermen, but with anybody?—Everybody who will give me custom.

21078. Do you find that your business has extended?—Very much.

21079. And you have greater sales than you had nine years ago?—Generally I have; the general turnover is much more.

21080. And do you find that the people pay equally well? Are they equally able to pay their debts?—It depends very much on the season; I

mean on what they earn. In a prosperous year like last year, or any year that is prosperous in crops or fishing, they pay well; but, as a rule, I don't allow debts to get into my books.

21081. You don't allow long credits to accumulate?—No.

21082. But my object is to ascertain whether you have any knowledge that the condition and resources of the people are improving?—I think, so as far as our district is concerned, they are very much improved—very much better off than they were a few years ago.

21083. Do they buy commodities of a more expensive kind?—I do not mean that; although I daresay their tastes advance with the advancing times. We don't encourage the sale of useless or showy, flimsy articles; but, as a rule, I think their tastes are improving that way.

21084. Do you find that they buy a superior description of food? Do they buy more flour than they did?—Much about the same, I think. I daresay I could sell a good deal more baker's bread if I would; but I don't want to do that, I think it would encourage laziness.

21085. You think it is advantageous for people to bake their own bread?—I do.

21086. Do they use much wheaten flour for scones, or do they still buy oat and barley meal?—The most of the grain in this parish is oats; and to counterbalance that, they buy fully more wheaten flour than oatmeal. But we give them their choice.

21087. From what you say, you don't only sell what you can sell, but what you think you ought to sell?—I think the people should not be left always to themselves in that respect. I think if temptation be put in their way, they may be induced to buy what they don't require. We are all exposed that way, perhaps.

21088. Do you sell any wool or worsted for the purpose of weaving at home for domestic use?—Yes, I buy Shetland wools and sometimes other wools, and I sell the Shetland wool which the women knit up.

21089. When you sell wool to the women for knitting which is not Shetland wool, what description of foreign wool do you sell them?—I don't sell any kind of cross. In speaking of other wools than that and Shetland, I don't mean foreign wools, but wool of Cheviot crossed with Shetland sheep.

21090. We were told by another witness that the people don't purchase blackfaced or Cheviot wools for purposes of knitting—that they were not sufficiently fine; I want to know if there is any kind of foreign or colonial wool sold for the purposes of the knitting trade?—It is our interest always to put the finest wools into hands for knitting the underclothing. I have a trade similar to Mr Anderson in ladies' and gentlemens' underclothing and shawls, and it is to our interest to put soft wool into the knitter's hands. I also do a small trade in home spuns.

21091. What sort of wool do you sell as soft wool apart from the pure Shetland?—There is really no soft and pure so valuable as the Shetland.

21092. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said you had a small trade in Shetland home-spun clothing; what wools do you put into that?—Sometimes crossed Cheviots and Shetland blended together.

21093. Is there much demand for the clothing?—No, not so much as there used to be; but there is a fair demand for it yet.

21094. The women, of course, make something of it by spinning the wool?—Yes, I may say they make by spinning the wool more than the merchant does. They get the wool at a certain price, and the rougher kind of wool is much cheaper; it is 2d. to 4d. per lb. cheaper.

21095. What price do you sell the coarser wool at?—14d. to 1s. per lb.

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21096. Blackfaced?—Cheviots crossed with Shetland.

21097. At what price do you sell the Shetland wool to them?—About 20d. per lb. I buy the best for about 1s. 6d. and 1s. 5d., and retail it again at 1s. 8d.

21098. Have you any idea of what a woman, depending upon her own labour, can make in the course of a year?—I think I do, because there have been two or three instances of it around our place.

21099. Would you mention them?—I know a case of two girls who support a grandmother and one child. They have been able to live entirely by their handicraft, and live well too, in a room. They support themselves, their grandmother, and a little boy. There are some articles that pay them better than others, but I should say that women who wrought anxiously would make from 1s. to 1s. 4d. a day.

21100. Is that in the finer goods, or in the coarser kinds?—In the class of goods we deal in here.

21101. Would a woman make that in home-spun clothing?—I don't think she would. There are certain women who have finer hands than others, and who can do better knitting; people who do home-spun cannot do the finer work.

21102. Fine spun fetches higher prices to the worker?—Yes.

21103. Had you any statement to make yourself?—I did not come here intending to make any statement; I have no complaint to make.

21104. Have the people beside you any complaint to make?—I am not aware of any. I think, generally speaking, the people in North Mavin are better off than those of any other parish I know of in Shetland.

21105. The complaints that have been made to us to-day have been principally about high rents, do you hear any complaints about that?—I cannot say I hear many. It is mentioned, now and again, in poor years or when their earnings are not much, and they have hard times, and have to pay their rents; but in prosperous years they don't feel it.

21106. In cases brought under your notice of complaints of this sort, have you had cause to think they were reasonable?—I think I have not heard any complaint at all. There is, however, one thing I could wish to state, and that is with regard to the Shetland crofters generally, and those of this parish particularly, if the crofters had continuous use of the scathold or commonty, as they are allowed here, and if they continue to get the privileges which they have now, with leases, and compensation for outlay, I think that is about all they require. As it is, there are large bounds of commonty in this parish, because the population is scattered along the sea-shore. I don't know if any person could really tell the number of square miles of commonty here, and any person can keep as much stock as they like and can attend to. The number is restricted very much according to what they can attend to in winter; they drop off in winter if they cannot attend to them—I mean with regard to sheep or ponies,—and of course an active farmer will have more than a man who is not active.

21107. *Mr Cameron.*—What do you mean by continuous occupation of the scathold?—Well, in some parishes the scathold have been withdrawn, —in most of the parishes indeed; and the proprietors have put palings round them.

21108. You mean restoration of scathold?—Restoration to those from whom it has been taken. We hold—though we may be wrong—that the peasantry in Shetland had a right to the scathold, and that the landlord have no right to take it away.

21109. I gather from your remark, that it would be better, instead of having a common use of scathold, that each tenant should be fixed to a

certain number?—Much better, it would equalise the ownership of the general prosperity.

21110. So that one crofter should not be able to complain of any unfairness in the distribution of the common hill grazing?—Quite so, no crofter can complain of his being excluded; if he is excluded it is want of being able to place stock on the commonty.

21111. But you think it would be more desirable that each crofter should have a right to place so many, and that one should not be allowed to place twenty and another not able to have any at all?—That is my opinion.

21112. Was last year a bad season for crofters in the way of crops?—The crops were only fair, but the fishing was very good, and I think last year was a good season in this parish.

21113. There was no failure of crops as there was in Scotland—no special failure?—No special failure; the potatoes were almost a failure.

21114. Are the potatoes an important crop in this country?—Very important on account of the shore fish always to be caught;—fish can be caught all the year round; and the potatoes are an important crop, because the fish and potatoes make an excellent article of food.

21115. Do the potatoes grow well in Shetland?—Very well, when there are sunny seasons.

21116. Do the crofters renew the seed of their potatoes often?—They are not so thrifty that way as they should be; but the most intelligent portion of the population do, and the merchants, so far as I know, are very open to give them help that way.

21117. Have you observed that where they employ fresh seed the potato crop of the following year is better than it was?—It always is so in my own little farm. I change the seed and bring it in fresh, and I find the crops better in potatoes and also in oats.

21118. How long does it take a Shetland woman to make one of the finest kinds of Shetland shawl?—I cannot speak definitely about that. It is not the lace shawls we do here, it is wraps and warm underclothing.

21119. In what part of Shetland do they make the best of these shawls?—Unst and Lerwick.

21120. Do you know whether the demand for these fine goods is falling off or keeping as it was?—It goes up and down according to supply and demand, I think there is still very good sale for the finest class of shawls.

21121. Do you think more money is actually earned by making the class of goods you speak of in this district, or by the finer class of goods such as shawls?—I cannot speak definitely with regard to the fine shawls, but so far as it has come under by observation, I think that it pays the knitters better to make the class of goods of which I spoke as being made here, because I have noticed particularly that women can earn what I have stated when they work regularly at it.

21122. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—According to what has been done in other places the scathold might be taken away from this parish, and you don't want that?—No, we don't want that.

21123. Would you go a little further and say the scathold which was taken away in other parishes should be restored to the small tenants?—Yes, I would; because there are one or two parishes, where I can say with assurance, they have lost their scathold and the crofters are in far worse circumstances.

21124. You said a little ago, that the people in this place were much better off than in other parishes?—Yes, generally.

21125. And do you attribute that, to some extent, to their full

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possession of the scathold ground?—I do, and also to the open competition amongst the merchants, giving them every facility, and the highest prices possible.

21126. With regard to the native wool, you say you buy it from 1s. 5d. to 1s. 6d., and sell it at 1s. 8d.?—Yes.

21127. What class of people are your purchasers of the wool?—The women who knit.

21128. Chiefly those who knit?—Yes.

21129. Not wholesale buyers?—Oh no.

21130. Do these people pay you down cash?—No.

21131. What credit do you give them?—They pay for it with the goods they knit.

21132. You take the goods from them?—Yes.

21133. Is there any difference in the class of native wool; is not what is called black or dark more vaulable than white?—The brown and murriat of various shades, and the gray of various shades—natural gray, grown on the sheep—are the most valuable.

21134. What would you charge for that?—Just the same, 1s. 8d. is only the picked stuff we sell to the women to knit with.

21135. I suppose there are no large sheep farmers in this parish?—No; there are two or three enclosed places where there are a few black-faced and Cheviot sheep.

21136. Are there any Cheviots at all?—There is a small enclosure west in Esha Ness where there are a few; and there is a sheep farm at Tingwall, but the stock there are principally blackfaced.

21137. But the system of large sheep farming does not prevail to any extent in the parish?—No, it does not.

21138. Is your parish a very large one?—It is about twenty-four miles long by twelve wide, taking it at the extremities.

21139. Are you the person referred to by the previous witness as having taken a lease of Ollaberry?—Yes, of the business premises, and a small farm, and so on.

21140. What rent do you pay?—I pay about £26, I think, of rent for the farm, and I pay so much for the business premises.

21141. In your lease are there any conditions of a stringent or arbitrary character imposed upon you?—No.

21142. When you took your lease had you any difficulty in accepting the conditions laid upon you?—They were not so just, perhaps, or so liberal as I would have liked, but that is more a question of pounds, shillings, and pence. I must say that I think the rent dear; but I was no way bound to take it, it was quite optional.

21143. You mentioned two girls who supported not only themselves, but some relative by their industry, to what class in life do these girls belong?—To the crofter class. I just instanced them, but there are more of the same class. There is a young woman who supports her mother in the same way; and there are various other cases I could name.

21144. And all belonging to the crofter class?—Yes.

21145. I presume the women in your parish are very industrious?—They are very industrious; I think they do their part in the way of earning too. The greatest drawbacks is that there is very little employment for the men unless during three months of the summer, and only occasional employment then. There are four months in the year when they have not much work to do.

21146. How do you suggest that should be remedied—what could be got for them?—Nothing better than encouragement to work on their own crofts.

21147. Give them something to do on their crofts?—A great many of their crofts are large enough, but the proprietors might give them something to encourage them to work upon them. There is very litle work done on the crofts just now.

21148. Do you attribute that non-improvement to some extent or altogether to the want of leases or encouragement?—That is what they say. They don't care about working to another; hut I cannot recall an instance where a man has spent a good deal of labour on his croft, and been set adrift.

21149. You know the case of the man who has just preceded you—what his father did?—I know the man, but I do not know what he did to his croft.

21150. But from your observation, and knowledge of the men generally of this parish, do you think if they did get what they want,—some security that they would not be dispossessed or got compensation for any improvements—that they would work during their idle time?—I am sure they would. I have expended about £400, simply because I had a lease; if I had not had a lease I could not have done that, and I would not. But I must say it has been with a sort of selfish end, because it was with a view to help forward my own business while it was improving the land, and I should think they would be of the same way of thinking.

21151. Is there any difficulty in persons like you of being able to purchase a small property where you could carry on your own business?—That is the great difficulty. I don't believe I could get an inch of ground to purchase where I should like to plant my business round the whole of Shetland. There may be spots to he got, hut not what would suit a business man, or any, very few.

21152. Do you mean that they are really not in the market, or that exorbitant terms are asked?—They are not in the market at all.

21153. Does that remark apply pretty generally to the whole of Shetland?—I think it applies to the whole coast.

21154. And that has a tendency to stifle trade?—It does stifle enterprise, and retard progress very much.

21155. Do you think that if the land were more free and open than it is, that with the improvement in the fishing during the past few years, great progress might be made in Shetland?—Very great indeed. There are facilities for leasing the fishing stations, but there is a good deal of restriction about them. However, a great many of them have been taken up.

21156. Notwithstanding these disadvantages?—Yes.

21157. But they are only leased under restrictions?—Leased under restriction.

21158. *The Chairman.*—Can you imagine that, if encouragement were given to small tenants, any would be found desirous to purchase the property of their holdings with the consent of the proprietors?—There might in some of the parishes; but I don't think there would be much of that here in the case of the crofters.

21159. Did you ever hear any desire or aspiration expressed on the part of the crofting class to become proprietors in fee simple?—I cannot say I ever did; not to such an extent as to strike me that it was a desire on their part.

21160. When you speak of the fine underclothing which is produced here, do you refer to fine hand-knitted uuderclothing?—I do.

21161. There has been no introduction of machinery whatever?—No, not in underclothing; there is no power in the islands.

21162. There is no water power?—No, nor steam power.

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21163. Do you think that the quality of the underclothing produced by the people here, by the process of hand-knitting, is decidedly superior to machine work of the same sort?—Intrinsically it is not so valuable; but there is a superiority about it, that takes the taste of the better classes, and so the trade moves on.

21164. It is a fancy preference?—Yes, we seek to place those goods in the hands of the people who can buy them as a luxury.

21165. Is there plenty of raw material, or, if you had more could you develope the manufacture?—The hosiery is a very limited trade. I think it has been extended as far as it can be made profitable. It degenerates when it becomes too much; in other words, when women get set on to work at it who cannot do it, so as to produce more goods, we find it does not do so well.

21166. Has this industry, carried on in the cottages, any bad effect upon the health of the women?—I don't think so.

21167. They do a great deal out of doors?—Yes, they have to get out door work in some shape or form. They have fuel to cure and carry, and they have all got some farm work to do, more or less, and when their husbands are away at a distance fishing they have to visit them.

21168. Did you ever see the distaff used, or always the wheel?—It is the spinning wheel which is used.

21169. You never saw a distaff?—No.

21170. Do you know whether that was used in former times?—I don't know the machine by that term.

21171. A stick with wool at the top of it and twisted by the hand?—I think I have seen my grandfather spinning tethers out of horse hair that way. But it is a very rough sort of yarn that should be spun that way.

21172. You never saw yarn spun that way?—No, not wool.

21173. *Professor Mackinnon.*—When you said that you wished to see the scathold restored to the people, you stated that the people here believed they had the right to that scathold, and that the proprietors were not entitled to keep it from them?—That is the general belief among the crofters and tenantry.

21174. Upon what is that belief founded?—I daresay it is founded on this—that some of the proprietors would have a difficulty in proving their titles to all the ground they assume they possess, and another reason is that from time immemorial the people have had the use of it, and it has been an understood thing that they were to have the scathold with the croft, because the crofts could not keep their families without the scathold.

21175. Do they consider they have a firmer right to this scathold than to the arable portion of the land?—Yes, they do, it appears that its name would imply that—a commonty for the common people.

21176. When rent is charged for a croft, is it considered that so much is paid for the arable land, and so much for the commonty, or is it that so much is paid for arable ground, and, as a matter of right, so much commonty goes along with it?—It lies between the proprietor and tenant to properly define that. Say a small croft is vacant, and that there are two or three applications for it, the factor naturally chooses the man who, he thinks, will suit him best. Rent was fixed very much according to the locality—that is its nearness to good scathold—and so, looking at it that way, it would appear that the whole pasture was taken into account in fixing the rent. But generally speaking, the rent is fixed according to the supposed value of the arable land in the holding.

21177. And when one gets a piece of arable ground he is entitled to a bit of commonty along with it?—Yes.

21178. Without any separate rent?—Yes, it is the accepted understanding always.

21179. And that right is not limited to the amount of stock the croft will winter?—Yes; and sometimes the scathold is too heavily stocked, and nature rights itself by clearing them off.

21180. Suppose the head of a family to have no arable land at all, does he believe he has any right, in any shape or form, to a portion of this Scathold?—No, I don't think so—that is a man without a croft—no, I don't believe that. But at the same time he is not prevented from keeping stock—on the commonty, either by the tenants or by the proprietor.

21181. In the belief of the people it would seem that their right to a portion of the commonty is dependent upon their having a croft?—Quite so, so far as I understand.

21182. But as a matter of actual fact, a person who has no croft is not prevented from having sheep upon the commonty?—He is not.

21183. I suppose there are not many cases of people without crofts?—Very few.

21184. Are there cases of some people without crofts having stock upon this commonty?—A few solitary cases.

21185. Chiefly of sheep?—Chiefly a few solitary sheep—a few solitary cases—but not to such an extent as to be taken notice of.

21186. You stated that when you sold wool to the country people they paid you back in goods. I suppose they could pay in money if they wished?—I would prefer that, but they cannot.

21187-88. You attributed the improved condition of the people partly to successful years, and partly to the open competition in trade. I suppose, practically, the trade is now quite all over the place?—Yes.

21189. And a fair share of the improved condition of the people is to be attributed to that?—Yes, a fair share is certainly due to the merchants and open trade.

21190. There is more ready money among the people, so that they can go to any merchant they choose?—Yes, generally speaking, they can go, and do go, to any merchant with whom they can make the best bargain or whom they prefer.

21191. Last year was a good year, and fully better than the average?—It was.

21192. At settling time last year had a fair number of those who fished for you a balance upon their side?—Yes, last year, except in one case, they all had money to get. One of my boat's crews, the little open boats, which are now despised—carried away within a few shillings of £100 of cash after paying all expenses. But that was an exceptionally prosperous fishing. Nevertheless, all the others had money to get.

21193. They got nearly £100 at settling time after all the accounts of the season were equalised?—Yes, the crew which had the best fishing.

21194. This was white fishing?—Just for the three months in summer of ling fishing.

21195. The previous witness stated that they paid ready money for the fishing received, except during these three months; is that the common practice?—Yes, it is.

21196. What kind of fish is got during the winter and in the early spring months, when the people fish nearer the shore?—Shore fish,—cod and ling, and tusk.

21197. The same as during summer but less of it?—Yes; they go to the deep sea fishing in summer, and lie at out-stations, and we take the fish from them and cure them at out-stations.

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21198. How do you use the fish you pay ready money for?—We salt them down, and dry them in spring; we take our chance of them. We would rather there was a fixed price all the year round, but the fishermen won't do that. For instance, the price of ling in spring from the men in large boats is, I think, about 8s. a cwt., and I would gladly pay that price to my men just now if they would take it. But I have no doubt they will get 9s. or more when they settle.

21199. Per cwt.?—Yes. It is a feeling of confidence which exists between the men and the curer.

21200. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The price is fixed at the end of the season according to the rate at which you can sell the fish—if you get a high price you give them a high price?—Yes. It takes so much wet fish to make a ton of dried fish, and the prices are calculated that way, and the expenses of curing being taken off, the men get much about what is realised. Sometimes a merchant has a small commission, and sometimes he gets very little. But the men are not bound to deal, so far as I know, with any curer, even during the summer months. For instance last season I had three open boats fishing at Vidlon, and I sent out a good many stores, but it seems they required more, and they purchased things from other people, and I paid about £30 of cash to these men to clear them out with other places, so that they might be quits with everybody for the summer's work.

21201. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you had leased a small farm?—Yes; it was leased along with the premises.

21202. Of what area is the farm?—I can only speak at a guess; it has never been measured by me. I should think the arable land is about sixteen acres, perhaps; and then, there is pasture ground besides, perhaps about fourteen or sixteen acres more.

21203. You took this lease for your own personal convenience, and not for the sake of making sub-tenancies?—For my own convenience, and keeping up a supply of milk and vegetables, and also a pony for riding or driving.

21204. Have you established anything like a vegetable garden or kitchen garden in which you could raise better vegetables?—No, we can grow very good early cabbages and turnips, but it is not a growing district. But I am a working sort of man, and cannot afford to spend time in fancy work. My neighbour—our minister—grows very good strawberries in his garden.

21205. And can you grow good carrots, turnips, and pease, and other vegetables?—Yes, all the ordinary vegetables used.

21206. Do the proprietors ever make new arable ground out of the scathold and the crofts in that way?—No, the proprietor don't do it; but sometimes men who have some spirit and friends attempt to do it. Suppose a young man marries and don't wish to leave the country, if he has a good will and good courage he may get a patch of ground and hill pasture, and by and by work it into a very good croft; but it is his own labour that does it, the proprietors don't seek to extend the arable ground.

21207. But what I want to arrive at is this,—is there a good deal of ground in the scathold which is susceptible of improvement as arable ground; or is the good arable ground all already taken up in that way?—In places there is a good deal of hill or common pasture that could be made good growing land by drainage and cultivation.

21208. Supposing that the proprietor wishes to promote the extension of the arable ground on the scathold, has he the right to do that without the consent of those who have the claim to the commonty—can he do it

of his own will, or must he have the permission of the shareholders. There is no accepted claim from the neighbouring proprietors; anything done in that way it is expected will be looked into at the common division of the whole scathold, which is always held in abeyance, as far as this parish is concerned.

21209. But it is not common to form new crofts upon the scathold?—No.

21210. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—May anybody settle upon the scathold and take in land?—No.

21211. What do you call outset?—That is what Lord Napier has been asking about, whether a man can get a piece of commonty marked out for him, and be allowed to settle down on it, and make it into a farm.

21212. Who gives him the privilege?—For instance, if a man wants an outset in Ollaberry, and Mr Anderson of Hillswick chooses to give it him he may do so.

21213. Out of the scathold?—Yes, and the same way with Busta, if it is near the township.

Rev. JAMES FRASER, Minister of the Congregational Church, Sulem (70)—examined.

21214. *The Chairman.*—Is your communion a very numerous one in these islands?—Not very numerous.

21215. From what date has it existed?—I am not able to fix the precise date. I think it is just about as old as the century.

21216. Under whose influence was it established?—Under the influence of the late brothers, Robert and James Haldane.

21217. And since their death it has supported itself?—Yes.

21218. Do you stand in immediate connection with the English congregations in the same communion?—Not in immediate connection, but pretty close.

21219. Is the Scotch Congregationalist Church a separate organisation?—Scarcely. They are very nearly amalgamated, but there are some slight differences.

21220. Do you receive any pecuniary assistance or encouragement from your English co-religionists?—Not at all.

21221. They don't do anything for the Northern churches?—There may be individual cases of assistance in building churches, but there is nothing done systematically.

21222. You don't depend upon your richer brethren in London at all?—No, certainly not.

21223. How long have you been settled here?—Since 1847.

21224. And in what class of people does your strength lie—are your adherents among the crofting population and fishermen?—Yes.

21225. The lower class—the labouring people?—Yes.

21226. Since you have been here do you think the condition of the people has been improving physically and morally?—Yes, I think it has. The improvement is slow, but I think it is visible.

21227. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you a native of this island?—Yes.

21228. Then, you are well acquainted with the inhabitants and their customs?—Yes, I think so.

21229. And do you think, on the whole, their living is as good now as it was before or better?—I think it is better on the whole.

21230. Is there any difference in their moral conduct, for which I

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think they have been always honourably distinguished?—I think they have improved considerably in morals since I can remember.

21231. Intemperance has never been one of their vices?—No, not as a rule. There have been some cases in the island, but it is not general.

21232. There are no public houses in this parish?—No.

21233. Has that always been the case?—Well, I think it has always been much the same as it is.

21234. Is that ever felt to be a grievance?—Not at all.

21235. You mean by natives?—I don't think it is felt to be a grievance.

21236. Don't strangers find it a grievance?—I don't know what they feel.

21237. It has never been the custom here so much as in the Hebrides, for young men to go south to work in the harvest?—No, the young men here mainly go to sea.

21238. And the young women don't go away?—They go south and take service.

21239. Have they been always in the habit of doing so to any great extent?—No, only lately. There were very few going south when I remember first; but they go very largely now.

21240. Has that any influence for good or evil on their character?—I could not say. Some of the men that go to sea improve their condition very much, and a number of them become masters, mates, and officers.

21241. But as regards the young men in particular?—I am not so well acquainted with the circumstances of the young men in regard to that. I don't think there is a great deal of improvement.

21242. Has there been any great progress in education within your recollection here?—There has been.

21243. How many schools were there when you came here?—There was the Parochial school, and others were got up by private individuals, or by public subscriptions. I don't remember that there was any other fixed school, but that of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge at Esha Ness.

21244. There were a number of places far removed from school?—Yes, a number.

21245. And now there is a sufficient number of schools within reach of all children fit to go?—Yes, but some have a considerable distance to go still.

21246. Have any to go more than three miles?—I think there are some that have fully three miles to go; and the difficulty is increased by the want of roads, and the existence of burns over which there are no bridges. And in the winter time the children are not able to go through the marshy ground without wetting their feet and being exposed to danger by afterwards sitting in school during the day. That has a considerable effect in lessening the attendance at school.

21247. The people of these islands are naturally of a religious disposition?—Yes, they are naturally morally disposed.

21248. Do you find in that respect there is any falling off from their old feelings?—I cannot say I do.

21249. Do they attend ordinances as well as they used to do?—Yes, they do; there may be individual cases of falling off and neglect, but the people generally attend.

21250. Do you know of anything in the circumstances of the people making it necessary for this Commission to come here?—I think it is possible some advantage may be reaped by the people from this Commission—at least I hope so.

21251. Do you think there are any serious matters of complaint which it would be well that the Government and the public should know of?—The principal matters of complaint have been referred to before—the system that prevails beteen landlord and tenant—the tenant at will system—the tenant may be turned off on forty days' warning. Then there is no compensation for improvement; and that having existed from time immemorial has almost blotted out the disposition to improve, and consequently improvement has almost stopped. There are a great many improvements which might be carried out if there were fixity of tenure and compensation for improvements. That grievance, I think, is universally felt throughout the Shetland Islands. The existing state of matters is not owing to the present proprietors or factors; it has always been the same. At every reference I make to improvement, I am met by this, that they have no security and no prospect of compensation; and the result is that the people spend many days in idleness when they might be improving their small crofts and making them better for themselves and the people.

21252. *Mr Cameron.*—Would the people be satisfied with compensation without security, if they got it?—I think they would do a great deal which they don't do now.

21253. Are you aware that there is a bill before Parliament providing for compensation for improvement?—I am aware of that.

21254. What number of years' lease do you think the people would be satisfied with?—I think a lease for nineteen or twenty-one years.

21255. Are the conditions in regard to houses satisfactory between landlord and tenant just now?—That would be settled according to the other conditions of the lease.

21256. Who repairs the people's houses now—landlord or tenant?—Sometimes the one and sometimes the other; generally the landlord if it is any great repair.

21257. That is the custom of the country?—Yes, generally.

21258. I suppose there have not been many evictions on a large scale in these islands?—To some extent, but not upon a large scale.

21259. Have there been any in this parish at all?—No, not what may be properly called evictions; none since I came to the parish.

21260. You have heard of none amongst the people with whom you have been coming into contact?—No. There have been some proprietors laying down grazing parks, but, generally speaking, some provision has been made for the tenants.

21261. Supposing leases were granted to the crofters would you make any reduction for loss of common pasture or scathold?—I would very much like if there was a right understanding about that; at present there is no proper understanding about it. The people have always had the right to the pasture here, and that has not been interfered with; but in other parishes it has been taken from the people, and there is still an understanding that they have a right to it, and that creates a great deal of heart-burning and dissatisfaction, and makes the conditon of the people worse than it would otherwise be.

21262. But with regard to these parishes where the scathold has not been taken away, and where the conditions under which the cattle, ponies, and sheep are grazed are satisfactory?—There have been some questions about that; but the conditions are tolerably satisfactory. One thing, however, is that the people do not know how long the existing state of things may last, and no doubt a better arrangement or distribution might be made. There have been several questions put about the dissatisfaction of some of the tenants with regard to others having stock on the hill pasture, and not

SHETLAND. allowing them the same chance, and some better arrangement about that should be made.

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21263. Have you any suggestion to make which you think would meet with the approval of the people?—I have not, because, although I have conversed with the people about it they have never suggested anything that might be an improvement; but I should think—and I have suggested to the factor himself—that if so many sheep were allowed the tenant for each £ of rent, the tenants who have more might be taxed for their over stock.

21264. What do you mean by taxed?—That they should pay so much for the sheep. In some places in Shetland the people pay as much as a shilling per head.

21265. By a tax you mean something added to the rent?—That so much should be paid for every sheep—added to the rent could that arrangement be simply and easily carried out?—It might be for ought I know.

21266. You are aware that in Scotland the practice on the crofting farms is to have a certain stock called the summing, which every crofter is entitled to, put upon the common pasture?—I think something of that kind would be judicious and right. At the present time there is a misunderstanding on the subject. It seems to stand in this way: the tenant is very apt to look at it from the custom which has existed from time immemorial. When, for instance, you see advertisements of land to be sold, it is spoken of as so many acres or merks of arable land with the right of so much hill pasture. The hill pasture is not properly bought, but it enhances the value of the arable land, and from time immemorial the tenant has held the arable land and so much hill pasture;—it may be mentioned or it may be not. It was not paid for *per se*, but it was held under scathold, and was held to enhance the value of the arable land. Now, in many cases, it is taken from the tenants, and they are told they are to pay for nothing but what is within the arable land. They don't believe that, and hence the heart-burning and dissatisfaction which prevail. That does not exist here, but nobody knows how soon a change may take place.

21267. Have you heard that a crofter with a large scathold has a fear of selling a beast or sheep to any neighbour?—I have heard that.

21268. Do you know why it is so?—I don't know. I believe in some places it is something like a superstitious fear that it will take away the luck; but I am not aware of that existing in my own neighbourhood, nor do I think it exists in this parish. I think any person here would sell to any one else, whether a neighbour or not.

21269. If he got a good price he would put the luck on one side?—I have no doubt of it. But I have known places in Shetland where the people would not do that. I think, however, that superstition is passing away mostly everywhere.

21270. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When a man has a large stock is he not jealous of his neighbours?—That, I believe, arises from the depravity of human nature.

21271. The grazing on the scathold is limited, and if everybody held a big stock he would not fare so well?—No, certainly not.

21272. *The Chairman.*—Suppose that in the township the scathold has been nearly fully occupied by two or three of the richer or more fortunate tenants, and that there are two or three poorer who have got none or only a few animals between them, and suppose these poor tenants become a little better off and are able to put more stock, and wish to have their fair share upon the ground, have they any means of reducing the stock of

their richer neighbours, and of getting their own stock put on the scathold?—No, not so far as I know.

21273. Such a case must surely have arisen; what do they do?—They do nothing, so far as I am aware. That is a thing which I think the proprietor should put right.

21274. They don't appeal to the proprietor about it?—They may speak about it, but there is very seldom any interference upon his part.

21275. Is there any rumour of any intention upon the part of the factor to form a farm out of the scathold?—No, I don't think there is.

21276. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—There are several proprietors in this parish?—Yes.

21277. And I suppose what you state is something like this—that although the state of the crofters at present is fairly good compared with other parts of Shetland, yet their future is very doubtful?—That is what I mean. And, therefore, their state is not satisfactory. It is not satisfactory.

21278. And improvements are, to a great extent, at a stand still?—At a complete stand still.

21279. You said that, some time ago, there were not so many young women going to service in the south as now?—Yes.

21280. What is the reason for that; is it because the people are poorer and the young people are obliged to leave their homes?—I don't think so; I can hardly tell the reason.

21281. But you would not put it upon the score that their families at home are poorer than they used to be?—No, I rather put it upon this, that they are anxious to improve their condition—more anxious than they were perhaps fifty years ago.

21282. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you know of any case of the hill being overstocked?—I do not think it is overstocked. They generally find the remedy for overstocked pasture in a severe winter.

21283. That is, the stock will be lost?—Yes.

21284. The winter comes and reduces the stock to very satisfactory dimensions?—Yes.

21285. But it is just as hard upon the one who has few as upon the one who has many?—Yes, that is the worst of it.

21286. So that there is no limit or equality of stock in respect of the capacity of the croft for wintering stock?—Yes, there is inequality, and there always must be for various reasons.

21287. And you would approve of the practice we have in Scotland to prevent that—that every man should have a right to so much either in proportion to his arable land; or in proportion to his rent—a definite fixed thing?—Yes, I should like some definite fixed thing.

21288. And while adding an additional rent for additional stock would you make a reduction for a reduced stock?—I think so.

21289. The one would carry the other?—I don't know that the additional rent would be very acceptable. I think their rent is generally as high as it should be.

21290. The practice in Scotland very often is, that when one has over stock he pays to his neighbour who has a reduced stock?—Matters are very different indeed from what I remember in that respect.

21291. In what respect?—There is a greater equality now than there used to be forty or fifty years ago.

21292. So that matters are improving as it is?—Yes, as regards equality and stock on the pasture.

21293. *The Chairman.*—I think you said that if a man kept more than his legitimate share he ought to pay a small rent for the number of sheep

SHETLAND. to the landlord—would it not be more equitable that he should pay to his neighbour who has a deficient stock?—Far more; but the difficulty would be to get that settled.

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21294. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The people should see to it that the one who has too much should pay to the one who has deficient stock?—Yes.

21295. But you think the thing is more or less improving itself now?—Yes, it is very largely.

JOHN MACPHERSON, Farmer, Islesburgh (32)—examined.

John Macpherson.

21296. *Mr Cameron.*—What part of the parish is your farm situated in?—At the southern extremity.

21297. Who is your landlord?—My farm is on the Busta Estate.

21298. Do you come here to represent any one but yourself?—No.

21299. How do you come to be here?—I have been asked to give evidence since I came into the meeting.

21300. What is the size of your farm?—I think I have about twenty acres under cultivation.

21301. And how much hill pasture?—I cannot say exactly. I have a lease.

21302. To how many acres does the hill pasture extend—is it scathold right?—No.

21303. How many acres are there?—From 500 to 600.

21304. What class of stock do you keep?—Blackfaced and Cheviot in sheep.

21305. How do you manage to keep them separate?—I never attempt to keep them separate.

21306. Is it a ewe stock?—Partly.

21307. Is the ewe stock blackfaced?—Partly blackfaced and partly Cheviot.

21308. Do you let the ewes run together?—Yes, unless I think proper to keep them separate for some purpose which I think might be of advantage.

21309. What do you do with the lambs—are they grazed?—Some of them; but I generally sellthem to some person or ship them on my own account to the southern market.

21310. Which kind do you find thrives best?—That is sometimes a matter of opinion; one man might have one opinion, and another a different opinion; but both kinds, I think thrive in a fair way in Shetland.

21311. Do you keep any cows?—Yes.

21312. What kind?—Southern crossed with Shetland.

21313. Do you find that answers?—Yes.

21314. Do you house them in winter?—Yes.

21315. Would it answer if you did not house them in winter?—No, certainly not.

21316. Therefore that breed would not suit the poorer tenants?—No, or they would need to keep fewer of them and feed them much better.

21317. When you house them you feed them of course?—Yes.

21318. Have you crofters or large farmers as neighbours?—Chiefly crofters.

21319. What kind of cattle do they keep?—Chiefly native Shetland cattle.

21320. Do they house them in winter?—Yes.

21321. What do they feed them on?—Straw and cabbage as long as they have them.

21322. They would have no means of feeding a better kind of cow?—Not unless they kept much fewer of them. Sometimes they graze them a little.

21323. In your opinion could the crofters keep on their common grazing the same class of blackfaced sheep as you do?—Yes, if they would keep fewer of them.

21324. You think the animals would thrive if there were not too many?—Quite so.

21325. Are you acquainted with other parts of Shetland beyond this particular island?—Not to a great extent. I am a stranger here; it is only four years since I came here; I came from the mainland of Scotland.

21326. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—From what part of Scotland?—Forfarshire.

21327. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Have you any right to scathold land near you?—Not according to my lease. My predecessor, I believe, claimed a right to it.

21328. Do you know if the 500 acres of your farm ever formed part of the scathold?—I believe they did.

21329. Have you heard if it caused any dissatisfaction to your crofter neighbours when that part was cut off the scathold?—No, it is an isolated part almost surrounded by the sea.

21330. So that they would not have got much advantage from it?—If they had it, with the rest of the property, it would have been an advantage; but I don't think the want of it hurts them.

21331. Is cabbage a crop largely grown in Shetland?—Yes, to a certain extent.

21332. In place of turnips?—Yes, turnips are not grown to any large extent by the crofters.

21333. What kind of cabbage is grown?—I suppose it is a kind belonging to Shetland—what is called Shetland kail.

21334. Is it Scotch kail or drumhead?—Drumhead.

21335. Have you anything to remark about the grievances of the people here?—No, I might, perhaps, pass an opinion upon the scathold. I think, in the first place, there ought to be a division of the scathold between the heritors; and in the next place, in my opinion, the crofters would be benefited if they were limited to a certain number of sheep stock. It could easily be ascertained what stock each proprietor scathold would keep, and then it could be ascertained how many could be allotted to each holding, to keep them comfortable. According to the present state of things, in my opinion, if a bad winter came, a person owning 100 or 300 sheep might lose the half of them.

21336. In fact, there is great waste from the present mode of stocking the scathold?—Yes, it leads to overstocking and death.

21337. *The Chairman.*—Is your farm fenced?—It is fenced chiefly by the sea, and what is not so fenced is enclosed by stone dykes.

21338. Is there any portion of your grazing which might be converted into arable land?—Not much of mine; but on other parts there is a great deal of land which might be brought under cultivation.

21339. Is the system of tile subsoil draining practised in this parish?—Not to my knowledge.

21340. You never saw a tile drain in this parish?—No, I don't think so.

21341. Is any lime imported?—They burn lime in this parish to get a supply for building houses.

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21342. Do they find limestone in the parish, or do they burn shells?—They get limestone in Delting.

21343. Do they burn it with peat?—Yes.

21344. Is lime extensively used?—Only for building and repairing houses?

21345. It is not used for cultivation?—Not to my knowledge.

21346. You never saw a ton of lime laid on the land in this parish?—No, I never did.

21347. Would it be beneficial to this soil?—Yes, I think it would, I have thought of trying it.

21348. Are there any stipulations in your lease about improving?—No, and no compensation clause.

21349. Did the landlord place the building in good order?—They were in a fair state of repair, and I am obliged to leave them in that state of repair or something nearly approaching to it; something might be allowed for natural decay.

21350. If you had a claim for compensation would you be inclined to lay out something in improvements?—Certainly, I have improved a good deal without a claim for compensation or any expectation of getting it.

21351. What is the duration of your lease?—It was an old lease I took up, and there were eight years to run when I got it.

21352. How many years are there remaining to run?—Four, I think.

[ADJOURNED.]

FOULA, SHETLAND, WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1883.

SHETLAND.
FOULA.

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

ROBERT GEAR, Catechist (50)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LIII.*)

Robert Gear.

21353. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are catechist at Foula in connection with the Established Church?—Yes.

21354. How long have you been catechist here?—I will have been eleven years in the island in November.

21355. Did the people of Foula know that this Commission was coming here?—Yes, it was explained to them.

21356. Did they elect anybody to represent them?—Yes; they elected another person and me to represent them, but the other man is not here.

21357. Will he be here to-day?—I think not; but there is one here, David Hendry, to take his place.

21358. Who is the man who was elected along with you?—Andrew Robertson, but he told me on Sabbath that he would not be here.

21359. Have you got any statement to make?—Yes. Several meetings

were held, and at one of these on 12th June Mr Morrison submitted a statement which he had prepared as directed by a previous meeting. 'The meeting discussed and adopted the statement, paragraph by 'paragraph, and thereafter cordially and unanimously adopted it as a 'faithful expression of their wishes, and having signed it, directed 'the delegates to lay said statement before the Royal Commission.' '*Statement by the Crofters in the island of Foula to the Royal Com-* '*mission for Highlands and Islands.* The statement is as follows:—1. 'This island lies out in the Atlantic about sixteen miles from the 'mainland of Shetland. All is owned by R. F. C. Scott, Esq. of Melby, and 'Mr James Garriock, Reawick, is factor. The population is 275 and the 'number of crofts 40. 2. We would respectfully submit that our rents 'are excessive and out of all proportion either to the value of what the 'soil can produce or to the value of land in the rich farming districts of 'Scotland. We are unable to state the exact sum paid by each of us as 'rent, as the public burdens (poor, school, &c. rates) are collected along 'with the rent, and we get no receipts, but as nearly as we can calculate 'the best portion of the isle is rented at over 25s. an acre for arable land '(including right to hill pasture). The soil is very poor and exhausted, 'and owing to the peculiar position of the island a large part of the crop 'is often either blasted by the sea or shaken and destroyed by violent 'gales. We have calculated that on an average our crops do not provide 'us in bread for more than from four and a half to five months in the year; 'all the rest we must buy. In recent years rents have fallen in Scotland; 'here no man ever heard of rent decreasing. It has been rising, rising, 'rising for generations. Whenever church or manse repairs are executed 'in Walls there is an increase of rent all over the Melby estate to cover the 'cost, and this remains till the next repairs are called for when increase 'No. 2 is made in addition to increase No. 1. The manse of Walls was 'built about 1867. Most of us have paid 10s. a year since towards its 'cost, and there is no indication of the charge ceasing. There is no work 'to be had in the island, we must depend on the sea for our (often 'precarious enough) means of existence; and we respectfully submit that 'it is entirely unjust for us to be charged rents which our crofts cannot 'produce, but which must be fished out of the sea. Even were our rents 'more equitable we should still be placed at a disadvantage—our situation 'compelling us to sell in the cheapest and buy in the dearest market.'

21360. It is stated that you have to buy in the dearest and sell in the cheapest market: can you explain that?—If you will allow me to read this paper it will explain it:—'(*a*) The whole trade of the island is a 'monopoly in the hands of the merchants, Messrs Garriock & Co., 'and the inhabitants in consequence do not enjoy the benefits of competi- 'tion, and although most industrious, are kept in a state of hopeless 'poverty. (*b*) The want of fixity of tenure perpetuates this system by 'deterring competitors. (*c*) The want of a proper mail service retards the 'development of the resources of the island. A small packet about 'fourteen tons burden, at present, carries the mail from Garderhouse, near 'Raewick, instead of from the post office at Walls, which is not much 'over half the distance. She ought to visit the island once a fortnight, 'but it frequently happens that there is no communication between Foula 'and the outside world for perhaps two months at a time; and last 'spring the inhabitants were obliged (as the packet was unable to cross) 'to go for supplies to the mainland in one of their own six-oared boats. '(*d*) The want of a harbour (which qualified men say could be constructed 'without difficulty and at a comparative small outlay) is also a great 'obstacle to the prosecution of the herring and other fishing industries "for

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'"which the island is so well adapted;" and also as a place of refuge, and 'consequent welfare of the people. (*e*) The continued charge for building 'the manse at Walls of which the parish of Foula forms a part, and the 'cost of which, we believe, should have been defrayed long ago, from the 'revenue derivable from church lands.' This statement was prepared independently of the other, as I did not know but what I should have to send it to the Commissioners. The statement which I was reading before goes on to say—'3. Eviction has never been resorted to here, 'although we are tenants at will. For a long time our landlords have 'been of a good type, and the factors as sympathetic and forbearing as 'possible; but we cannot tell how soon changes may come, and we 'respectfully submit that our tenure should be secured by something more 'permanent than the good disposition of a factor, who may soon be 'removed, or a landlord who is not exempt from the changes and end of 'life. 4. As tenants we have nothing but praise to give to the present 'factor; he has ever been considerate and merciful, and as islanders we owe 'much to the merchants for whom we fish—Messrs Garriock & Co. 'of Reawick. Whether we are in debt or not they always supply us 'with the necessaries of life, and they have done so in cases where there 'was little probability that they would ever be paid. We regret that so 'many of us are getting more indebted and less able to pay our way year 'by year. 5. Without taking up more of the time of the Commissioners 'we would respectfully offer the following practical suggestions for the 'bettering of our condition. Some of these would be mainly for our 'benefit, but the others would, in our opinion, be largely for the public 'advantage:—(*a*) That a substantial reduction be made on existing rents. '(*b*) That the power of eviction be curtailed by leases or otherwise, and 'that compensation be given for tenant's improvements. (*c*) That the 'attention of the Government be called to our very unsatisfactory and 'undependable mail service, to the necessity for employing a more 'suitable vessel, and for making Walls the port of departure instead of 'Garderhouse. (The former is much nearer Foula). (*d*) That in the 'interests, not only of the island, but of the national fisheries (particularly white fish and herring) so advantageously situated a fishing station 'as Foula should be turned to account by the construction of a harbour. '(*e*) That in the interests of the fishing, and for the safety of the 'mercantile marine, a lighthouse should be erected here.'—THOMAS × GRAY, Dykes, and by twenty-eight others.

21361. Do Messrs Garriock give a less price for the fish and articles of produce than you would get elsewhere?—They do.

21362. Can you give any idea of the difference in prices?—I am not a fisherman.

21363. You are a crofter, do you sell cattle?—Sometimes.

21364. To Messrs Garriock?—Yes.

21365. Have you any idea whether you would get better prices by selling elsewhere than to them?—Yes, much larger. Cattle sold this last year on the mainland realised at least a third—perhaps a half more than those sold on the island. There is no opposition here, and we must sell according to the price Messrs Garriock's cattle dealer will give.

21366. Do Messrs Garriock charge you very highly for the goods they keep in the shop?—The goods are very high.

21367. Can you give any instances in which they are very much higher than the prices on the mainland?—I think meal is generally 3s. to 4s. higher per boll than on the mainland at Scalloway.

21368. What has been the price of meal here this last year?—I think 22s. per boll.

21369. But it has been 20s. 6d. lately, has it not?—About a month ago it was 21s. per boll.

21370. You have been here eleven years; it is about that time since Messrs Garriock proposed to abandon the shop here, and sent a circular round?—I was not here, but I heard about it.

21371. Do you remember that at that time the people did not wish this monopoly to be given up?—No, they signed Mr Garriock's paper to fish to him.

21372. Why did they do that if they wished the monopoly broken up?—Because the poor people have been so long insolvent that they are afraid to oppose the landlord or factor or whoever it might be.

21373. Messrs Garriock stated at the time that the trade in Foula was so small that unless they had the whole of it, it would not pay them to have a place here at all; and they were willing, they said, that the inhabitants of Foula should make their own arrangements for disposing of their produce and buying supplies. They asked the people which they wished, and it is said the people signed to a man in favour of Messrs Garriock continuing the trade?—I believe that is so, but I was not here.

21374. Are you of opinion that if Messrs Garriock were to withdraw the shop, and have nothing to do with the trade, the people could find an outlet for the sale of their produce?—Certainly, I am of that opinion; there would be competition directly, and the people would get the same advantages as on the mainland.

21375. You think somebody else would take up the store?—I think so; and the people would be paid in cash for the fish and cattle, and could buy the same as on the mainland. There would be perhaps, two or three shops, and competition would bring down the price of goods.

21376. You are of opinion that if Messrs Garriock gave up the shop other people would establish shops?—Certainly; but we have no objection to the Messrs Garriock. We ought to be thankful for what they have done for us, and acknowledge their kindness with gratitude; but we should not let this chance pass us.

21377. If the trade were thrown open to competition, Messrs Garriock said ten or eleven years ago, they would give up the trade?—I think that would be a great benefit.

21378. Do you think that is the opinion of the people of Foula?—I think that is the general opinion.

[*Mr Morrison*, Pastor of the Congregational Church.—No, sir. *Several Voices.* I don't think that is the voice of the people.—*Mr Gear.* That is the private voice of the people; they may tell you what they like.]

21379. You state in the paper you have given in, that you have to buy in the dearest and sell in the cheapest market; was that paragraph discussed at the meeting?—It was.

21380. What was the opinion of the people as to remedying that state of matters?—That paragraph was not discussed at the meeting.

21381. It was not discussed?—No. I took objection to the next paragraph; it was contradictory.

21382. The paragraph I was asking about was the one in which you say that your situation compels you to sell in the cheapest and buy in the dearest market?—It was not discussed.

21383. Who wrote the statement you have produced?—Mr Morrison who presided at the meeting.

21384. You think the state of matters complained of might be remedied?—I think so. I have had large experience of Shetland, I am a native of the country and am a crofter. I have thorough knowledge of the working of the crofter system in Shetland.

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21385. Do you know what is paid for meal at present?—I am not sure; Mr Inkster, the clerk, is here, and will be able to tell.

21386. What size of harbour would it be possible to make here?—I think a small boat harbour could be made here at small cost. The lighthouse ship was here recently, and Mr Stevenson, who was on board was looking for a site for a lighthouse, which is of great importance in Foula, and I heard that he expressed the opinion that a harbour could be constructed at a very moderate cost.

21387. A harbour would do a great deal towards the improvement of the island.

21388. Is it a particularly good situation for fishing?—It is a fine place for fishing.

21389. Would other fishermen come here?—If they had a harbour.

21390. They are nearer the fishing ground here than elsewhere?—Much nearer.

21391. Are veselss often wrecked in this neighbourhood?—We often see vessels passing here in a very poor condition, but owing to the position of the island, and the strong currents, the vessels are swept round. It would not matter how many vessels were wrecked on the island, we would never see anything; two or three vessels might go down in a night, and nothing ever be seen of them.

21392. Do you think vessels are endangered by the want of a lighthouse?—I think so.

21393. Foula is a high island and easily seen, is it not?—Yes, but the danger is in the long winter nights,—vessels driving down here from the North Coast of Scotland. Last year we saw one go down without being able to give any assistance.

21394. *Mr Cameron.*—How many crofters are there here?—Forty.

21395. What rent do they pay on an average?—I suppose about £4.

21396. The total rental of the island according to the valuation roll is £140, that would be rather less than £4 each?—Perhaps it may be £4 with rates.

21397. What amount of arable land has each of these crofters?—Between three to four acres.

21398. What stock do they keep?—As a rule they will keep seven old and young animals.

21399. Of all sorts?—Of cattle.

21400. Is the summer grazing of these animals included in the rent of £4 paid for arable ground?—Yes.

21401. Do you think that a high rent as compared with places on the mainland of Shetland?—I cannot say so much about the rent. I know about the mainland of Shetland, and I don't think the rents are excessive considering everything. But there is this peculiar to Foula, that the crops are liable to be destroyed by the sea and by violent gales; and these years, I think the landlord should consider and make an allowance to their poor tenants.

21402. I suppose the principal grievance is the raising of rents in consequence of the repairs on the church and manse, from which the people of Foula derive no benefit?—I think so, so far as the rent is concerned.

21403. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—The islanders have no leases of the land?—No.

21404. The people are left entirely to the will of the proprietor?—Yes.

21405. So that the people might be put out next Wednesday?—Yes.

21406. Has that a tendency to discourage the improvement of the crofts?—I am certain it has.

21407. With reference to the expression about buying in the dearest market, are you aware that that is the very opposite of free trade?—Yes.

21408. Does it come to this, that when you want to buy anything in the shop you must pay whatever the merchant chooses to ask?—Yes.

21409. And when you want to sell a beast you must take what he pleases to give?—Yes.

21410. And you want to throw the business of the island open to the world?—Yes.

21411. If any one were to set up in business as a merchant, do you think he would get any encouragement to do so from the proprietor or factor?—I don't think so, but the reverse.

21412. You are under a gross monopoly in these days of free trade?—We are.

21413. Could the fishing be very much developed if there was a harbour made, and the island thrown open to the world?—Very much.

21414. Are the people of Foula enterprising when they get a chance?—They are a very active and industrious people.

21415. You think, so far as you can make out, that the average rent per acre is 25s.?—I think so, as far as I can make out.

21416. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are there any whose rents are higher than £4?—Yes, there are some, I believe, who pay more than that including taxes.

21417. What is the lowest rent paid by anybody in the island?—£2 is the lowest, and £5 is the highest inclusive of rates.

21418. What is the greatest amount of stock anybody is allowed to keep, or can keep?—There is no limit, they can keep as many as they can; the pasture is common and some keep more and some less.

21419. Everybody here has one or more cows?—Yes, two or three cows—small beasts.

21420. What is the average number of cows kept?—I think three cows besides young ones.

21421. And of sheep?—I cannot say what the average number of sheep may be, perhaps half a dozen.

21422. What is the largest number of sheep any one person has?—Some fifty or sixty, and others, perhaps, may have none at all.

21423. The same as in the parish of North Mavin?—I fancy so.

21424. Anybody may keep 50 or 100 sheep?—Yes, or none, if they cannot get them.

21425. And those who have the larger pay no more than the others?—No more.

21426. Has that been customary on the island from time immemorial?—So far as I know. There was a time on the island when they used to fish for single rent, so many fish paid the rent.

21427. Do you keep horses also?—No; the proprietor has a few horses, but none of the inhabitants are allowed to keep them.

21428. Would horses be of use to you?—They would.

21429. For what purposes?—To carry home turf, and for other purposes.

21430. You would not use them for ploughing?—We might.

21431. On the mainland of Shetland they do all the turning of the soil with the spade?—Yes, we have to carry the turf from here to the other end of the island on our backs.

21432. Has it been the practice always to turn the turf with spades?—Yes.

21433. What kind of soil is it?—Peat or a clay soil.

21434. What crop grows best here?—No crop grows well; I don't know which is best.

21435. Don't you raise good potatoes?—No, they are of poor quality.

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21436. What is the best return of oats you can get in a good season?—I suppose three or fourfold.

21437. Do you raise any white crop other than oats?—Nothing but bere.

21438. Your peats are abundant?—Abundant.

21439. And they are convenient to you?—Yes; in some parts of the island they have to come here for them.

21440. Is it the women or the men who carry the peats?—Both, but mostly the men.

21441. All the hard work is not put on the women?—No.

21442. Are the women also all engaged in knitting?—Generally.

21443. Out of the native wool?—Out of the native wool.

21444. What kind of hosiery is made mostly in the island?—Principally small shawls and stockings.

21445. Of a common kind, or fine?—Coarse; none of the fine shawls.

21446. Are these goods taken from them by Messrs Garriock?—Yes.

21447. They don't sell anything out of the island to anybody else?—Sometimes they do; if they go out with their boats for fishing, the women may go and take what they have ready to the mainland.

21448. Is any wool sold out of the island?—No.

21449. It is all used in the island?—Yes, as a rule.

21450. Have you any sheep in the island except natives?—Yes, the native breed is almost out.

21451. What wool is chiefly used?—Blackfaced principally; they have been crossed with blackfaced; we have a bad quality of wool.

21452. The whole of the island is in the occupation of the inhabitants?—Yes, with this exception, that the landlord has a few ponies which are kept on the island.

21453. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Who supports your mission here?—The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge.

21454. And the complaint of the people about this church and manse exaction is that it never ceases?—Never ceases.

21455. Do you think there has been a sufficient amount paid already by this island?—More than its proportion.

21456. What is the benefit that Foula gets from the Ecclesiastical arrangements in Walls?—The benefit is only to those who attend the church, and that is the smallest portion; most of the people of Foula belong to the Independent denomination.

21457. What benefit do the people of Foula get from the manse of Walls?—None; the minister only visits this island once a year, if he does that.

21458. He is expected to visit you once a year?—Yes, he or his assistant.

21459. And you have been paying 10s. a year for the manse for twenty years?—Yes.

21460. Are you convinced in your own mind, that supposing the monopoly of the Messrs Garriock were broken up, other traders would be found quite ready to come in?—I am quite convinced of that; and it would improve the condition of the people.

21461. Do you think there is a sufficient amount of trade to keep up one or two traders?—I don't know. They would naturally run in whether it kept them or not.

21462. But would not they naturally run out again if it did not keep them?—I mean that there would be more than one party who would visit Foula for the purpose of trading.

21463. There is great inequality in the stock; what stock do you keep?—I have five cattle now, I think.

21464. Have you any sheep?—A few.

21465. How many?—I think six ewes.

21466. How many head of sheep altogether?—About ten, I think, altogether.

21467. What will be about the rent?—The rent of the whole place is about £5.

21468. Don't you think it is a very great anomaly that one person may have 100 sheep while another has none at all, both paying the same rent?—I do.

21469. Don't you think that some arrangement should be made by which that should be remedied?—I do.

21470. What would you suggest?—That every man should be stinted to a certain number, as many as the place could keep profitably; and that every man should keep a certain number according to the rent.

21471. And if he kept more than that number, that he should pay extra for them?—Yes.

21472. To the person who has less?—Yes.

21473. That is the usual way in Scotland?—It is the fair way.

21474. Has any representation ever been made to the landlord or factor upon that subject?—I think not.

21475. Do you think that if a reasonable representation was made it would not be listened to?—I don't know. They are reluctant to make alterations, but they might do it.

21476. Of course a man with 100 sheep would be reluctant, but one would think those with few sheep would join in it?—But I think it is fair between man and man.

21477. As a matter of fact, nobody has 100 sheep?—No.

21478. But the rule is that he may have them if he pleases?—Yes; and the worst of it is that where one or two have fifty they keep others out.

21479. So that the place would get overstocked?—It does get overstocked.

21480. You taught the school here for a while?—Yes.

21481. Are the people all able to read?—Yes.

21482. And most of them to write?—Yes; Foula bears favourable comparison with any place in Shetland for intelligence.

21483. Was the school we see here existing in your time?—No.

21484. It is under the School Board of Walls?—Yes.

21485. And one may expect the inspector in the future to come here every year?—Yes.

21486. And education to be better than in the past?—It should be.

21487. Are the people bound to go to the factor with their hosiery the the same as with their fish?—No.

21488. You stated that they sold their hosiery upon the mainland?—Sometimes.

21489. Are you aware of the difference in price between what they sell to the factor and what they sell on the mainland?—I cannot say; I don't understand about that.

21490. Do you think they get more for what they sell at their own hand than what they get from Messrs Garriock?—I cannot say.

21491. But it would be expected that they would?—That would be expected.

21492. Is he expected to take from them all they offer him?—I don't think there is any understanding in regard to the hosiery.

21493. As a matter of fact, does he always take all that is offered?—Not always.

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21494. But he always takes the fish?—Yes.

21495. You would expect fish would be dearer on the mainland than here?—Yes.

21496. The freight would account for a good deal?—Yes.

21497. And you would expect goods here would be a little dearer, but do you think they are dearer than the cost of transit ought naturally to make them?—I think they are.

21498. And that was especially the case about those animals you spoke of?—Yes.

21499. You thought they brought about a third more on the mainland than here?—Yes.

21500. Can you give us any example?—I did not sell one this year; but I saw a man selling a quey and he asked £3, and I think he got £2, 18s.; and that beast or any of a like kind would have sold on the mainland for £5.

21501. What age was it?—A three year old.

21502. What would be a reasonable freight for such a beast?—5s. to 10s.

21503. Risk and all?—Yes. A small vessel could ferry fourteen or fifteen animals, and 10s. each would be a good freight.

21504. And it actually brought £2, 2s. less?—Yes.

21505. Are the people bound to give their beasts to the factor?—They are not bound unless they are in his debt, and in that case they are bound to give them to him.

21506. But they are only bound to give their fish and take their stores?—Yes.

21507. If a drover came from the mainland I suppose the people could sell him their beasts?—They might.

21508. Why would they not encourage an enterprising drover?—They would be frightened to sell.

21509. Was it ever tried?—I think so, indeed I know.

21510. It appears from the paper, that except in this matter of the monopoly, the people are very well satisfied with the proprietor and factor?—Very well indeed; we like Mr Garriock very well. I believe other people in the same field would be much worse than Messrs Garriock & Co.

21511. You might go farther and fare worse?—Yes, but the principle is bad—the law that allows that is not fair between man and man.

21512. And you would be willing to risk the practice for the sake of the principle?—Exactly.

GEORGE MORRISON, Pastor of the Congregational Church (26)—examined.

George Morrison.

21513. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have you been here?—Two years.

21514. Are you a native of Shetland?—No, I am a native of Wick.

21515. You were in the chair at a meeting of which Mr Gear has spoken?—Yes.

21516. And you were asked to prepare the memorial which has been submitted?—Yes.

21517. That memorial was read at a second meeting, paragraph by paragraph, and was approved of?—Yes.

21518. There is one paragraph which you have heard referred to, which was not discussed?—Mr Gear said so, but the statement was incorrect; every line was discussed and accepted.

21519. It may have been accepted without being discussed?—It was really discussed; Mr Gear himself discussed it; and his opinion upon the question of the monopoly does not agree with the opinion of the crofters.

21520. Your memorial says, 'We crofters would still be placed at a disadvantage, our circumstances compelling us to sell in the cheapest and buy in the dearest market,' you think that is an irremediable disadvantage?—I think so, because there must be freight both on goods imported and exported, owing to our situation.

21521. Would it be desirable to have an open market, or that Messrs Garriock should have the trade?—I think it desirable that some merchant should have the market, because we cannot depend on other persons supplying us all the year round. Messrs Garriock supply us well; it is their own advantage to do so.

21522. And that is the opinion of the people of Foula to-day as it was ten years ago?—I think so.

21523. *Mr Cameron.*—When there was any difference of opinion in the meeting did you proceed to take a vote on the subject?—There never was any difference except when Mr Gear differed from all the rest on some points; they were all unanimous.

21524. And they were unanimous as to the merchants' shop as well as the rest?—Most unanimous.

21525. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—There used to be a monopoly of a similar kind on Fair island, but by the establishment of more frequent communication that was done away with; you don't think that should be done here?—It is hardly fair to say there is a monopoly here, because a few months ago there was a trading vessel lying here selling goods and buying produce.

21526. Not fish though?—No, not fish.

21527. Unless the whole of the fish were sold to Messrs Garriock, they would not take a part of them?—I don't think so, but I cannot speak positively to that. The men are not bound to fish to them; there are twelve men belonging to the island away at the herring fishing at Walls.

21528. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—But any fish caught at Foula must be sold to Messrs Garriock?—They are sold to them as a matter of fact; I don't know if there is any binding agreement.

21529. You think yourself that the people of Foula like the monopoly to be in the hands of Messrs Garriock; is it for the benefit of the people of Foula that Messrs Garriock carry on business, or for their own profit?—Their own profit.

21530. Is it possible for the benefit to be mutual?—No doubt, Messrs Garriock's idea is to have it for their own benefit.

21531. You are not a free trader?—I am.

21532. Are you not aware that to have a monopoly of this kind is contrary to free trade?—I am; but I object to the word monopoly being applied to the trade here.

21533. Is it not the case that no other merchant can settle here?—I think so; I think it has never been tried. But Messrs Garriock & Co. are not the factors, it is Mr James Garriock.

21534. Is it not a fact that the proprietor prohibits any other person from carrying on business?—I don't know that.

21535. If that were true would it alter your opinion?—Yes, decidedly, if the people were bound to go to Messrs Garriock for their goods. They go there for the greater part of their goods, but they are not bound to do it. For my own part, I got part of my goods from Leith.

21536. But could any other merchant come and settle here and carry on business?—I don't know; I cannot speak on that point.

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21537. Don't you know quite well he could not?—No; I don't suppose any other merchant would care to make the experiment, because forty families would scarcely support another merchant.

21538. You are not a delegate?—No, I was simply chairman at the crofters meeting.

21539. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I understand you to say that in theory you are quite as good a free trader as Mr Gear, but that your belief is that from the circumstances of this island the present arrangement is practically as good as any other that could be adopted?—My opinion is, that we are safer under the present arrangement, because it is not likely two merchants would keep a shop here, and we might be left for two or three months without any at all.

21540. If you were informed that open trade had materially benefited the people of Fair Isle and improved the trade of the place, would that induce you to change your opinion?—I think there is perhaps a difference between the circumstances of the people of Fair Isle and the people of Foula. The Fair islanders, if I know anything of their state, were much more oppressed under old arrangements than the Foula people; the landlord was more exacting and grasping.

21541. Do you think merchants coming here voluntarily would not be likely to supply the people better than at present?—Not permanently, because whoever comes here must purchase fish and hosiery if he is to supply the people with goods, and hosiery is often a drug in the market for a long time, and the price is very low. The Orkney merchant who was here a short time ago, paid lower prices for hosiery than Messrs Garriock & Co. were doing.

21542. Might not your free trade principles incline you to try the experiment of a shop?—No.

21543. In your case, practice overcomes theory?—I am not inclined to make so heavy a sacrifice for principle.

21544. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are the only minister on the island?—I am the representative of the Congregational Union; I am not an ordained minister.

21545. But you are the only resident minister on the island?—No, Mr Gear is the representative of the Church of Scotland.

21546. To which denomination do most of the inhabitants belong?—To the Congregational Church.

21547. Do all the inhabitants come to your services without distinction of sect?—The greater number of them come occasionally. The number connected with the Church of Scotland is a mere handful; about a dozen, I suppose.

21548. There is no sectarian feeling?—None.

21549. Do they attend the church very regularly?—Very regularly.

21550. And they are very particular in keeping the Sabbath?—Yes, but not in the same way as in the west of Scotland; they are not such strict Sabbatarians as the people of the Hebrides.

21551. They don't consider it a sin to walk about on the Sabbath and admire the beauties of nature?—No, we are not so straight-laced as the Hebrideans.

21552. Do they indulge in song singing?—They don't indulge very much in song singing.

21553. Have you any music amongst you?—Yes, the inhabitants of Foula are very musical.

21554. What form does it take?—Principally, the form of sacred music.

21555. Have they any instrumental music?—Yes, Mr Paterson has an instrument and I have another.

21556. What sort of an instrument?—A harmonium.

21557. Is the old practice of fowling entirely given up?—Yes, I think so.

21558. How long since?—I think a long time ago.

DAVID HENRY, Crofter and Fisherman (44), assisted by JAMES GRAY, Crofter and Fisherman (50); ROBERT PATERSON, Crofter and Fisherman (38); JOHN HENRY, Crofter and Fisherman (38).

D. Henry, J. Gray, R. Paterson, and J. Henry.

22559. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a native of Foula?—Yes.

22560. Have you anything to add to what has already been said?—No, I have nothing.

22561. Do you remember the paper which Messrs Garriock & Co. sent round ten years ago?—No, I don't—*James Gray.* It was stated then that the Foula men were dissatisfied with the price they were receiving for the green fish. Then they had the chance of salting their fish and drying them, only they had to meet the expenses, pay rent, and buy their own meal. The factor would not supply them; and there were many years that the fishing of Foula turned out to be little or nothing, and if it had not been for Messrs Garriock & Co. we should not have been alive; and we are afraid that might turn out again, and what would we do then? We could not live at all.

21562. You think it better that they should have the whole of the fish?—Yes, because when they had the fish, whether we had a fishing or not, they gave us what supply we needed, until we could pay.

21563. And you are still of the same mind?—I suppose so; for my own part I am.

21564. Your principal complaint is about your rents being raised?—*David Henry.* Yes, that is our greatest grievance.—*James Gray.* I have the dearest rent in the island, £5. I have been in the place twenty-six or twenty-eight years, and there has only been one year out of that that I could bread my family without buying.

21565. You mean there was only one year in which there was enough on the croft to supply your family?—Yes.

21566. How much have you had to buy in other years?—Some years five or six months' living. I would pay about £5 or £6 for meal.—*Another Islander.* I have paid £10.

21567. What will a fisherman make here in a year?—*James Gray.* From £4 to £6. He must make more than that if he is to keep a family.—*Mr Inkster.* Their earnings will range from £8 to £15, taking both fishings together.—*Several Islanders.* That is their view.—*James Gray.*—I never run above £10.

21568. Another man says he made £5?—I have had as low as £3.—*Robert Paterson.* I have had as much as £20.

21569. What time of the year do you settle with Messrs Garriock & Co.?—*James Gray.* About just now.—*David Henry.* In the month of June generally.

21570. Are you generally in debt at the end of the year, or is there a balance to your credit?—*James Gray.* I am always in debt; I never had money at my credit.

21571. Had you any money the year that you were able to bread your family?—That year I did have a little, but very little. My rent is heavy, and in addition to that I have to buy bread and meal, and there is nothing to meet that, and a poor man cannot stand that.

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D. Henry, J. Gray, R. Paterson, and J. Henry.

21572. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You say you remember having made £20 in one year?—*Robert Paterson.* Yes; I was a young man, and had health at the time, and was fishing.

21573. Had you not some money that year?—Yes, I had.

21574. Had the whole crew a little over that year?—I suppose the two young men who were with me had something over.

21575. As a rule, when you have something to your credit, do you get any money?—Yes.

21576. Is it occasionally the case that some people have money over at settling time?—Perhaps a few young men may have a little; in the best years they will.

21577. But there is a greater number that don't have anything to their credit?—Yes, a good many.

21578. And that goes right on from year to year?—Yes.

21579. You are always in the books?—Yes.

21580. Are the boys employed in drying fish?—Yes, two or three boys.

21581. Do they get separate wages for that?—Yes.

21582. Do they draw goods from the fish-curer on their own account?—Yes.

21583. What will be the age of the youngest boy that is engaged in that sort of work?—Fourteen.

21584. Whenever he begins to earn money his name is entered in the books, and he gets credit the same as if he were a grown man?—Yes.

21585. And he remains in the books just as his father was before him?—Very generally, if he stops here.

21586. The usual time of settling upon the mainland is November, but the time here is summer, is it not?—Yes.

21587. What is the reason of the difference between the dates of settlement here and on the mainland, is it because the boat cannot come here in November?—Yes.

21588. It suits you quite as well to have a settlement just now?—Yes.

21589. Is it the rent due at last November, or November coming, which is collected just now?—The rent due at last November.

21590. There is nothing here but the point of the hook to look to?—No day's work.

21591. But are the people not remarkably fond of the place?—They are.

21592. Do any young men or women ever leave the place?—Yes, a good many; there are some in Australia and New Zealand.

21593. How long is it since they went?—It has been a general thing for them to go there for the last eighty years.

21594. What do the men go away to do?—They go to sail in ships, and to the diggings, and farming, and so on.

21595. Do some of them come back now and again?—They seldom come back.

21596. Do the young women go away from the island?—There has been only one in my memory, and she came back.

21597. Are there more women than men in the place?—I think they are about equal in numbers.

21598. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What price is given for fish here?—2s. I think is the lowest, that is for saithe, and 9s. 6d. is sometimes given for ling.

21599. What is being given for ling this year?—8s. 6d.

21600. And for cod?—From 5s. to 7s.

21601. And tusk?—5s.

21602. When is the settlement made as to the price of fish?—In spring.

21603. Do you know what you are to get before the beginning of the fishing?—No, we are only going to settle now for the last summer, not for the present time.

21604. The price you get is regulated by what the purchaser gets in the market?—*Several Islanders.* We get what Messrs Garriock please to give us. We don't know what they get for the fish.

21605. Is it part of your duty to spread out the fish to dry?—No, it is the beach boys who do that.

21606. What is done with the cod-livers?—They are thrown into a barrel, and taken home and used by us for light, or sale.

21607. They are your property?—Yes.

21608. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—When will you know the price of the fish you catch now?—Next spring.

21609. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you use the cods' heads for food?—Yes.

21610. But not the lings'?—Yes, the tusks' and lings' also.

21611. Are any conger eels caught here?—Yes.

21612. Do you sell them?—No, we use them chiefly for bait.

21613. What is your ordinary bait when there are no herring?—Small cod, turbot, and halibut.

21614. Do you actually use turbot for bait?—Yes, there is no sale for them. We use limpet for the hand lines. There is no market for turbot.

21615. Would you like a steam boat to carry away the turbot?—Yes, we would like that. We imagine that would do us a little service.

21616. Are you engaged in the herring fishing just now?—No, in the ling fishing. I have never gone to the herring fishing.

21617. You have never gone in for the herring fishing here?—No. Two crews are trying it this year.

21618. Was it never tried before?—Only on a very small scale—two nets set across the mouth of the goe.—*John Hendry.* Our greatest concern is the land rent. There was one year there were three of us in a family, and we laboured very hard, and we only made what would keep us alive for three months. I had then to go across to Raewick to Mr Garriock, and was indebted to him for eight or nine months' living. My rent was £4, 10s. and I had between £10 and £11 for meal to answer for, making in all £16, while my fishing was only worth about £5 or £6; and that launched me into debt I have not got out of yet, and that is the general case. We look upon Mr Garriock as a very merciful man, but we are very apt to grumble that his things are too dear. We are paying 5s. 11d. for a pound of English tobacco, and we think that rather dear.

21619. That is for twist?—Yes, and we get no tea here below 8d. per quarter of a pound.

21620. Is it very good tea?—The tea at 3s. 4d. per lb. is the best.

21621. What do you pay for sugar?—For hard sugar 6d. a lb., and for soft 4½d. It is not many years since loaf sugar was 8d.

21622. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You consume a lot of tea and sugar?—Yes, we do; more than we are fit to purchase.

21623. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any scarcity of milk in the island?—It is scarce in winter.

21624. What do you give the children then?—A little sugar and water.

21625. Do you use porridge ordinarily?—Yes.

21626. I suppose you eat very much the same as your fathers did?—Yes.

21627. What have you to breakfast?—In winter bread and milk when we have it, and sometimes we have a little black bread, and a cup of tea.

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D. Henry, J. Gray, R. Paterson, and J. Henry.

That is the general rule I think. Fish and potatoes for dinner; but they are not potatoes; you could wring the water out of them.

21628. You very seldom taste meat?—Very seldom. Some years there are three cows butchered in the island, but generally none at all.

21629. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What becomes of the sheep?—We make use of them. A great many of them fall over the rocks.

21630. But those that don't you eat?—Yes.

21631. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you keep any pigs?—There are no pigs on the island. We are not fit to feed them.

21632. Would not the fish offal feed them?—No.

21633. You have no doctor in the island?—No.

21634. Where is the nearest doctor?—Walls.

21635. Do you find that a hardship?—Yes.

21636. But most of you are very healthy?—Yes.

21637. And you are perhaps none the worse of being without a doctor?—That is right.

21638. And potatoes and fish make you as big and strong men as we have seen anywhere?—If our own crofts could supply us with living, we would be satisfied.

21639. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is there any way of improving the crofts, so that you could get more off them?—No, I think not, our fathers did all that could be done.

21640. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you want leases?—*Robert Paterson.* We would work with better heart; we would have no fear of improving, and building, and repairing houses.

21641. But I suppose, as a matter of fact, no person was ever put out?—*James Hendry*; No, I don't think it, we are not very rebellious here. We grumble much about the price of our eggs.

21642. Don't you eat them?—No, we eat as few as we can; we have to give them for meal.

21643. What price do you get for eggs?—4d. and 6d. per dozen.

21644. You give them to Mr Garriock?—Yes.

21645. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who builds the houses?—The proprietor gives £10.

21646. And who finds the wood?—The proprietor; but the tenants have to stand the cost, and what money the houses cost over the £10.

21647. Who keeps it up after that?—The tenant.

21648. Once he has entered he looks after it himself?—Yes.

21649. But if the wood gets old and rotten, the proprietor gives new wood?—Yes, for the roof.

21650. Are the houses pretty good?—Some of them very poor.

21651. Are they thatched?—Yes.

21652. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are the walls all built with stone and lime?—Some of them only; some are pointed with lime, and some have no lime at all.

21653. Have the most of you fire places in your houses, or is the fire put in the middle of the floor?—Mostly all the fires are in the middle of the floor.

21654. None of you keep cows under the same roof as yourselves?—No.

ALEXANDER INKSTER (29)—examined.

21655. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—In what capacity are you here?—I am in the employment of Messrs Garriock & Co., as manager, at Raewick.

21656. For what purpose do you happen to be here?—Just now, for the purpose of settling with the fishermen and tenants, I am appointed by the factor to collect rents due at November last. They are generally collected at the end of June.

21657. You are acting for the factor as well as Garriock & Co.?—Yes.

21658. Will you make your statement please?—Yes. The prices paid for green fish last summer were,—ling, 8s. 6d., cod, 7s., tusk, 6s. Fish are bought here at the same prices as are paid on the mainland. The fishermen are not bound to deal with or sell their fish to Messrs Garriock & Co., and never have been. They are at perfect liberty to sell to whom they choose. With regard to the shop goods, Mr Gear's statements are simply incorrect. The rates charged here are the same as at Raewick, with the exception of the meal, to which 6d. or 1s. per boll is added to cover freight. It never exceeds 1s., and sometimes it is 6d. The cheapest meal sold here is Indian meal, of which the price is 14s. and 15s. per boll, and for oatmeal from Scotch oats 21s. is the price charged; it varies, however. It was stated also that tobacco was sold at 5s. 10d. per lb. Now 5s. is the price, only we get a specially prepared kind for keeping in winter, for which we have to pay considerably more. It is made to keep four or five months in winter, when there is no communication with the mainland, and for that tobacco we charge 5s. 10d.; but the ordinary tobacco is sold at 5s. Messrs Garriock & Co. have more than once offered to take cattle over to the mainland, and expose them for sale at the half yearly sale at Walls, and to pay the islanders the price realised, less the freight and cost of the sale; but they prefer to sell on the island, and save risk, &c. Yearly some of the cattle bought are sold in the island without any addition being made to the price paid. The landlord or factor does not bind the people to sell to Messrs Garriock & Co. nor do Messrs Garriock & Co. interfere in any way with the people buying and selling, nor exercise any control over the tenants and fishermen, other than as merchants dealing with customers. With reference to the eggs, generally 1d. per dozen less is paid than the price given on the mainland. The shells of the eggs here are thinner and more liable to breakage, and of course the irregular communication in the winter time often leads to the eggs being stale before we get them.

21659. What do you pay on the mainland in winter?—The price varies from 7d and 8d., to as high as 9d. for a short time.

21660. But it is not 7d. and 8d. here?—Yes, it is down to 4½d., and 5d. just now at Reawick, and 4½d. here, of course it varies. The cause of the thinness of the eggshell is the want of lime on the island. With regard to the rents, the rent book in my possession, dates from 1875, from which time I am not aware that any of the rents have been raised, with the exception of Mr Gear's which was £2 up to two years ago, and which was £3. 5s. last settlement.—*Mr Gear.* I only paid for half a croft, as schoolmaster here; that is the £2 you refer to; the rest, the laird of Melby gave gratis to the teacher.—*Mr Inkster.* Yes, but its more than two years since you resigned. The average rent value of the croft is £3, 10s.

21661. How many crofts are there altogether?—Thirty-eight crofts, at £3, 10s. each. The total rental, including sheep, is £140. Only ten of

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the thirty-eight crofters, were due balances in the rent book last year, and five of those were under £3 at last year's balancing.

21662. There are ponies kept here?—Yes, the proprietor keeps a few; that is the only right he retains to himself. There are eight to ten generally; that is the number he does not like to exceed. But sometimes, with younger beasts, it may come up to twelve or so.

21663. Do you never pay, in winter time, 1s. per dozen for eggs?—No, the price never exceeds 9d. at Reawick.

21664. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—According to your statement the people in Foula have no complaint to make about their rents?—I consider not, comparing them with those of other places; of course, their isolated position is against them.

21665. Then why do yon make the statement that the rents have not been raised—what object have you in making it?—Because I think, Mr Gear said the rents were raised.

21666. Did you not hear the chorus of concurrence that all the complaints were on account of the rents?—Yes.

21667. Do you think that represented the feeling of the people or not?—Perhaps it did.

21668. But you think otherwise, that they have no cause of complaint?—Well, compared with the mainland, and taking into consideration the unlimited right to scathold, I don't think they have.

21669. How many places of business have your company in Shetland?—Shops at Reawick, Sandness, and Foula—three shops, and several fishing stations along the west coast from Scalloway as far as Sandness.

21670. Do your employers find it worth while to do business in Foula?—Yes, taking all together.

21671. They make a considerable profit out of it?—Not considerable, but perhaps a working profit sufficient to induce them to keep it open. With bad seasons it is very questionable; but Garriock & Co. have always kept it on.

21672. What was their object in putting out a paper wanting the people to say whether or not they wished them to remain?—The people were dissatisfied, I understand, at that time with the prices they were receiving, and they got the option of curing for themselves.

21673. Are the prices given now better than those given ten or twelve years ago?—They vary—sometimes better, sometimes worse.

21674. Are most of the people in your books, in debt?—Not the most of them.

21675. Of the thirty-eight families how many may be indebted to your firm?—I am not prepared to say exactly, but I should say, perhaps a dozen.

21676. Only a dozen; and all the rest are perfectly indepeudent?—Several of them are.

21677. Supposing the fishing here, were paid for in money, how are the people to use it. Is there any bank?—Fishing is such a precarious business that a man has a little this year, and next year he may have to use it all up.

21678. What does he do with it—does he keep it at home, or put it in a bank, or leave it with the firm?—Sometimes he leaves it with the firm.

21679. And the firm act as baukers?—Sometimes.

21680. You stated there was no monopoly of the fish—that they might sell to whom they choose—but can anybody else put up a shop or keep such a place without the landlord's permission?—I am not aware that there is anything to hinder them.

21681. Where does the landlord live?—He is at Melby, but the factor lives at Reawick.

21682. Where does the proprietor live?—At Melby, Reawick.

21683. Does he ever come here?—Sometimes, he is under age, and cannot yet interfere.

21684. Has this island belonged to the same family for a long time?—So far as I know.

21685. What does the proprietor do for the island, can you tell me?—Can you mention one single sixpence which he lays out for any purpose whatever?—He provides a certain sum towards the building of houses.

21686. That is the condition of the country with regard to the matter of land; but does he lay out anything—can you point out anything he does?—I am not aware at this moment.

21687. Will you give us any explanation about the complaint which one or two delegates made, that they are paying for manse repairs in Walls, a thing that occurred some twelve or twenty years ago. Can you explain why they are still paying these ecclesiastical assessments?—I have been looking back in the book which I have in my possession. It only dates back to 1875, and I find no allusion to manse assessment in the rent book. The rent is stated at the same sum.

21688. Supposing what they say were true that this rent was put on for the purpose of defraying ecclesiastical assessment, would it not be right to take it off if the assessment has been repaid?—I should say so for my own part; if the place is really over rented, that is to say. But it is not entered in their rents as assessment.

21689. Do you think it is a satisfactory state of things in the island for the people to be all dependent on one man—the landlord—who can turn them off next year, and upon your firm to whom they are indebted for the necessaries of life?—It is the same with them as with those in Shetland and other islands where you have been; it is not for me to express an opinion.

21690. Supposing you were proprietor of the place, and only got that small rent, would you keep it?—It would scarcely be worth keeping, considering the taxes.

21691. Supposing the people were willing to buy portions of it would it not be wise to give it to the people of the place, and let them find their own way in the world?—Yes, I think so.

21692. Would it not be much better if they could buy the island themselves?—Yes, I think so.

21693. Have you anything to say about the development of the fisheries, or the advantages that might follow to the islanders from it?—No doubt, if a better harbour could be made, the place might become a very important fishing station. I understand there is plenty of herring fishing round the island all the year, and the fishermen are aware of that.

21694. And so far as you are aware, you have reason to believe it is quite correct?—I believe it is.

21695. And although it is at present rather inaccessible in the way of landing, the distance is not so great as to make the place out of the world altogether?—No.

21696. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You stated that Messrs Garriock offered to take the cattle over to the mainland and let the people have the price, less the freight? What evidence have you that he did so?—Mr Garriock told me.

22697. To whom did he make this offer?—To the people; and I think some present can confirm it; and I am sure Messrs Garriock would make the same offer now—to take the cattle over, and charge freight only.—*Mr*

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Gear. I am here to say not a man ever heard it.—*Several Islanders.* I never heard of it.

21698. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Well, the offer is made now. With regard to the paper issued by Messrs Garriock, you are, perhaps, aware that some dozen years ago there was a prospect of Messrs Garriock leaving the island, and they then said they must have the whole trade or none, and they sent a paper round to the people to know whether they wished them to remain; one condition of their remaining being that they should have the whole trade; and the people agreed that they should remain; have Messrs Garriock given any indication that they have departed from that?—*Mr Inkster.* Not that I am aware of.

21699. The condition is that they are to have the whole trade?—Yes, without the whole trade of the island it would be worthless.

21700. But, just now you said they were free?—Yes, in the event of their dividing the trade, Messrs Garriock & Co. would probably withdraw.

21701. *Professor Mackinnon.*—That is the nature of the freedom?—If the business could not be kept on they would withdraw.

[ADJOURNED.]

SHETLAND. LERWICK.

LERWICK, SHETLAND, THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1883

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

JAMES ROBERTSON, Happy Hansel, Parish of Walls (37)—examined.

James Robertson.

21702. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate, or do you appear here on your own account?—I appear as a delegate.

21703. How many persons took part in your election?—Probably fifty or sixty.

21704. What statement did they desire that you should make on their behalf?—They wish fair and fixed rents, and security of tenure, and also compensation for improvements. A meeting of crofters in the parish of Walls was held in Old Happy Hansel school, on 2nd July 1883, for the purpose of appointing delegates to appear before the Royal Commissioners, and state the grievances of the crofters in this district. Mr J. D. Robertson was unanimously elected chairman, and stated to the meeting the purpose for which the Royal Commission had been appointed. After some conversation it was unanimously agreed to, that the following were the principal grievances of which the crofters have to complain, viz. '1. Excessively high rents. The rent charged for land in this locality is much beyond its productive value, land being generally of inferior quality. The rents in many cases have been doubled during the last thirty years. 2. The crofters in Walls have no security of tenure, but are entirely at the mercy

'of the laird or factor, who at any time may drive them to the fields by 'giving forty days' notice. This state of matters is felt to be a very great 'hardship, and gives no encouragement to tenants to improve their holdings. '3. Although a tenant may improve the land he occupies to the fullest 'extent, yet on his having to leave the croft, by his own wish or by the 'order of the laird and factor, he cannot claim for any of the improve-'ments he may have executed, but must walk out whether any compensa-'tion is allowed or not. The crushing burden of rates which the tenant 'has to pay presses very heavily on the people in this district, and tends 'to pauperise them. The poor and school rates alone amount to the sum 'of 7s. 9d. per pound, the half of which is payable by tenants. 'Although road money is paid, scarcely any of it is expended in country 'districts. The state of the roads in many places during the winter are a 'source of danger to the community. The foregoing are the principal 'grievances from which the crofters suffer, and this meeting would humbly 'recommend to the notice of the Royal Commissioners that an alteration 'of the existing state of things, so as to ameliorate the condition of 'crofters, has become a dire necessity. The law would require to be 'changed so that the crofters could have the following privileges, viz. (1) 'security of tenure, with the existing scathold as formerly held; (2) a 'fair and fixed rent; (3) compensation for improvements; (4) reduction 'of local rents by subsidy from Government to parishes where the rents 'exceed 5s. per pound. Mr J. D. Robertson and Mr John Jamieson 'were appoin ed delegates.' (signed) J. D. ROBERTSON, Chairman, JOHN JAMIESON, and hy sixty-nine others. On 7th July an adjourned meeting of crofters was held, when the foregoing statement was read, and unanimously approved of by all present.

21705. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is stated in this paper that the crofters in Walls have no security of tenure; as a matter of fact, are removals frequent?—No.

21706. Is there much room for improvement of the crofts if security of tenure were given?—Yes, much room.

21707. What size of croft do you hold?—A small croft of about a couple of acres or thereby.

21708. Is it all arable land?—Yes, with right to scathold outside.

21709. Is there room for you to increase the arable land?—Not for me individually.

21710. But have your neighbours much ground which they could improve?—Yes, everybody has some.

21711. Except you?—Yes, almost everybody.

21712. Has any one in your recollection added to his croft by improving the land?—Yes, many.

21713. Have rents been increased in consequence?—They have.

21714. Can you mention an instance where land was improved and the rent consequently increased?—I cannot say it has been increased in consequence, but it has been increased very quickly after the improvement.

21715. Give us an instance of that?—There is the case of Lawrence Jamieson.

21716. What is the size of his croft?—Probably five or six acres.

21717. How much of that has he improved?—He was the incoming tenant; the rent was raised when he came in on account of improvements.

21718. The outgoing tenant had improved the land;—Yes.

21719. Why did the outgoing tenant leave it?—Force of circumstances, not the will of the laird.

21720. He was not able to pay the rent?—He was not able to work the land; he had too few of a family.

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21721. And when he left he got no compensation?—No

21722. How long had he had the croft?—Probably from twelve to twenty years.

21723. Had he made much improvement upon it?—Yes, he probably doubled its extent.

21724. What rent did he pay?—Originally about £3, and latterly about £6 or £7.

21725. Was it increased on the outgoing tenant?—The rent was about full to the outgoing tenant before any one came in.

21726. And that in the course of twelve or fifteen years?—About that.

21727. What rent do you pay?—£4 is the stipulated rent.

21728. And rates besides that?—Yes.

21729. You say your arable land is not above two acres?—I think so.

21730. What stock do you keep?—No stock; I work on a different system from anybody else.

21731. What use do you make of your land?—I principally raise potatoes.

21732. What quantity do you raise?—It is rather a hard question.

21733. Do you use them all yourself?—Yes, all of them.

21734. How long do they keep you?—We are supposed to have as many as we require until the new ones come in again.

21735. Do you build your own houses, or does the landlord do it?—The house I occupy is an old one, and I do the repairs on it myself.

21736. It was originally built by the proprietor?—Yes.

21737. Is it a slated house?—Yes.

21738. How many rooms are there in it?—Originally there were four, it is a peculiar house that way; it is the property of the School Board, being the old schoolmaster's house.

21739. Is it to the School Board you pay your rent?—I am supposed to pay to them; but I pay nothing, for reasons best known to myself. There is a dispute about whose it is.

21740. What has become of the four rooms?—The partition and hulk-heads of most of them are away.

21741. Who removed the partitions?—Time.

21742. Are your potatoes sufficient to keep you for a year?—Yes.

21743. And you consider £4 a very high rent for that?—Yes, and consequently refuse to pay it; that is the reason I say I don't pay the rent.

21744. Your neighbour Lawrence Jamieson, of whom you spoke, pays £6, 10s. of rent?—Yes, about that.

21745. And he has about six acres of land?—About that.

21746. What stock does he keep?—About seven to nine cattle of all kinds, young and old.

21747. Ponies?—I don't know if he has any; but that don't interfere with the croft.

21748. That is on account of the scathold?—Yes, most of those who have ponies pay no rent; the hills are open.

21749. Is it the custom of people who pay no rent to make use of the scathold ground?—Yes.

21750. Do you hold that they have a right to do so?—They make a right any way; there have been no objections raised to their having a pony or two.

21751. And if a tenant keeps a pony on the scathold you don't count that part of his rights?—No, he may keep one or a hundred, and no one interferes.

21752. What sort of house has Lawrence Jamieson?—A very good thatched house.

21753. Did the landlord put it up?—I suppose he did originally.

21754. And the tenant keeps it in repair?—Yes.

21755. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you got any leases in the place where you are?—No, I am not aware of any.

21756. Is there no such thing known?—No, I think not.

21757. You are entirely tenants at will?—Yes.

21758. I think you said the people are very willing to improve if they were sure they would not be turned out without the value of their improvements?—Yes.

21759. Who is proprietor of the land about?—There is no one proprietor; it is a sort of republic; there are about twenty.

21760. But a republic without liberty?—Without much liberty.

21761. *Mr Cameron.*—You mean too much liberty?—Yes, too much.

21762. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the biggest rent of any single member of the republic?—I don't know of any above £5 or £6, except house tenants.

21763. None of the people who signed the paper you read are landlords themselves?—Yes, one small landlord signed that paper.

21764. To whom do the bulk of the people who signed the paper pay rents?—To Mr Scott, the laird of Melby.

21765. Is he the proprietor of the island of Foula?—Yes.

21766. Does he live near you?—Yes, just a few miles over the hills.

21767. Does he reside there the most of the year?—Yes; he is not of age yet.

21768. Who has charge of the estate?—Mr Garriock, Raewick.

21769. Is he any friend or relation of the laird?—Not so far as I know.

21770. Does the proprietor or those who act for him lay out any money in improving the estate?—Yes, there is some laid out in making new houses; there is so much given, and the tenant does the rest.

21771. Is that going on just now?—Yes.

21772. You have no complaint, so far as houses are concerned?—No, no particular complaint. All the repairs are done by the tenant.

21773. You state in the paper that the crushing burden of rates which the tenants have to pay presses very heavily upon the people of the district, and tends to pauperise them; whose fault is it that the burdens are so heavy?—That is a question we cannot decide.

21774. You are not the causes of it yourselves, are you?—I don't think it.

21775. Don't you think it is as much the interest of the proprietor as the tenants to keep down the rates?—Yes, more so.

21776. Do you know what the school rate is in the parish of Walls?—I think 2s. 7d. in the pound of rental this year; it will be better than 3s. in the pound next year.

21777. One half payable by the landlord and one half by the tenant?—Yes.

21778. What is the poor rate?—2s. 6d. I think on each side, on the nett rent, not the gross.

21779. You complain of the road money, is that a heavy assessment?—I think 6d. in the pound.

21780. Do you pay in Walls an ecclesiastical assessment—an assessment for the church or manse, or something which was done some years ago?—No, not exactly; it was simply a raising of rent, and no cause given. It was not paid for church buildings or parochial buildings; it was simply a rise of rent at the time the parochial buildings were put up, some twelve or fourteen years ago.

21781. And it still continues?—And in all probability will.

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21782. Do you recollect when it was first put on?—I think it was in 1869, but I cannot say exactly.

21783. What makes the people in Foula, where we were yesterday, think that an ecclesiastical rent?—The opposition of religious matters, I suppose.

21784. But your receipts don't bear that it is an ecclesiastical burden?—Not in the least.

21785. One of the things you ask is a reduction of local rates by a subsidy from Government, in parishes where the rates exceed 5s. per pound; who made the suggestion at the meeting that the Government should relieve you of part of the rates?—I think it was I myself, if I remember rightly.

21786. Where did you get that idea?—The Government now gives us help towards maintaining lunatics, and they pay a certain proportion to the doctor for the poor, and in a place where the rates are heavy, why should they not pay something towards the maintenance of the poor as well?

21787. That was what passed through your mind when you made that suggestion?—Yes; they help in one direction, and why not in another, when the burden is so high? Next year the school rate may be half as much more than it is now.

21788. Are the school buildings not all yet erected?—No, not yet.

21789. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you use almost all your ground for the raising of potatoes?—Yes, I don't raise any corn.

21790. Do you sell any potatoes?—No, I very rarely sell any.

21791. Do you always cultivate the same ground for potatoes, or do you observe any rotation?—All round are shifting.

21792. Do you shift?—Not always.

21793. Do you observe a rotation?—No, no regular rotation.

21794. Do you keep a c w?—Not at present.

21795. How do you manure the ground?—With the refuse from the fire, or anything of that kind—ashes.

21796. You don't use any sea-weed?—No, it is rather too far away.

21797. Do you find that the ground is exhausted?—No doubt, it will be exhausted in the long run.

21798. You said that most of the tenants in the neighbourhood paid rent to Mr Scott of Melby, do any pay rent to Adie?—Not in our immediate neighbourhood.

21799. I thought you were at Voe?—I am at Voe, Walls, and Adie's property is at Voe, Delting.

21800. Are the tenants on Mr Scott of Melby's ground under any obligation to fish for any particular person?—No, they are free to fish to whom they will, and sell to whom they will.

21801. There is no complaint about that?—No.

21802. In your neighbourhood are there any people so far from the high road that they don't benefit by it?—Many.

21803. Is there any township very far from the high road?—One half of the parish of Sandness is about eight miles from any road except what the sheep have tracked through the heather.

21804. Is there any kind of track a cart could go along?—Not across the hills.

21805. Has the proprietor ever done anything towards making a road?—The Road Trustees commenced a road, and made a small bit at each end, and then stopped.

21806. The proprietors and tenants have never done anything towards making a road?—Nothing worthy of the name.

21807. Have they made an attempt to make a road?—Very little.

21808. The authorities cannot make a road everywhere; but supposing the proprietor was to offer to the tenants to make a road privately, would the tenants help the proprietor?—Not unless compelled.

21809. Supposing the proprietor said he would pay half the expense, would the tenants do something on their part without payment?—No, nothing without payment now.

21810. You said the rent was raised about the time the manse was built?—Yes, the manse was built and the church repaired.

21811. And about the same time there was a rise of rent?—Yes.

21812. But it was not specified in your papers that it was on account of the manse and repairs?—No, simply a rise all over.

21813. Do you think there was any connection between the building of the manse and the raising of the rent?—Certainly, the laird had to get the money from some quarter, and make good the difference.

21814. Was it the general impression of the people that the one thing was caused by the other?—It was.

21815. There are, I suppose, some people belonging to the Established Church?—I think the majority—perhaps not a majority of the parish, but a majority of the church-going people—belong to the Established Church.

21816. And the Established Church people thought so themselves?—I never heard a dissenting voice to that.

21817. Did it cause much discontent?—It caused a good deal of talk.

21818. Were the Established Church people just as much discontented as the dissenters?—Yes, if possible more so.

21819. Have you any other statement you wish to make?—No, nothing in particular; we have nothing to say against the lairds or factors, simply against the law as it stands.

21820. You wish security of tenure? How long do you think a lease ought to be?—A man would require twenty years.

21821. You think if they had that they would give satisfaction?—Yes, I think it would give great satisfaction. There is an unwritten law now supposed to exist—and that is what is wanted to be altered—that is, as long as a man is honest and pays his rent, he may remain. There have been no evictions amongst us for sake of sheep; the great grievance is that the proprietor should take advantage of the law, and enclose the scathold, and leave them worse than nothing. It is evil to come that we fear; we have had advantages in Walls which they have not had anywhere in Shetland.

21822. I thought Hillswick was as well off as Walls?—Not in times past. We have a number of proprietors and lairds, and amongst the lot we have more liberty than the people elsewhere. A great advantage in keeping down rents was emigration to New Zealand; and owing to the natural formation of the parish, it cannot be let for farms.

21823. When the people went away, did they go of their own accord?—Of their own free will.

21824. How were they encouraged to go?—By free emigration.

21825. Did any agent come to explain to them?—Yes, there were travelling agents about that time.

21826. How did the people find money to go?—There was no money required; the emigration was free.

21827. When they got abroad, were they given land?—No, they just worked at the best thing that turned up.

21828. How did they succeed?—As a rule, all well.

21829. Do they write to their friends in this country?—Yes.

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LERWICK.

James Robertson.

21830. Are any more people going out to them?—If emigration was free now, probably they would.

21831. How was the money recovered from those who were taken out free?—It never was recovered; it was the New Zealand Government that took them out, not private individuals.

21832. Were whole families taken, or only men?—Whole families, men, women, and children; but families had to find their own way to London.

21833. Did the Government supply them with food, or did they take their own provisions?—The Government supplied them.

THOMAS EWANSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Papa Stour (50)—examined.

Thomas Ewanson.

21834. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any statement to make?—Yes. 'We the undersigned, crofters in the island of Papa Stour, hereby 'humbly beg to bring the undermentioned grievances under which 'we are at present living, before the notice of the Royal Crofters Com- 'missioners now visiting Shetland. (1) That owing to peat ground being 'exhausted on the island, we have been compelled to transport our peats 'for the last twelve years from Papa Little and the Ness of Aithness, 'the former a distance of nine miles and the latter of ten miles from this 'island, over a tempestuous bay, often at the risk of life. (2) That since '1870 we have been deprived of a large proportion of our scathold by it 'being fenced in; and although this has been done, we have had no 'reduction of our rents, but on the contrary, for the last thirty years, 'repeated rises on the rents have been made for reasons unknown to us, 'so that we consider that if our crofts were valued by a valuator 'appointed by Parliament, that we would be found at present paying 'rents for them far above their value. (3) That we have at present no 'compensation granted us for building outhouses, nor for other im- 'provements made on our crofts, when we remove from them. 'This we consider is unfair, and is a matter that we think ought to be 'altered; also that we would very much desire to have security against 'being evicted from our holdings, while we can pay a fair value for them, 'and wish to remain on them. We hereby appoint Thomas Ewanson 'and John Sinclair as delegates, to being the above mentioned grievances 'before the Royal Crofters Commissioners. Trusting that our petition will 'get their favourable consideration, and their petitioners will ever pray.— 'WM. JOHNSON, JOHN UMPHRAY, and twenty-two others.—*Papa Stour*, '*July* 16, 1883.'

21835. You complain that the peat ground is exhausted, so that you are compelled to transport peat a long distance over a stormy bay?—Yes.

21836. What remedy can you suggest for that state of things?—We would require some compensation for our work. We are all fishermen, and we spend part of the best time for fishing in procuring peats. Twenty-four days we calculate it takes to bring eight months' fire from Papa Little and Aithness, and that during the best part of our fishing time.

21837. You would like to be paid for the labour of transporting your own peats?—Yes, or to receive compensation for it in some way from the proprietor. If we spend our time carrying peats to the island, we lose our fishing; and if we lose our fishing, we cannot pay our rents.

21838. Is there any fuel now in the island?—There is little or nothing now, it is all scalped bare; and that has cleaned all the sort of pasture

we had. We take about four months' burning from a part of the island, and about eight months from the other place we transport from.

21839. What is the population of Papa Stour?—I cannot exactly say.

21840. How many families are there on it?—Thirty-six.

21841. Has each family got a certain amount of arable ground which it cultivates?—Yes, some more some less.

21842. Have you any idea what number of acres each family cultivates?—I could hardly tell you; four or three, or perhaps not three in some cases.

21843. What is the size of your own croft?—I was just removed to one there last season, and I cannot tell you exactly.

21844. Is the one you removed to larger or smaller than the one you left?—About the same size, but it is inferior in quality.

21845. Why were you removed?—I removed of my own accord to try and better myself.

21846. But you made an unfortunate selection?—I have three different times removed on the ground of the same proprietor—Lady Nicolson.

21847. Always intending to better yourself?—Yes.

21848. And have you always made the same unfortunate choice?—No betterment yet.

21849. Do you propose to try again?—Yes.

21850. At these different removals, who got the places you left?—In some cases other tenants on the same proprietor's ground got them, and others were laid waste.

21851. Left unoccupied?—It is occupied now, but at a reduction of rent.

21852. I am afraid there are too many families residing on Papa Stour for the quanity of fuel on it?—Yes, and I think about one-third of the people on the place have left on that account.

21853. How many families do you think could remain with the quantity of fuel there is?—They could not do with the fuel in the island without some from other places.

21854. Could they not manage if the population were reduced?—No, not without some of the better quality of fuel along with it.

21855. How long is it estimated that the four months' supply of fuel will last with the present number of families?—I cannot exactly say.

21856. Does it look like lasting many years?—No, it is near about out altogether.

21857. Then people will be left shortly without peat in the island at all?—Yes.

21858. The island will be hardly habitable under these conditions, will it?—Hardly.

21859. Who is the factor?—Mr Thomas Adie.

21860. Have you ever heard what the factor intends doing in view of this state of thing?—No.

21861. Do you think it will be possible to live without peat, which you can only get by conveying it twelve miles across a stormy bay?—It is not possible to do without it.

21862. Peat is a heavy and bulky article to transport?—It is.

21863. Is there any other property belonging to Lady Nicolson to which the families on the island might be removed?—None nearer that they could have.

21864. Has she any property on the mainland?—Yes, but none nearer or more suitable.

21865. Has she any property in the vicinity where peat could be cut?—None that I know of.

SHETLAND. — LERWICK. — Thomas Ewanson.

21866. Can you describe the arrangements under which the scathold is pastured hy the tenants. Does each tenant put on any quantity of stock he likes,—cattle, ponies and sheep?—Yes at present, but some have only a few and some none.

21867. Is there any rule by which the number is regulated?—There was a rule a few years ago.

21868. And what happened to that rule?—It did not stand; it was laid down, but did not stand.

21869. Why did it not stand?—The tenants just got their will the same as before.

21870. Did the tenants not approve of the rule?—No.

21871. They would rather return to the old system under which everybody put exactly what he pleased upor the scathold?—Yes.

21872. Don't you think the rule was fair and just towards the tenants, that each person should be allowed to put on a certain number and no more?—Yes, if it were carried out.

21873. But the majority of the tenants thought otherwise?—Yes; those that had the stock put them on again, and the others had not the ability to raise the stock.

21874. When was the scathold taken off—ten or fourteen years ago?—Yes, it was after that when they wished to go back to the old rule.

21875. After the scathold had been fenced?—Yes.

21876. What proportion was fenced off?—I could not tell you, but the tenants wish to have it back again.

21877. What was done with the scathold?—It is a sheep farm.

21878. Who occupies it?—William Humphray, crofter.

21879. How did he get money enough to take this larger holding?—Perhaps he was helped by the factor, Mr Thomas Adie.

21880. Was he just an ordinary crofter?—He was a fisherman and crofter before.

21881. Was he supposed to have made sufficient money to take and stock this land?—He did not have it of himself.

21882. Was there any opposition manifested by the other crofters when this man got the scathold fenced off for himself?—Yes, they went to Mr Adie, and wished to have it as it was before, but it was not granted.

21883. Have you any idea by what amount the stock kept by the other crofters was reduced in consequence of this fencing off of a portion of the scathold?—I could not tell that.

21884. What stock do you keep yourself?—I keep two Shetland milk cows, one quey, one calf, one pony, and about ten sheep; and that is as many as can be kept on an average on the island.

21885. Is that about an average of what each crofter keeps?—That is about the average of what can be kept; some have none at all, and some have double, treble, or quadruple that.

21886. Do they all pay the same rent?—There is a difference in the rents of the crofts, but they all pay the same for the scathold; there is no difference with respect to that.

21887. Is the difference in the number of cattle held by the tenants caused by one crofter doing well by fishing, and another falling into poor circumstances and having to sell his stock?—Partly, and partly to not being able to begin; they cannot take any sheep from the mainland on account of the sheep disease; it is clearing the island.

21888. What sheep disease?—Scab.

21889. Is it bad on the mainland?—In some places it is.

21890. Is it always existing there?—Always to some extent.

21891. Don't they use dips to preserve the sheep from scab?—Oh yes.

21892. Do they not find that that cures it?—Very likely it does, but I cannot tell; we are not using it.

21893. Don't you think you ought to use it if you want your sheep to get free from scab?—We are not troubled with it.

21894. Does any of that scab come among the ponies?—Yes.

21895. The same scab?—Not the same.

21896. Are the people on the mainland not aware that scab is a thing that sticks to the ground, and that they will get it every year unless they make an effort to clear it away by proper dips?—Perhaps some of them are aware of it.

21897. Who looks after the sheep?—Just themselves.

21898. Each manages for himself?—Yes.

21899. Are there any large sheep farms in the neighbourhood?—Yes, there are some through Shetland, but I don't know much about them.

21900. Do you think these sheep farmers don't try to persuade the crofters to keep their sheep clear of scab?—No, I never heard that they did.

21901. What rent did you pay?—£6, 10s.

21902. And about three or four acres of arable ground?—I think about four acres, as far as I can learn.

21903. You say you have no compensation guaranteed for building houses; have many of the crofters built houses?—Yes; I have been on four farms belonging to Lady Nicolson, and I have got very little compensation for building a house 28 feet by 12 feet by 6 feet 5 inches. I built it, and left it without getting anything.

21904. Did you build outhouses on each croft you occupied?—Yes, out of the quarry.

21905. Did you ask for compensation?—I asked for it once, and got a denial, and I never asked again.

21906. Do you know if any other crofters built any houses for themselves?—For the most part.

21907. Have the crofters in this island been in the habit of shifting about voluntarily in the way you have done?—Yes.

21908. What makes them change their quarters?—They think they may be better at one place than another.

21909. How many of the thirty-three families changed in the course of one year?—Some years there is not any change, and some years there may be three or four shifting about.

21910. Are there many seals in the island?—No, there is hardly one to be seen.

21911. Used there to be a lot?—Yes, there were plenty at one time, but there is scarcely one now.

21912. What has happened to them?—I don't know; perhaps they have lost their course, or have been killed.

21913. Were they a source of profit to the crofters?—No.

21914. You say you desire to have security against being evicted from your holdings?—Yes.

21915. But this dreadful fact about peats leaving you would not make you fond of the island?—It is a fine fishing place. All the inhabitants are fishermen, and they don't wish to leave the island.

21916. What do you and your neighbours expect or propose should be done when the supply of peat comes to an end?—We can hardly state that at present.

21917. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are the two properties in Papa Stour divided?—Yes, the whole ground is divided by the lairds; a march is laid out between the properties.

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21918. When you are selling any beast, what market do you go to?—Voe—to Mr Adie's place or to Walls.

21919. Do any dealers come to Papa Stour?—No.

21920. What communication have you got with the mainland; how do you get your letters?—There are two posts which come across every week in summer, and one in winter.

21921. With regard to this crofter who you say has got a big farm, what rent does he pay?—He has a small croft, only he has a sheep farm along with it. About £4 was the rent.

21922. What does he pay for the sheep farm?—I cannot tell you.

21923. Does he pay £50?—No.

21924. £30?—No.

21925. Have you any idea what stock he has?—I could not tell you. He has a good stock on it of small sheep.

21926. Where does it lie—down towards the caves where the seals are?—It is at the North Ness.

21927. Is that where the caves and seals are?—No.

21928. Has he got the best part of the pasture—the best in the island?—It is all the pasture in the island now.

21929. When passing it yesterday some of the tops were very green indeed; I presume that was his farm?—That was the north-east part; his was where Mr Adie's station is.

21930. Will you explain how it is possible to remedy the state of matters about the peats. Supposing the proprietors were to put up a pier where your boats could land, would that be enough?—No, it would not do. We would need to cure our peats ourselves, if he could put them on the island to us clear of labour. We would like if he put them on the island, and then it would not take our time from the fishing.

21931. You would like him to transport them?—Yes, clear of expense.

21932. Are there any peats in the small island—Papa Little?—No; there was a tenant on it, but it is under sheep pasture now.

21933. Who has got it?—Mr Dickson.

21934. Has he more than that island?—Yes.

21935. Where?—He has the island of Lunga and Vementray.

21936. That island would be of no use to you?—It would be of no use as pasture unless we had it altogether.

21937. Is the population increasing or falling off in Papa Stour?—Falling off. The crofters are all leaving it on account of the want of peats.

21938. The only reason for your remaining in the island is because the fishing is good?—Yes.

21939. You know Fetlar?—Yes.

21940. Is it far from you?—It is on the east side, and we are on the west side.

21941. There is plenty of vacant ground there, on the Nicolson property?—Probably, I cannot tell you.

21942. You have not been there?—I was only once ashore.

21943. Has Lady Nicolson any property near where you are except this island?—None that I know of: only this place where we cut peat.

21944. Does the whole of that island belong to her?—Yes.

21945. *The Chairman.*—You said there was no scab on the sheep on your island?—None on the island.

21946. Has there never been scab on your island?—None that I know of.

21947. You say they are not allowed to bring sheep from the mainland on to the island?—No.

21948. Who is it that lays down that law—is it the proprietor or the crofters themselves?—The crofters themselves.

21949. But you say that the ponies have had the scab?—They have had what we call the horse disease.

21950. Is it a kind of scab?—No.

21951. Is it quite a different thing?—Yes, it won't affect the sheep, so far as I know.

21952. You say you got no compensation for the outhouses?—No.

21953. When you put up outhouses, do you build them with stone and lime, or only with dry stones?—Dry stones.

21954. And what sort of roof is put on?—A wood and earth roof.

21955. Thatched?—Yes.

21956. It is dry stones?—Yes.

21957. When you leave one place to go to another, are you allowed to carry away the wood of the roof?—Yes, in some cases they will get the chance to do it.

21958. Did you take away the wood of your roof?—In some places, and in some places I left it. The tenant who came in paid for it.

21959. Then the loss you have is the dry stone walls?—Yes.

21960. That is all?—Yes.

21961. What do you think is the value of the dry stone walls and the labour of the outhouses?—I could hardly tell you; we never put any value upon them.

21962. Would it be £2?—Yes.

21963. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is that place from which you get peats the nearest where peats are to be had?—There are plenty others, but none belonging to the same proprietor.

21964. What are the places which are nearer?—Sandness Voe.

21965. Is that the place from which the Sandness people get their peats?—Yes.

21966. Who is the proprietor there?—Mr Scott of Melby.

21967. There is plenty of peat upon his property?—Yes, plenty; but I suppose they are far up from the sea.

21968. How far is it from you by land and sea to where the peats could be had most conveniently?—Most part from Sandness Voe.

21969. Is there a convenient landing place at your island?—Yes.

21970. And it is a good fishing station?—Yes.

21971. For whom do you fish?—Mr Adie. There is a good fishing station, and plenty of room for more.

21972. *Is it white fishing you all follow?*—White fishing and herring fishing.

21973. Where do you fish?—To the west.

21974. Far out in the ocean?—Yes, sometimes far out, and sometimes not very far.

21975. Are you able to fish any in winter?—Yes, with the small boats, and in summer with big boats.

21976. Do you fish for Mr Adie in winter?—Yes.

21977. Does he keep a store on the island?—Yes.

21978. And you get your stores from him?—Yes; but not altogether.

21979. Where else do you go for stores?—To Sandness.

21980. Who is factor on your estate?—Mr Adie.

21981. There is no other fish-curer in Papa except Mr Adie?—None.

21982. The only compensation you could get for the want of these rates is, I suppose, the reduction of your rent?—We will leave that to the management.

21983. What were you looking for?—For the reduction of the rent, do the peats put over, as I stated.

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21984. Either that the proprietor should reduce the rents or ferry the peats?—Yes.

21985. You would cut them and dry them yourselves?—Yes.

21986. When you were not busy with the fishing?—Yes.

21987. How could that ferrying best be done—by taking a big vessel?—Yes.

21988. Then, I suppose, if there were an equal reduction in the rents, you could do that yourselves—hire a big vessel, and get the peats across, as well as the proprietor?—No, I don't suppose we could.

21989. Why not?—I don't think we could manage.

21990. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you a church in Papa Stour?—Yes.

21991. An Established church?—Yes.

21992. Is there any other church?—There was one, but it has gone down now; a Methodist chapel.

21993. Have you more than one school?—No, only one.

21994. Is it convenient to the inhabitants?—There is a new school which they are commencing to build just now.

21995. Is it convenient to the children of the island?—Yes.

21996. Do they attend well?—Yes.

21997. Have you a doctor?—There is one in the parish of Walls.

21998. How far is that?—Six miles and a mile across the sound.

21999. Do you find it a hardship that he should be so far from you?—Yes, we very seldom see him.

22000. Does he not come regularly to vaccinate the children?—He comes, but not regularly.

22001. Do you know if there are any children in the island who have not been vaccinated?—I don't think there are any.

22002. Are you liable to any particular disease in the island?—None at present that I know of.

22003. Then you will not miss the doctor very much?—Yes, there is great need for a doctor, and very poorly we are served with him.

22004. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Where does he stay?—Walls.

22005. Six miles from Sandness?—Yes.

WILLIAM HUTCHESON, Crofter and Fisherman, Whalsay (60)—examined.

William Hutcheson.

22006. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you been appointed a delegate to come here?—No.

22007. You have come of your own accord?—Yes.

22008. Have you got any written statement?—No.

22009. What have you to say?—I have to complain of the high rents and want of pasture.

22010. Who is the proprietor of the island?—Mr Bruce of Whalsay, and Mr William Irvine is factor.

22011. Does Mr Bruce live on the island?—No, he lives in Edinburgh, a young boy.

22012. Has he any other property besides this island?—Yes, he has property at Ness.

22013. What is he generally called?—Bruce of Symbister.

22014. How many families are there altogether?—About 100, I think, I could not exactly say how many.

22015. Then the population will be about 500?—900, I think.

22016. Is it increasing?—Yes.

22017. What rent do you pay?—£6, 16s. for 4½ acres of land.

22018. Does that £6, 16s. mean taxes as well, or is it bare rent?—Bare rent, and the taxes vary from 18s. to 22s. I have paid £7, 14s., and I have paid £7, 18s. The latter is the highest I have paid and the former the lowest—that is, in twenty years. It was in 1863 that the land was planted and over-rented.

22019. What stock do you keep upon that 4½ acres?—I can keep two cows and a quey in winter.

22020. Have you any ponies?—No.

22021. Any sheep?—No sheep.

22022. Does that croft support you?—No, I have to buy six bolls of meal in the year.

22023. What family have you got?—Four of a family.

22024. Is the size and the rent of your holding about the average of those over the island?—No, mine is one of the least.

22025. Can you tell me what is the biggest rent paid by any one person?—Mine is the biggest, unless one, I think, in the island.

22026. Do I understand from you that other people have better places than yours?—I think so. I think I have a worse place than some, and a heavier rent. Some have better places and less rent.

22027. Were you born on the island?—Yes.

22028. Have you been there all your days?—Yes.

22029. In the same place?—No, but in the same town. I have been just once shifted.

22030. What rent did you pay when you first set up house for yourself?—28s. or 30s. for three merks of land.

22031. Put that into acres for me?—I could not do that.

22032. Is that as much as the 4½ acres you have now?—It was more, but we were on a different system then; we were going to the fishing and getting a very little for the fish, and had a very low rent. Then when the land was planted we got an over-rent to pay.

22033. Were you fishing for the landlord in those times?—Yes.

22034. On what terms had you to do so; were you obliged to supply him on his own terms?—Yes.

22035. In those days if you had anything at your credit did you get money?—Yes, if there was any over; but there never was very much over.

22036. In some places we were told that in those old times the people were better off; but in your opinion it was not so?—I cannot say they were so;—but if they are better now it is owing to the people getting their eyes enlightened.

22037. I daresay they require a little more light still?—I think so.

22038. For whom do you fish now?—Messrs Irvine, Hay, & Co.

22039. They are very influential people in this island?—Yes, they are indeed.

22040. And have got stations here, there, and everywhere?—Yes.

22041. On what conditions do you fish for them?—They give as good prices as another.

22042. Have you any share in the boat in which you fish?—Yes, every man has a share in his boat.

22043. Do the boat's crew get half the produce?—I suppose if Hay and Co. own the boat they get half-catch; but generally the men own the boat themselves.

22044. Do you own your boat?—I am too old a man to go; I don't go in the boats.

22045. How long is it since you went in a boat?—Three years.

22046. Have you any sons?—I have two.

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William Hutcheson.

22047. Do they live with you?—One of them lives with me, but I am obliged to him or I could not live.

22048. Is your grievance that you are paying too heavy rent?—Yes, the full rent, and the scathold taken off from us.

22049. Tell us about the scathold?—It was taken off for the sheep farm on the island, half of the island is taken off for that, and so 100 families left on the other half of the island, which is four miles long and two broad.

22050. And the 100 families have got half of it?—No, half the scathold is taken off from them.

22051. Half of the scathold goes to these 100 families, and the other half to one man?—Yes.

22052. What is his name?—Zachary M'Aulay Hamilton.

22053. How did he get that name?—From his father, the minister of Bressay.

22054. Does he live on the island?—Yes. That is our grievance I have to complain of; and I have no place to tether a cow in, and cannot have a drop of milk.

22055. Is that the state of matters among your neighbours?—Very near; not one in the town has more than one cow, and there are twelve neighbours in the town.

22056. Is there a scarcity of milk for children in consequence?—Yes.

22057. How long is it since Mr Hamilton got the farm?—I could not exactly say.

22058. You said that in 1863 the island was planted?—Yes, but he had not got it then.

22059. When was it made into a sheep farm?—About 1865, if I remember right.

22060. Was he the first tenant?—No, Mr Shepherd was the first there as a sheep farmer.

22061. How long was he there?—I think about seven years.

22062. Did he do well on it?—Yes, he went south and took a far larger farm. Mr Hamilton, I reckon, is making as good a thing of it.

22063. And by your account the crofters are making nothing of it?—No, I am living on a small bare bit of land now for twenty years 4½ acres of land for £6, 16s. of rent.

22064. Was there any other old cultivated land taken off and given to this sheep farm?—Three holdings.

22065. How many acres might be in these holdings; I suppose about fifteen altogether?—About that.

22066. And does that gentleman cultivate these lands?—No, he keeps them lying for grazing sheep.

22067. It is all out of cropping?—Yes.

22068. What induced the proprietor to make this change in the island?—The proprietor himself was badly when this took place, and shortly after he died. He was not fit to manage the place himself, and so he let it out to these gentlemen.

22069. Have you any idea what rent Mr Hamilton pays?—I heard, when Shepherd got it, that he was to pay £170, but that might be true or it might not.

22070. Then he is not paying nearly so much as yourself and the other small tenants?—Nothing like it.

22071. And it does not seem to be for the benefit of the proprietor that he should be there at all?—I don't think it.

22072. And it is certainly not for the benefit of the small people?—No, it is greatly to our disadvantage; for his sheep are on the heather of

the hill, and our sheep would eat it while his won't. His sheep never taste it.

22073. It comes to this, that the pastures must therefore be falling back if they are not properly eaten?—I believe it is getting no good.

22074. Why didn't the people in the island meet in the way they have done in other places and send delegates to come here?—They met and sent delegates.

22075. I think you stated you were not one of them?—I am not one, I only wanted to come here to get a hearing if possible, there are delegates here besides me.

22076. Is John Stewart a delegate?—No, but he wants a hearing.

22077. Is James Shearer a delegate?—No.

22078. Is Alexander Jamieson a delegate?—No; but they want a hearing.

WALTER WILLIAMSON, Fisherman and Crofter, Burra Isle (59)—examined.

Walter Williamson.

22079. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you a delegate?—I am.

22080. You were elected by your people?—Yes.

22081. Have you any statement to make?—Yes. 'At a meeting of 'crofters, held within the U.P. Church, Burra Isle, on the 18th of June, 'Mr Walter Williamson and Mr James Smith were appointed to repre- 'sent them before the Royal Commission, and call attention to the follow- 'ing matters:—(1) We think the present rents are too high. (2) The 'proprietor will not give anything to build or repair houses, and if the 'tenants themselves put up new houses they get no lease or promise of 'compensation. (3) If the crofts are improved or made better by the 'tenants, there is a danger of the rents being raised without any com- 'pensation for the improvements. (4) The proprietor has power to put 'out his tenants at forty days' warning—a hard and unjust law. (5) 'District road money has been exacted for a number of years, but the 'roads on the island are only now begun. (6) 'Fair rents—rents fixed by 'a competent valuator, and not by the proprietor,—are desired: also 'security against evictions. The proprietor should not have power to 'turn out a tenant if he is paying a fair rent. (7) We do not want the 'scathold, or pasture land, taken from us, as we think it belonged to 'us originally.—WALTER WILLIAMSON, Chairman,—*20th June*, 1883.'

22082. On which of the two islands do you live?—West Burra.

22083. How many families are on the island?—There are about eighty crofters.

22084. Who is the proprietor?—The Misses Scott.

22085. Where do they live?—Perhaps in Edinburgh. Burra is under trust, I understand, and for several years has been managed by Mr Garriock at Scalloway.

22086. How many families are on Easter Burra?—I don't know that.

22087. Is this paper only for Wester Burra?—It is for both islands; both islands are united.

22088. You think your present rent is too high?—We do.

22089. What is your own rent?—£4, 4s. 4d. for the bit of croft I hold, and the small bit of another croft I paid £4, 2s. 2d.; but the actual rent is £3, 12s. 6d. exclusive of rates, for the croft I am in exclusive of the half croft.

22090. Is that the ordinary rent?—I think it is rather below the average.

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22091. What is the highest rent?—Perhaps £7 I would suppose, exclusive of rates.

22092. And what is the lowest rent?—I think there is one croft at £1, but only one.

22093. How many animals can you keep?—I keep three cows; but then I have a bit of grass more than this—I have a guinea's worth of land in another place. I could not keep the three cows without buying provisions, until I got that guinea's worth of land.

22094. How many sheep do you keep?—The sheep upon Burra are in open pasture. The pasture is very poor, and has never been taken from us. Everybody is at liberty to keep as many as he can maintain alive. Some have as many as a score of the Shetland breed, and several crofters have none at all.

22095. How many have you?—About a dozen.

22096. What is the largest number anybody has?—I would fancy about a score or thereby.

22097. What is the largest number of cows anybody has?—Abont four or five cows would be about the most.

22098. What would you consider a fair rent for yourself?—Some years ago, perhaps nineteen years ago, I think, or thereby, we had £50 of rent laid upon the island, and we were very aggravated, and thought it unfair, and that is what we complain of. We were then in Burra island, under the thraldom of the truck system, and we felt it very much, because we had no power over our fishing. We had to fish to the tacksman, and never knew the price of the fish until we came to settle, and the tacksman could give us just what he pleased. We felt very much aggrieved, and had several meetings among ourselves to see what plan or principle we might honestly and legally decide upon to keep ourselves clear men, and free like Englishmen. Englishmen have the boast of liberty; we could boast of none although we were British men. We were in bondage and slavery, and we had several meetings to get our liberty—the thing desired by all men. At one of these meetings we proposed to the law agent of the Misses Scott to give us a lease of Burra Isle for ourselves, and we would promise to pay the yearly rent in a day. Hay & Co. were then the lessees or tacksmen for Burra. We did not know that they were getting £50 off the rents of the island for drawing up rents and bad debts. We offered the law agent in Edinburgh the same rent they were paying, which turned out to be £50 more than the proprietor was actually getting. The law agent very likely thought it was better to get it from one gentleman than from a lot of rude fishermen and crofters, and he offered the same tacksman the land again at a new lease for the rent we were offering. He took it at that rent, and laid £50 more upon us in return, and that is how we think we are paying too much rent. I was in a half croft in Burra before that, which was in a poor state. The house was not worth calling a house—it was nothing at all. The roof was like to come down, and so also were the walls. I went to the proprietor wanting assistance to build the house, and was told their laws were to give no assistance, and I got none. I added twelve feet to the house, and made its walls higher, and gave it almost a new roof. The following year I had 20s. added to my rent, and that I think an unfair and unjust thing.

22099. Was that done immediately after your enlarging the house?—The very year it happened after the enlarging of the house, when we wanted to get our liberty. I don't say it was because I enlarged the house, but the house being enlarged, there was no mercy on account of that, which I think was a very unjust thing indeed.

22100. What improvement did you make upon the croft?—The croft has not been of long standing. I remember the son sitting on it as tenant—the son of the man who dragged it out of its virgin state, and put it into a croft. It was very shallow ground; I ditched up a good deal, and quarried out stones, and improved it in many ways, and took a great deal of sea ware and laid it upon it, and improved it for giving a crop; and I was indignant that, after all my improvement, it should have been immediately raised in rent.

22101. Have any of your neighbours had their rents raised since that time?—The £50 was laid over the land, but chiefly on those who improved.

22102. Has the rent been raised since then?—No. I don't complain of Messrs Garriock & Co. Since the Truck Commission came we have little or no complaint to make. It is the only time we have ever got anything like the free liberty of free men. We act under him in every circumstance as we please under the bonds of the civil law. He does not want our fish, unless we want to sell to him: and if we want to sell to him he gives as good a price as any. Two years ago he gave us £1 more than any other body. I don't come to complain against Mr Garriock, but I come here to complain of the confounded laws which hurt the poor crofters. I know the crofters have had a hard and bitter time for a long time back. I am free to tell that.

22103. When did you get free from this truck yoke?—Just shortly after the Truck Commission came. We were watching it with a good deal of interest, and it is from that time only that the Burra people have had either a stitch of clothes on their back or a morsel of food.

22104. Now you are at perfect liberty?—Yes, and a most blessed thing it is. We can do anything we like—either go to the merchant who gives the highest price, or cure our fish ourselves.

22105. Have you no roads in the island?—That was considered a grievance, but the roads are getting on now; they are making fast progress.

22106. When did that begin?—Last winter, but they made little progress because the weather was bad, but now they are working pretty hard.

22107. Have you horses?—Yes, a few have horses in Burra island, but I have none.

22108. And carts?—No carts; no roads and no carts. There is not a cart on the island.

22109. Is everything carried on people's backs?—Everything; and the poor women work a good deal harder than many of the rich men's horses. No true gentleman would work his horse so hard as our wives are wrought, and we must needs do that to make a creditable living. I did not for my own part wish to come here, but the meeting which was held wished me to come, and I said if they wished me I would do so, but my time was past.

22110. You say you don't want the scathold taken from you:—is there any danger of that?—There is nobody in Shetland has a bit of pasture anywhere worth while to take. It is in great danger of being taken; proprietors have taken it away yearly.

22111. But none of yours has been taken yet?—No; and we have never heard of it being taken. It is not worth taking. It is a strip of island and remarkably sea-girt, and a great amount of danger connected with stock on it. And the land is very bad. We believe the crofting population not only in Shetland, but in Great Britain, is a great power. There is an everlasting amount of national wealth among the crofters. In

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Scalloway alone there is not a gentleman or business-man, or fisherman or common labourer, but his father or grandfather was a crofter, and in Lerwick, it has been crofters since it began to rise. The crofters in England, Scotland, and Ireland are, I contend, the wealth of the nation. They are there in war and peace, and it is nothing but just and equitable that they should have more fair play when I am dead than they had before, and it is the nation that must do it and not the landlords. Every man is a selfish man, and why not the landlords as well as others? We want improvements on our crops, and also on our houses. We are living all through the country in hovels, and not houses. The blame of it lies on the landlord laws. I don't say it is on the landlords, but on the landlord laws. If I had been a landlord, I am not sure but I should be as bad; but there should be proper laws.

EDWARD ARTHUR, Crofter and Fisherman, Whalsay (68)—examined.

Edward Arthur.

22112. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you any other employment besides crofter and fisherman?—No. I have been for some time in the sailor line in my time.

22113. Were you long away as a sailor?—About a dozen years.

22114. Were you a sailor or common officer? No, just before the mast.

22115. Have you a paper?—Yes. 'To the Royal Commissioners 'for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.—Gentlemen, we your 'petitioners, humbly state that we the crofters of Whalsay have 'grievances that we would wish to lay before you, viz., that in many 'cases our crofts have been reduced, and the rents raised; and in con-'sequence of verbal leases, and no compensation for improvement, tho 'crofters have poor encouragement for making improvements. And also 'our scathold in many cases has been reduced, and in some cases wholly 'taken away for sheep farming purposes, and consequently our chance of 'making a living is very limited; and likewise there is only one shop in 'the island, and no more being permitted, we find it a great incon-'venience; and other grievances might be personally stated before you. '—We are, gentlemen, your humble petitioners, Crofters of Whalsay.—'EDWARD ARTHUR, THOMAS HENDERSON, JAMES ROBSON, representatives 'for the crofters of Whalsay.—25*th June* 1883.'

22116. You heard the former witness from Whalsay, and what he said about the state of the island?—Yes.

22117. Do you agree with that so far as it went?—I quite agree with it.

22118. You say in this paper that, in many cases, your crofts have been reduced?—Yes, more tenants put on the land than there were there formerly.

22119. When was this done?—1863, I think.

22120. Mr Bruce of Symbister was living at that time?—Yes, he was.

22121. He was factor himself at that time?—The factor had not come in then; the laird was alive.

22122. It was at that time that the crofts were reduced by other people being sent in among you, and some of your crofts taken and given to those new people?—Yes.

22123. Where did these people come from?—From the islands.

22124. They belonged to the place?—Yes.

22125. Were they all sons of crofters themselves, just in the same place?—Yes, generally; just the neighbours.

22126. And others came from the place where the new farm was made?—Yes.

22127. How many families came from where the new farm was made?—No, none of them came from that.

22128. You say also that the rents were raised?—Yes.

22129. Was it at that time the rents were raised?—Yes; when the land was turned up, the rents were raised and the pasture land taken away at the same time.

22130. How much was the rent raised?—In the first of my time I paid £4—I paid 25s. a merk, which was about an acre. But for the very same land for which I paid £4, without tithe, thirty years ago, I now pay £6, 10s. with rates. We had no rates at that time, neither poor nor school rates.

22131. And the rates are very high?—They are £1 now on me; so that really I pay £7 for what I got for £4 thirty years ago.

22132. The boundaries of your croft have not been changed?—No.

22133. And have the rents of the other crofters in Whalsay been raised in much the same way?—Yes, the very same.

22134. 'Verbal leases' means that the people only held leases from year to year, I suppose?—Yes.

22135. And that they could be sent away at forty days' notice?—Yes.

22136. You think that if they had long leases and compensation for improvement, they would make improvements more than they do?—Yes, there would then be better encouragement.

22137. I suppose, as a matter of fact, people are not turned away?—No.

22138. But still you think if they had security that they would not be turned away, they would work better?—Yes. The principal grievance at the present time is that our rents are far too high. We can raise very few cattle for that money, and the pasture being taken away from us.

22139. The paper says the scathold has been reduced, and in some cases wholly taken away?—Some of our townships have not one foot of scathold. The cattle never know where the hill is; they must be reduced to the byre the whole season.

22140. The others have some scathold yet?—Yes; but it is very poor.

22141. Can you tell me how much scathold was added to that sheep farm occupied by Mr Hamilton?—I could not say.

22142. Is it a large track?—Yes; Mr Hamilton has by far the best part of the scathold.

22143. Before 1853, did the whole of that stretch of scathold belong to the crofters?—The whole of it. In my time we had freedom to put our stock on any part of the hill we pleased, and when the scathold was taken off it was a grievous thing for me, for I lost about seventy or eighty head of sheep which were in the property he took off. And after he took it in, my sheep lay outside until they died.

22144. When you had land thirty years ago at £4, 10s., had you plenty of sheep?—Yes; we had plenty, and freedom. We never thought but that every tenant was to have plenty of freedom of the pasture.

22145. I suppose you may put as much stock as you please upon the scathold, only there is less scathold?—Yes, but it won't hold them. And in our neighbourhood, where the scathold has been taken off, they must put their animals in upon us, and it is as bad for us as for them.

22146. Your grievance is that the rents have been raised very much, and that the scathold has been reduced upon you?—Yes, on account of want of sheep we must all get cotton. Once we had warm

SHETLAND. wool, but now we have nothing to wear but cotton sheetings.

LERWICK.

Edward Arthur.

22147. Are the Whalsay people engaged in fishing?—Yes.

22148. What fishing do they follow?—Ling and herring fishing principally now, since the large boats have come in, but they follow the ling fishing in the spring.

22149. Do they fish from the island or from the Outer Skerries?—The small boats used to go to the Outer Skerries, and in the first of my time we used to fish from the land. We got for ling 3s. 4d., for tusk 2s. 6d., and for cod 1s. 6d. per cwt. But then we had our land at 10s. a merk—low land and low fish. Our beef was 14s. per cwt., and our day's work was 10d. and find yourself. But now every man has freedom to fish to the best advantage; but his rent is heavy, and on account of our losing the pasture we are considerably harassed.

22150. Low rents and low prices for fish and beef in the past, and now high rents and high prices for fish and beef—which is the better condition for the crofter to be in?—I could not say. The people think themselves better off now, on account of the times being more enlightened, and they can see better what they are doing.

22151. I am looking at it rather more in the light of food and clothes. What do you say of the present or the past; were the people more comfortable then than they are now, or are they more comfortable now than they were then?—We have to buy a great deal of our living now; the crofts can do very little for us.

22152. But you have more means?—Yes, the earnings are better.

22153. Which is the best time—when you were young or now?—It is better now, if we only had fair play with our land and pasture.

22154. You would like to make it better still by having lower rent?—Yes, and by having use of the pasture as before.

22155. The factor just now is Mr Irvine?—Yes.

22156. The proprietor is a minor?—Yes, he is not of age. We have been under the factor for a good many years, and a good man he is. I would not like to see him going naked or hungry.

22157. Is it he who has the only shop in the island?—Yes, Hay & Co.

22158. Is he a member of that firm?—Yes, he has been.

22159. And is it to them you give the fish you get at the island?—Yes, they have a fishing station on the island.

22160. And do the whole population give them fish?—Yes.

22161. And do the people, considering they have put it down as a grievance, complain that there is only one shop on the island, and no more permitted?—That is the great evil.

22162. Who has the power of permitting another shop on the island?—Hay & Co.

22163. And they permit no one but themselves?—No, he would allow no one to sell but himself, I suppose. The island being four miles perhaps, we send our children to the shop, and they may have to stand there from morning till night—there is a great run of business—and that is the reason why our children, and perhaps ourselves, cannot get served. And likewise, the firm have had all their own way—no opposition.

22164. I suppose you could put up with the delay if you had the advantage another way?—Yes.

22165. Do you consider the articles in the shop are too dear?—No, about current prices.

22166. And you get about the same prices for fish?—Yes.

22167. But, at the same time, you would consider it a greater convenience if there were more than one shop?—Yes.

22168. And more than one curer too?—As for the curer, they always make away with all we have to give them.

22169. There is no curer on the island but Mr Hay?—No.

22170. And no one can get there without his permission?—No; he has the whole; there is no opposition on the island.

22171. And there can be none in your island?—No.

22172. The former witness stated that the boat he had was his own, in part at least, is that a general practice in the place?—Yes, they try to get the boats to themselves. Messrs Hay & Co. mostly keep a sixth share of the boat, and they supply the fishermen with boats until they can pay; but the interest is very heavy.

22173. Take the old sixern; there is a crew of six in the boat, and each would have a share and Mr Hay another?—Not in the old sixern, only in the big boats; frequently four or five men hold the sixerns.

22174. And that boat and the fishing material are their own?—Yes.

22175. And in the new large boats, what is the arrangement?—Well, so far as they can purchase them they do; but if they cannot do that Messrs Hay & Co. generally supply them on credit, and assist them until they are able to pay.

22176. When a crew tries to purchase a boat, what are the terms upon which they are allowed to pay?—I suppose it is three years' credit that Messrs Hay & Co. give, and they charge, I suppose, 10 per cent. for what is due on the boat, and they dry, and let the fish pay for the boat.

22177. They allow three years' credit, and meanwhile they charge 10 per cent. upon what is not paid?—I understand so.

22178. But supposing the crew were not able to purchase a boat in three years, what then?—I don't know what they do then. I suppose it must stand for debt still, and be charged interest still.

22179. If the crew does not endeavour to purchase a boat, what is the arrangement?—They fish on the half-catch system.

22180. That is to say the owner owns the boat and material, and keeps them in order, and the crew gets one-half of the fish and the owner the other half?—Yes.

22181. Is that the rule whether they are engaged in white fishing or herring fishing?—Yes, in some cases, when they are big boats.

22182. Would it be the same rule of half-catch in the white fishing too?—Yes. But the material for white fishing is not nearly so expensive as the material for the herring fishing; lines are not so dear as nets.

22183. But still half the fish is charged in the white fishing?—Yes, I know some of the men who go for shares in boats at half-catch in ling fishing as well as in the herring fishing.

22184. The proprietor gives the boats and lines, and gets half the fish?—Half the fish.

22185. And if they want to purchase the boat, they get three years to purchase it, and pay 10 per cent. on the capital?—Yes.

22186. Who fixes the value of the boat and nets?—The owner of the boat mentions his price for the boat; and as for the nets, we generally know what they cost.

22187. The present holder of the large sheep farm is Mr Hamilton?—Yes.

22188. Does he live upon the farm?—Yes.

22189. Is that the Mr Hamilton we met with as a factor in Unst?—He is a brother, I think.

22190. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What things are sold in this shop of Messrs Hay & Co.?—Groceries of all kinds, and goods as well—everything.

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22191. Are spirits sold?—No.

22192. Are there any spirits sold in the island?—No, there is no licence for it.

22193. Have you anything more you wish to say?—No.

THOMAS HENDERSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Whalsay—examined.

Thomas Henderson.

22194. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How long have you been a crofter?—My great grandfather, my grandfather, my father and myself succeeded each other on the same croft, and in the same cottage until the year 1863. In the year 1849 no change had taken place so far as known to me with the crofters. In the year 1849 the crofters had from early childhood improved and cultivated a great deal of fallow ground—broken it up and cultivated it. The consequence was that in 1849 the landlord overlooked and measured it up; and planted in the township or district to which I belonged, where twenty-two crofts existed, eight more, and did not reduce the rent. Previous and up to 1863 we were charged what are called teinds. Our land then was twenty-five to thirty shillings for three merks. We were charged as corn teinds two gallons of oil on each merk we had, and we were charged one gallon of oil for boat teind. We had to pay four pounds of butter for each milk cow annually, and twopence a head for every sheep on the scathold. In 1863 the land was laid out in crofts in a different form and put in fields, patches, or lots; and no more crofters were put in on the land. The teinds were no more heard of, and where I once paid 25s. to 30s., I was asked in the first place £6. In consequence of that I objected, and the proprietor graciously gave me down 10s. of the rent. I said 'That will be for the next man.' I got a house in the parish and stopped there three years, and then, in consequence of a member of my family being in delicate health, the doctor advised me not to remove to the township. They were then planting down squatters, and a man had planted down and stopped one year. Another succeeded him, and when he left I squatted after him, and I am there, I think, for the last sixteen years. My rent is £3 and the usual rates. The most of what I have under crop I have cultivated myself, trenched, and drained, and cleared. I think the rent too high; I not only speak for myself, but for those who elected me to come here.

22195. You came in sixteen years ago?—Yes.

22196. At a rent of £3?—Yes.

22197. Into an outset?—Yes.

22198. And you have cultivated it yourself?—Yes.

22199. And built a house?—The house was built by the man who squatted down first, but the proprietor repaired it and made it better for me. But he don't charge any interest on the house. It didn't require a new roof, it was only the walls that were a little weak, but I built the outhouses. I don't say that the people are not in better circumstances now than formerly. But what is the reason. Many have gone away to the colonies of Australia, where they dug gold, and supported their old parents. Some have gone into the mercantile service, where I was myself, and got better wages. We had no communication with the south when I was a boy almost, except with one little sloop; now we have steam communication, and the south country curers are being introduced, and there is a competition with the curers. Formerly our fish, when we were at a low rent, were at 3s. 4d. per cwt. for ling, 2s. 6d. for tusk, and

1s. 8d. for cod. That continued until our land rent was paid for with fish, and then we had 8d. more on each cwt. that we caught over, which was often very little. The boats were weak and puny, and the gear was different. The gear was handed down from our forefathers; it was coarse. We had not the same boats or oars or the means of getting them, and he was a lucky man who got in a sixern five tons of fish in the summer months. Mr Bruce brought boats from the south. My father brought one from Leith. There were eight men in it, and Mr Bruce fitted it out and found everything. What was realised from the herring was somewhere about 2s. 8d. a cran to each of the eight men. It is not in consequence of the better treatment or lower rents, or better holdings that we are now in better circumstances. In 1849 Mr Bruce did give better houses, but we have to keep these up. He will give us lime to put on the outside, but we must put it on. Latterly we have been refused windows and doors for the houses, and I am not aware of anybody being allowed to take them away or get compensation.

22200. Has anybody left lately?—No. There was a statement made about Mr Hamilton's farm. There were four crofts put into that farm. The crofters who were put out all got holdings in the island; and scarcely any have been put off for giving short rent. Just one man lately, and he got a fine chance. They said, 'Take what you have and go,' and he would not, but he went and built a mud cabin on the hill and lived there. There was a disagreement between the proprietor and the man who was evicted from his holding. He was, in some way, refractory so far as I know.

JAMES POLSON, Crofter and Fisherman, Whalsay (34)—examined.

22201. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any statement to make?—I have. 'I am a crofter on the estate of Symbister Whalsay; my 'father and grandfather were also the same. We have made our living by 'fishing and crofting, always striving to look the world in the face, as the 'feeling of the Shetlander is to look the world in the face and owe no 'man anything. About fifty years back we had a hard struggle to 'keep the wolf from the door, but of late we have made many improve-'ments. Our boats have been made larger, from 20 feet of keel 'by 8 feet to 45 feet by 16 feet. Our gear has been improved also 'from coarse hemp nets to fine cotton nets; likewise our lines and 'hooks. We have not been kept so hard down by the landlords of late. 'About the year 1849 there was a measuring up of tenants' crofts, and 'tenants put in extra on the crofts, to the extent of one-fourth more on 'the average of the island. Then the tenant was forced to fish to the 'landlord. The fish on the average brought from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per cwt. 'The land then rented at 10s. per mark, and run about 3 marks to every 'croft. Then we paid tithes or teinds—for every cow 4 lbs. butter 'and one gallon oil; for every boat drawn on shore or beach one fowl; 'for every mark of land two gallons of oil. The houses are in general built 'and maintained by the tenant, and no compensation given on removal. 'For building, no favourable offers by the landlord; no long leases 'offered. In 1863 the land was measured over again and rented at from '30s. to 33s. per acre. Rents in general run from £4 to £7 per croft. 'In 1866 the scathold or common was taken away, to the extent of about 'two-fifths, and had it not been for the kindness of the present farmer 'occupying the big farm of Symbister, the case would have been worse

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'There have been two evictions to make the farm of Symbister larger; the 'people are still in and got no compensation. The crofters are under no 'engagement to fish to the landlord as far as I am informed. There is 'an advantage by fishing and crofting. In the winter time, when we can 'do nothing to fishing we can work on the croft. The fish-curer has one 'shop in the island. But I do not think, as far as I know, that he wants 'any one to buy. But as there is only one shop in the island, and no 'more allowed to be, we find it a great drawback to the population of 'about 1000 people. We stand in need of two harbours. We have no 'safe anchorage, and it is only in fine weather that we can take our boats 'ashore to get cleaned and painted. We are rated at about 2s. per £ of 'rent, and the school rate is from 2s. to 2s. 6d. Pauperism is on the 'increase of about one pauper per year, according to the increase of the 'population. There are also about sixteen squatters settled on the estate 'during the last twenty years. The reforms wanted are security against 'unfair rents; a valuator to be appointed by parliament; full compensa-'tion on removal for buildings and improvements by the tenant; long 'leases wanted on fair terms. We would be glad to get our scathold 'which was taken away back again if possible.'

Rev. GEORGE CLARK, Minister of Free Church, Coningsburgh (39)—examined.

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22202. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been minister of Coningsburgh?—Eight years. A delegate has already appeared who should have presented the paper which I now produce. It is as follows:—'The South Coningsburgh crofters on the estate of Mr Bruce of 'Sumburgh, at a meeting held within the Free Church of Coningsburgh 'on the 2nd of July, agreed to lay the following statement before the 'Royal Commission. 1. In 1872, when Mr Bruce younger of Sumburgh 'took a lease of his father's estate, our rents were considerably increased. '2. Shortly after our rents had been raised we were asked by Mr Bruce 'to sign a paper giving up our scathold to him. Some of us refused to do 'this. Those of us who signed did so very unwillingly, but we felt that 'it was useless to contend with Mr Bruce. Mr Bruce himself did not say 'that he would turn us out of our crofts if we refused to sign the paper, 'but those under him plainly hinted that it would be worse for us if we did 'not yield. We were at the same time led to believe that we would still 'be allowed to put at least a part of our stock on the hill. 3. Although 'the greater part of our scathold was taken from us we got no reduction of 'rent or compensation of any kind. 4. When the rents were raised we 'had no idea that our scathold was to be taken from us. 5. We feel 'greatly the want of our scathold. We think it very unfair that Mr Bruce 'should have so much pasture while we have such difficulty in getting 'grass. 6. In addition to rent we have to work, yearly, three days to 'Mr Bruce, and give a fowl for every mark of land that we have. The 'three days' work is a great hardship, and now that our rents are so 'much higher we strongly object to the giving of the fowls. 7. At 'the time Mr Bruce gave notice of raising the rents, we complained 'that the figure fixed by him was far too high. He agreed to make a 'reduction, if we would promise to fish for him. As yet Mr Bruce has 'asked none of us to fish for him, but nearly all of us are under an 'agreement to do so if he requires it. 8. Two years ago Mr Bruce 'asked us to agree to sell our herrings at 6d. per cran below the ordinary

'price going. He said if we would agree to this, he would make an 'agreement with a curer for us and pay us at the end of the year. Not 'being willing to do this, curers who would give us the highest price 'for our fish and take them from us in Coningsburgh are not encouraged to 'come. The curer at present in Coningsburgh gives 6d. per cran less 'than other curers give. 9. Many of our houses are very bad, and there 'is much overcrowding. Mr Bruce will not, as a rule, build a new 'house or repair an old one. Some of us would build better houses if 'we could get any encouragement to do so. 10. We have paid district 'road money for a long time, but are still without district roads. 11. 'We wish security against too high rents and evictions. We wish 'compensation, on removal, for buildings that we may have put up at our 'own expense. We desire to have the scathold, or at least a part of it. 'We appoint George Clark, Laurence Jarmson, and John Smith to 'represent us before the Royal Commission.—GEORGE CLARK, chairman. 'At a meeting held on the 16th instant, Adam Jarmson was appointed 'in the place of John Smith.—GEORGE CLARK, chairman.' The next witness can speak about the fishing. But the point I would like to call attention to is the state of the houses; and with regard to that I have prepared a short statement which I can read. When I speak about the houses, I refer not to the houses in South Coningsburgh, but to all the houses.

22203. Is Mr Bruce proprietor of the whole?—No, no; there are Mr Bruce of Sumburgh, Mr Bruce of Symbister, and Lady Nicolson, and perhaps eighteen or twenty small proprietors or udallers, one of whom is present to-day and can give the exact number. From North Coningsburgh I have the following statement:—'At a meeting of crofters, connected with 'the estates of Lady Nicolson and Mr Bruce of Symbister, held at Nith 'on the 27th of June, the following statement was agreed upon, and 'Laurence Halcrow (for Lady Nicolson's estate) and Magnus Manson '(for Symbister estate) appointed to lay it before the Royal Commission. '1. We wish to retain our scatholds. If they are taken from us our 'present stock must be greatly reduced. Without the scatholds we can 'keep no ponies. 2. We think the rig-run system should be done away 'with. The land could be wrought with far less labour if properly 'divided. Twenty-six marks of land in the district of Aithsetter were 'divided a few years ago. Seven pounds yearly have been laid on that 'land for expenses in connection with the division, while the houses are 'still where they were before the division took place. If the lands yet 'undivided are to be dealt with in this way the burden will come to be a 'hard one on some of us. 3. Our rents are high. It should be re-'membered that when the summer weather is bad, and that is not uncom-'mon in Shetland, our crops come to very little. 4. Many of our 'houses are bad, and not a few of them are greatly overcrowded. 'Neither of the proprietors will build new houses. Some of us would 'build new houses if we could get any encouragement to do so. We can 'neither get long leases or the promise of anything like full compensation 'for buildings we may put up at our own expense. 5. We have paid 'district road money for nearly twenty years, but are yet without district 'roads. Through want of roads we have a great deal of laborious work. 'It is almost impossible without roads for young children of five years or 'so to attend school in spring and winter. 6. The wire fence on the hill 'pasture of Mr Bruce of Sumburgh is not sufficient. But if the sheep 'on the adjoining scathold are found on his pasture they are poinded. 'We think Mr Bruce should not have the power to do this, seeing 'he does not keep up proper fences. Mr Bruce having taken the scathold

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'from his own tenants, they drive their stock upon us. 7. The proprietors 'have power to turn us out at forty days' notice. We regard this as an 'unjust law. 8. Those of us on the Symbister estate were very unjustly 'dealt with by Mr Mowat the late tacksmaster. On the renewal of his 'lease in 1866 he not only laid an additional £1 on each croft, but turned 'out two who refused to fish for him. That £1 that was laid on us by 'Mr Mowat has never been taken off. We believe it was laid upon us 'without the sanction of the proprietor. 9. We wish security against too 'high rents and evictions. We wish compensation on removal for build-'ings or improvements we may have executed at our own expense. 'If the rents are to be raised they should not be raised on the valuation of 'the proprietor. There should be a Government valuator.—GEORGE CLARK, 'chairman.' I have also prepared a paper, having special reference to the houses, which I would like to read. 'Many of the dwelling sin Conigs-'burgh are not only very uncomfortable but injurious to the health of the 'inmates. It is no uncommon thing to see, even where the sick are 'lying, the walls and floors quite wet with damp. To the dwellings are 'usually attached the byres and other outhouses. In not a few cases 'the byre or part of it has to be passed through before the dwelling can 'be reached. There are, at least, eighteen such houses in Coningsburgh. 'These byres and other outhouses, so closely attached to the dwellings, 'polluting the drains and giving rise to sickening smells, is, I believe, one 'thing that accounts for the prevalence of fever in the district, and for 'much of the sickliness that is seen among the children. Fever, and 'especially typhoid fever, is very common. It breaks out every other 'year or so. It may be safely said that the Public Health Act is a dead 'letter so far as Conigsburgh is concerned. The local authority, who 'are the Parochial Board of Dunrossness, have been again and again 'urged to do sometbing, but things are very much as they were seven or 'eight years ago. The chairman of the Board, who is the largest 'proprietor in the district, owns the worst houses, some of which are 'utterly unfit for human habitation or use.'

22204. Who is that?—Mr Bruce, younger of Sumburgh. 'Then many 'of the houses are overcrowded. We have at least forty-five families living 'in dwellings of one apartment. I have only to mention the numbers 'living in some of these one apartment dwellings to show how great the 'overcrowding is. In one we have a young man and his wife, with his 'mother, brother, sister, and nephew. With the exception of the nephew, 'all are above twenty years of age. In another, we have a father and 'mother and eight of their family, some of whom are grown up. Other two 'belonging to the family have to sleep elsewhere, there being no room 'for them at home. In another, we have a father, mother, grandmother, 'and six young people. Several other cases almost as bad I could mention. 'The size of these dwellings of one apartment is about 15 feet by 12 feet. 'Then we bave ninety families living in houses of two apartments. But 'many of these families are what are called in Shetland "double families," 'that is to say, two families living in common or at one fire. For 'example, in one bouse of two apartments which I know, we have a 'father, mother, and three young men, and a young man with his wife 'and child,—eight in all. In another we have a father, mother, son, 'daughter, and aunt, and a married son with his wife and two children,— 'nine in all. I might give many other examples. We have a population 'of 700. For these we have about 150 dwellings, 45 of one apartment, 90 'of two apartments, 9 of three apartments, 6 of four apartments or above 'four. No crofter lives in any of those houses of four apartments. There 'has been an increase to the population of at least fifty during the past eight

'years, while more of the young men are at home than formerly. But 'during that time only four additional houses have been built. Six new 'houses have been built, but two of these have been in the place of old 'ones. All these houses have been built by crofters or fishermen or those 'connected with the crofting and fishing. Two of them have been built 'by small merchants. Not one house has been built by Lady Nicolson, 'Mr Bruce of Sumburgh, or Mr Bruce of Symbister, the three chief 'proprietors in the district. This overcrowding is inconvenient enough 'when a family is in health, but when there is sickness the state of 'things is simply heartbreaking. To show what it sometimes leads to, 'I shall mention what I saw myself only five months ago. Typhoid fever 'broke out in a family consisting of a father, mother, and six young 'children living in a dwelling of one apartment on the estate of Mr Bruce 'of Sumburgh. The eldest child took ill first, but there being only the 'one apartment he could not be removed from the others. Shortly 'afterwards the mother and three other children were laid down. Two 'of these children died, and I saw their dead bodies laid out in that 'narrow place beside those that were sick and those who had not yet 'caught the infection. The dead bodies remained there a day and night. 'The people themselves are blamed for the state of things that exists, 'but it is unfair to cast all the blame on them. The proprietors will 'not help them to build better houses, and many of them are not able to do 'so themselves. Those who are willing to do so get little or no encourage-'ment. On the estate of Lady Nicolson, where almost every dwelling is 'overcrowded, not a new house has been built for years. Lady Nicolson 'is neither willing to build a new house nor grant a building lease. I am 'sure if Lady Nicolson knew the state of things on her estate she would 'do something. Unfortunately she never visits her tenants. I believe 'she was never in the district in her life. She is now an old lady. On 'the estate of Mr Bruce of Sumburgh, where there are also some bad 'houses and much overcrowding, only three new houses have been built 'during the past eight years. But the young men who have built these 'houses have no leases or promise of compensation. They hold no 'written agreement of any kind. Two of them at least were led to 'believe that they would get leases, but in the case of one of them seven 'years have passed away, and in the case of the other four years, and no 'lease has been given. They receive no help from Mr Bruce in building. 'They are charged £1 for house and garden. They understand that they 'hold these for nineteen years at this rent. When young men on Mr 'Bruce's estate are urged to make better houses, they point to this and say, '"Who will build on terms like these! Our rents may be raised any day, 'and if we leave we may not get a farthing of compensation." I do not 'mean to hint that Mr Bruce intends to take any unfair advantage of any 'one. Mr Bruce is an honourable man. But those who speak in this way 'say that they can at least point to one case where something like undue 'advantage has been taken. They can point to the case of a man in the 'adjoining parish of Sandwick whose rent has been raised £4 by Mr Bruce, 'notwithstanding the fact that he got a verbal promise from Mr Bruce's 'father that his rent should not be raised for nineteen years. This man 'laid out £180 in rebuilding an old house and improving a piece of waste 'land. He understood that his rent was to be £3 for nineteen years. At 'the end of fourteen years Mr Bruce asked £10, but brought it down to '£7. I have the man's own letter to me, which I should like to read, 'stating these facts. He says—"I became tenant of the house I am now 'in in 1856, at a rent of £3 sterling per year. I also got about two 'acres of waste land along with the house, with the promise that it should 'follow or belong to the house at said rent of £3 sterling whenever I

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'might get it cultivated, as it was very barren. In the course of about five 'years I got the land under crop, and then wanted a lease of the place. 'John Bruce, Esq., promised to give me a lease, but after a time when he 'saw me commence to build houses on the place he would not do so, 'but said my rent should not be raised for nineteen years after. I built 'or raised the dwelling-house from one room high to what it now is, viz., 'two rooms high, and built three other houses, as can be seen. In doing 'so it has cost me £180 sterling. As soon as I had finished doing so, 'which was fourteen years after I got the promise from Mr Bruce that my 'rent should not be raised for nineteen years at least, nor should I be evicted, 'I got notice that my rent was to be in future £10 per year. I then 'remonstrated with the landlord, but he would give me no compensation 'for my money, but would allow me to remain in the house at £7 rent per 'year. You are at liberty to show this letter to the Commissioners if you 'want to do so."* On the estate of Mr Bruce of Symbister, which is 'managed at present by trustees, there is not so much overcrowding, but 'there is the same discouragement to those who would build. I know a 'crofter on that estate who built a nice house quite lately, but he has no 'lease or promise of compensation. Another that I know, a seaman, built 'a cottage a few years ago worth at least £40, taking into account the time 'and labour he spent on it. He got a lease which I have here. (Lease 'exhibited to Commissioners.) If this man leaves the place before the 'expiry of the lease he gets nothing. If he remains, whatever extra 'improvements he may make he gets no value for them, for £10 is all that 'is allowed him at the end of the lease. The roof is a thatched one just 'now. If he puts on a slate one by and by he knows that he can get 'nothing for it. It is no wonder that young men do not care to build on 'such conditions. An intelligent farmer well acquainted with Shetland 'tells me that unfavourable as this lease may be, there are worse leases 'given in Shetland. In some cases compensation is not even promised he 'says. Let those who are not crofters be offered long and favourable 'leases—leases that they can sell if they have to leave the place. Let those 'who have crofts have security against evictions and too high rents, with 'promise of compensation for buildings they may execute at their own 'expenses, and a better state of things I am persuaded will soon be seen 'not only in Conigsburgh but in other places in Shetland. While 'things are as they are there is no hope of improvement. Things must go 'from bad to worse.'

22205. The statement which you have made is very interesting, although it is one which might be painful to those whom it concerns. It contains matter prejudicial to the management and the proprietor, and I would ask you to tell me whether the facts stated have been ascertained by you by personal inquiry, and whether you are well persuaded and advised in your own mind that they are all correct?—As regards the matter of the local authority I am fully persuaded of it. It is what I feel to be conscientiously true. I am to be examined, and I stand here to-day saying these statements are perfectly true.

22206. With reference to the numbers of persons residing in the same room of a house, these facts have been ascertained by you on personal inspection?—I have done all I could to ascertain the facts accurately, and while I may be wrong in a figure or two, I am satisfied that the statement is substantially true. I have read the statement to the men of Coningsburgh, and I have myself made inquiry into the matter.

22207. It is stated as a matter of fact that Lady Nicolson, who is an old lady, has never been upon her property; have you inquired whether that is the case?—I have, and so far as any one knows she has never been upon her property.

* See Appendix A, XLIX.

22208. I observe that the man whose letter you read states that he built three houses?—I suppose that means outhouses.

22209. You don't think it means dwelling-houses?—*No*; he is a merchant that man.

22210. He does not mean that he built additional dwelling-houses which were perhaps not contemplated by the landlord?—No, I think he rebuilt the old house and repaired it.

22211. With regard to this lease which you have shown us, while it may not be a very favourable one, it was freely entered into between the contracting parties?—Yes, because the man could do nothing else. He was living in such a miserable hut that he had to build.

22212. Did he build upon the site of his previous house?—No, but quite near to it.

22213. He has to pay £1 a year for the stances, so that it looks as if he got a new piece of ground?—Yes, but no garden. Mr Bruce of Sumburgh is here to-day, if you wish you may lay the statement before him.

22214. Is he in the room?—Not at the present unfortunately; but the agent for Lady Nicolson is present, and, I think, Mr Irvine, factor for Symbister also.

22215. I suppose Mr Bruce is his own factor?—Yes.

22216. Who is factor for Lady Nicolson?—Mr Macgregor, a writer.

22217. Who is factor for Symbister?—Mr Irvine; and he is also factor for Whalsay.

22218. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If I understood you rightly you mentioned a case of three young men who built houses and got nineteen years' leases at £1 each?—In the hope that they would get that.

22219. They would be satisfied with nineteen years' leases?—Yes; what annoys them is that they have no leases. They say that they were led to believe they would get leases, and leases have never been given. I know one of them never asked for a lease, but for two years they were led to believe they would get them. One has occupied his house for seven years and the other four, and these leases have never been forthcoming.

22220. Is it the custom of the proprietor to build houses for these crofters?—It is not the custom. I don't say much blame lay on the proprietors for not building the houses, but rather for not encouraging the men more to build houses by granting better leases or giving terms of compensation, in which case they would build themselves. If the proprietor gave £20 or £30 they would put up a very good cottage indeed.

22221. If you gave a nineteen or twenty-one years' lease would that be sufficient to induce them?—Yes, but I would rather have those who are not crofters to have a longer lease. I know the case of a man just now in the adjoining parish who has a nineteen years' lease, and at the end of that he gets half the house in value. If he should have sold that, I am sure he could have got a higher price.

22222. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you a native of Shetland?—I am not.

22223. To what part of Scotland do you belong?—*Dumfriesshire.*

22224. How long have you been here?—Nearly eight years.

22225. And always in the same place?—Yes.

22226. Have you got a considerable congregation?—Yes, my church is the only one in the district.

22227. I think you stated, or it is mentioned in the paper, that there have been no evictions in the parish?—None since I came, and I am not aware of any.

22228. Although there have been no evictions there has been no encouragement of the people in the way of getting additional houses for the increase of population?—None.

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22229. Have you taken every means in your power to ascertain the truth of the statements you have made about the houses?—I have. I may be wrong, but if I am so in one or two figures it is unintentional. I have gone over it again and again and done my very best. I have been very anxious to put it in the most favourable light. I have said 150 houses, there may be 152; but so far as I can make out there are 150.

22230. I suppose what has made you come here is the imperative duty upon you as having charge of the people?—It was the death of these two children lying in the churchyard brought me here to-day; but for that I would not have appeared before this Commission.

22231. There are other facts?—Yes, but that is what brought the thing to a head on my part.

22232. What may be the numbers of your congregation?—313 members.

22233. And adherents?—Altogether I have probably a congregation of 400 to 500.

22234. Are the facts you have stated well known and constantly talked of amongst the people?—The statement I have read I read to most of the men, and put questions to them and asked them if they thought I had overstated anything, and they all said, 'You are speaking the truth.'

22235. There was a meeting held to appoint delegates to come here; was that meeting largely attended?—The meeting at South Cunnigsburgh was attended by about 20, but there were those who represented others, and I think the statement I have made is one that represents the opinion of the people. The statement may be correct or incorrect, but it expresses the opinion of the people; I have no doubt about that.

22236. In the paper which you have just read, you say there are two Bruces in the parish; you made no reference to the estate of Symbister until you came to the end?—Quite so.

22237. This matter of the buildings has now become so clamant that you think public attention must be drawn to it and some public measures taken?—That is what I think.

22238. *The Chairman.*—You said you would advise, for the encouragement of the people in building, that they should have a long lease, and that they should have liberty of disposing of or selling it to their successors. Do you think it would be fair that a tenant should have the right of disposing of the lease and interest in the holding to anybody he liked without the consent of the proprietor?—Probably it would be better to have the consent of the proprietor.

22239. We have heard generally in Shetland that the custom of the country in making new houses is that the proprietor builds the walls and supplies the timber and the roof, and that the tenant puts on the thatch, and pays for or makes up the fittings. Is that in other places the custom of the country, and if so, why is it different on Mr Bruce's estate?—I don't know. I only speak the opinion of the people when I say that Mr Bruce of Sumburgh is not willing to build new houses or repair the old ones. It is stated that although Lady Nicolson is not willing to build new houses, she is willing to give a sum to repair old ones. Of course, in stating this opinion I am only expressing the opinion of the people—what the people told me. They have stated that again and again.

22240. How long is it since this case occurred of the death of the two children?—In the month of March of the present year.

22241. You say that those proprietors to whom you alluded will not build new houses; you have also said that, in the case of over crowding to which you alluded, there were frequently twenty-six of the same family living under the one roof; do you think it would be a wise thing to

apply to the proprietor to allow the children of the occupier to build separate houses on the same croft, and thus sub-divide it?—If the fishing prosper that might do very well, but, of course, if the fishing were not to prosper, the state of things would just become worse under that.

22242. Do you think, if the proprietors gave unlimited liberty to the younger members of a family to build new houses that might not discourage them from seeking their fortunes elsewhere, and that, hereafter, the evil of over-population might not become greater than it is now?—That is quite possible. In speaking of these matters I am taking into account the hope that the fishing may prosper and a better state of things come about. Of course, one might be mistaken about these things.

22243. Is it remarked that the fishing is sometimes rather precarious, and that fish may come for some years to a place and be absent from it in other years?—Yes.

22244. Therefore, you cannot count absolutely upon fishing as a resource for the population?—No, but the men have large boats, and can go a greater distance now.

CHARLES RAMPINI, Sheriff-Substitute, Lerwick (42)—examined.

22245. *The Chairman.*—You have a statement, I understand, Mr Rampini, which you are prepared to read: we shall be glad to hear it?—'In accordance with the desire of the Commissioners I have the honour 'to submit the following notes on the peculiarities of the measurement 'and tenures of land in Shetland, the condition of the peasantry, the 'valuation and population of the county, and the development of the 'white and herring fisheries. 1. A Shetland "town" or township is a 'collection of cottages built of stone and generally straw-thatched, 'surrounded by feul dykes, which separate the township from its hill-'pasture or scattald. In front of the cottages are the town-maills—a 'piece of ground always left uncultivated, and on which are tethered the 'stock required by the crofters for their domestic use. Lower down are 'the kail-yards of the cottagers, and patches of arable growing crops of 'here, potatoes or oats, always unfenced, and sometimes held in runrig. At 'a distance from the township are the plantis-cruives or crubs of the 'community—circular patches or outsets of land reclaimed from the scat-'tald, surrounded with dry stone dykes, and used as nurseries to their 'kail-yards. 2. The measurement of land in Shetland is in some respects 'peculiar. The unit of extent is the merk or mark, which originally 'was held to comprise 1600 square fathoms, but is now, owing to 'variation in the quality of the soil, of uncertain extent, comprising 'any amount of land from three-quarters of an acre to fourteen acres. 'Two or three acres may be considered a fair average. Each merk is 'divided into eight ures or ounces. The origin of the merk as a unit of 'extent is stated by Hibbert [p. 178] to be as follows:—"The Nor-'wegians in the time of Harold Harfagre [by whom the islands were 'conquered and erected into an earldom] appear to have known scarcely 'any other [standard of valuation] than what was suggested by the 'course woollen attire of the country, called Wadmel. Eight pieces of 'this cloth, each measuring 6 ells, constituted a mark. The extent, 'therefore, of each Shetland site of land hearing the appellation of mark 'was originally determined by this rude standard of comparison; its 'exact limits being described by loose stones or shells under the name of 'merk-stones or meithes—many of which still remain undisturbed on 'the brown heaths of the county . . . . . It was sometime after the 'colonisation of Shetland that it became necessary to reduce each

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'measurement of ground into still smaller allotments. But although the 'division was into eight parts, its correspondence to the similar one of a 'mark of Wadmel was not immediately derived from this measurement. 'A nearer standard of comparison had succeeded to the Wadmel, formed 'of a certain weight of some inferior metal. The division, therefore, of 'a mark-weight of this substance into eight ures or ounces, appears to 'have suggested a name for the same number of portions into which a 'mark of land began to be resolved." 3. The merks lands of Shetland 'are generally considered—although the point is not free from doubt—to 'have been originally the arable only, and were held at first by udal 'tenure. But in addition, each proprietor of merks land within the '"room" or township was entitled to a share in the hill pasture adjoin- 'ing and appertaining to the township, proportionate to the extent of his 'merks land. This hill pasture was and is still known by the name of 'scattald or scathold, because such lands paid scat or land tax to the 'crown—an imposition from which udal lands were exempt. Lands 'reclaimed from the scattald were termed "outsets," and were and are 'still regarded as the freehold of the reclaimer, after an undisturbed 'possession of forty years. 4. It must not, however, be supposed that, 'at the present day, all merks lands in Shetland are held by udal tenure. 'This holds good only in the case of the smaller proprietors. The lands 'of the larger proprietors have been, for the most part, feudalised; and 'such feudalised lands constitute by far the greater portion of Shetland 'territory. Up to the commencement of the present century, transmis- 'sion of udal lands without writing was the rule. But of late years, in 'transferences to singular successors, the forms of feudal conveyance 'have been adopted, mainly for the sake of the security which registra- 'tion affords. 5. A large proportion of the crofters are udal proprietors; 'and whatever may be their social condition, the possession of even four 'ures of land constitutes the proprietor a small, or, in the vernacular, '"peerie" laird. The proprietrix of half a merk of land was once 'described to me as "a lady in her own right." The purest Norse blood 'in the islands is to be found amongst these "peerie lairds." Few of 'the large landed proprietors can claim a longer connection with the 'islands than that of a hundred or a hundred and fifty years. 6. When 'a proprietor of merks lands desires to ascertain the extent of his scat- 'hold right, he institutes a process of division of commonty in the Court 'of Session, and calls his co-proprietors into court as defenders. A com- 'mission is thus granted,—generally to the judge-ordinary of the bounds,— 'to perambulate the scattald, to examine the titles of the claimants, to 'survey the scattald, and thereafter to allocate the same amongst the 'various parties who can instruct a right to share in the division. The 'allocation completed, march stones are erected; and on the commis- 'sioner's report being approved, a decree is pronounced by the Court of 'Session and the allotments become the absolute property of the persons 'to whom they are allocated. The procedure is under the old Scottish 'Act of 1695, c. 38. Any common proprietor has a title to sue. Most 'of the scattalds in Shetland are now divided. I may mention in 'regard to this point that what is meant by large proprietors taking scat- 'hold from a poorer one, is that they have probably instituted a division 'of the property for this purpose. 7. As has already been incidentally 'mentioned, land in Shetland is held either by feudal or udal tenure. 'The Earl of Zetland is superior of the islands. But he exacts no 'duplicand or other fine on the entry of singular successors. Udal or 'allodial land is land held in all-hood. "The word udal is said to be a 'compound of the Teutonic *odi*, signifying property or possession, and of '*ob* or *ab*, which, in the same language signifies *ancient*. And thus by

'an udal or abend, an odel or alod, is meant an ancient inheritance, 'patrimony or possession." "The heritage of the udal man," says 'Mackenzie, in his *Grievances and Oppressions of the Isles of Orkney* 'and Shetland, "is so entirely his own, *ut eo nomine, nulla regus gratia,* 'regus merces, regus opera debeantur, that neither homage, nor rent, nor 'service is due from it. And the reason is, he owns no seigneural 'superior, but holds *de Deo et sole,* of God and heaven only . . . . For 'this reason, the udalman . . . . was likewise called Rothmen or 'Roythmen, *i.e.* self-holders, or men holding in their own right, by way 'of contradistinction to feudatories, who held derivatively, or by a 'dependence on others. 8. Every one udal-born had the odalsjord—the 'right to share in the patrimony of his ancestors. How far this odalsjord 'operated in the nature of an entail of the lands in the family of the 'udaller, I am not prepared at present to say. The udaller could dispose 'of his lands by will. But when he died intestate the lands passed to 'his children in equal shares. At a later period the hull, head-bull, or 'bu, the chief house on the estate, came to be regarded as the appanage of 'the eldest son, and each daughter's share was restricted to half a son's 'portion. During the subsistence of the old local courts of the Fondric, 'a transference to singular successors was often for the sake of publicity 'embodied in a Shynd Bill; and finally a modification of the Shynd-Bill 'in presence of the king came to be regarded as necessary to legalise the 'purchase, sale and transference of almost every udal right, to evade the 'right of redemption which originally each Shynd Bill contained, and to 'give the Scottish purchaser the un-odal security of a written bill in his 'own language—a combined form of disposition and sasine. [See 'Balfour's *Oppressions of the Sixteenth Century in Orkney and Zetland,* 'Introd. p. xxxiv.] At the present day the rules of udal succession are 'the same as feudal. But the heir makes up no titles. 9. I believe the 'Shetland peasantry have, on the whole, few real grievances to complain of. 'Within my own official experience I have met with no cases of oppression 'by landlords or merchants. There is little destitution, though there is 'much poverty. The Shetland peasant is *inops inter opis.* He has his 'fuel from the Scathold, his food and light from the sun; but even with 'these advantages, and with, in the majority of cases, a feu croft, he has 'difficulty to support his wife and family. Taxes and rates are very high 'in Shetland; and the old and pernicious system of dealing still extant 'between merchant and fishermen is one of the greatest obstacles to his 'attaining a higher level either of comfort or of intelligence. As chair-'man of the Shetland Fishermen's Widows' Relief Fund, I am aware 'that a large proportion of the fishermen who lost their lives in the great 'storm of 20th July 1881 were in debt to the local merchant at the 'time of their death. I append to these notes a copy of the report of 'the Shetland Relief Committee, from which it will be seen that the 'committee refused to hold themselves responsible for the debts of the 'deceased fishermen, or to entertain any of the claims made against the 'representatives of the deceased fishermen on account of the loss of the 'boats—many of which were, in accordance with the customs of the 'country, hired out to them for the fishing season. 10. Although no 'cases of truck, properly so called, have come under my official notice, 'the days of the system undoubtedly remain. By advances of goods 'furnished to the fishermen at the commencement of the fishing season, 'and by supplies made to his family during his absence, the fisherman 'puts himself under an obligation to sell his fish to his creditors. I 'have within the last year tried some six or eight small debt actions, in 'which the local merchant was pursuer and fishermen defenders, in all 'of which I found that no proper settlement had taken place between

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'parties at the end of the season. The balance—in all the cases to which 'I refer, a debit one—was carried over to next year, and the account ran 'on in almost every instance till past the prescriptive period. As it has 'become proveable only by the writ or oath of the debtor, a reference to 'the fisherman's oath ensued. The nature of the evidence given by the 'debtor was, in each instance, the same. He admitted that the goods 'had been supplied, and that the prices stated were those usually charged 'for the commodities. But he added that he believed his share of the 'fishings had extinguished the debt; but having kept no account he was 'unable to substantiate the counter-claim. It seems to me that the 'Shetland peasantry are at present in a transition state. There appears 'to be a growing inclination to increase the two pursuits of fishing and 'crofting, and I cannot doubt that it would be of advantage to the 'islands that these two occupations should be separately pursued. 11. 'The following return shows the total valuation of the county for the last 'ten years. The increase within the last few years is largely owing to the 'improved system of valuation adopted by the commissioners of supply.

Years.	Amount.	Years.	Amount.
1873–74	£33,175 15 8	1878–79	36,499 2 11
1874–75	33,844 16 2	1879–80	36,503 6 4
1875–76	34,178 7 2	1880–81	38,130 15 1
1876–77	35,406 7 6	1881–82	40,425 17 11
1877–78	36,705 6 0	1882–83	42,442 2 6

'12. The population of the county was in 1871, 31,608; and in 1881, '29,705; showing a decrease of 1903 for the decennial period. 13. The 'following table gives the statistics of the cod fishings on the coasts of 'Shetland, Faroe and Iceland since the year 1856:—

Years.	No. of Smacks.	No. of Boats.	No. of Men.	Catch for the Season. Cwts.—Dry.	Total number of Persons employed in the Fisheries, exclusive of the Crews of Fishing Smacks.
1856	51	669	3,574	44,458	4,863
57	57	682	3,603	43,625	4,121
58	58	666	3,632	43,146	4,210
59	64	653	3,766	60,245	4,185
1860	67	689	3,885	55,960	4,260
61	65	681	3,757	39,005	4,126
62	65	683	3,759	51,706	4,200
63	68	677	3,917 (including smack's crews.)	69,699	4,372
64	107	642	4,149	62,006	4,198
65	92	628	3,982	66,089	4,079
66	89	629	4,016	58,455	4,140
67	85	710	4,196	66,641	4,444
68	96	660	4,244	62,649	4,154
69	87	621	3,918	81,812	4,099
1870	85	610	3,899	95,677	4,080
71	84	627	3,999	65,825	4,053
72	95	589	3,983	84,932	3,795
73	81	574	3,760	86,193	3,555
74	86	551	3,753	89,951	3,456
75	77	571	3,656	111,812	3,631
76	70	614	3,603	59,637	3,866
77	71	623	3,660	97,906	3,921
78	73	610	3,692	92,470	3,996
79	74	620	3,553	75,535	4,088
1880	82	614	3,586	87,423	4,295
81	56	628	3,658	61,105	4,654
82	40	629	3,441	68,597	5,620

'14. The following table gives the statistics of the Herring Fisheries of Shetland since the year 1833 :—

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Year.	No. of Boats of all Sizes.	No. of Fishermen and *People employed* in Curing.	Total Catch, or number of Barrels Shipped each year, Cured.
1833	...	...	...
34	1037	9,061	64,358
35	...	...	...
36	...	...	...
37	...	...	...
38	...	...	...
39	1185	9,418	25,685
1840	1185	8,706	6,112
41	1002	6,672	20,395
42	1007	5,976	**10,763**
43	900	5,014	**2,913**
44	882	4,704	**3,053**
45	874	4,621	**6,373**
46	931	5,172	**5,754**
47	884	4,982	**3,895**
48	881	5,032	**4,834**
49	859	4,956	**3,638**
1850	805	4,574	**5,652**
51	793	4,580	**5,164**
52	793	4,834	**9,181**
53	663	4,255	**15,800**
54	250	4,588	**9,009**
55	282	4,842	**14,760**
56	270	1,750	10,200
57	290	1,848	17,858
58	337	2,023	11,926
59	363	2,115	6,676
1860	360	2,106	10,550
61	374	2,156	8,164
62	385	2,211	3,720
63	359	2,057	9,733
64	359	1,638	650
65	340	1,220	4,152
66	274	1,677	13,257
67	308	1,812	9,946
68	300	1,698	1,209
69	288	1,639	1,775
1870	250	1,491	4,200
71	247	1,365	1,682
72	206	1,018	1,801
73	172	765	1,220
74	96	442	1,180
75	94	533	2,896
76	169	1,166	3,828
77	99	856	5,451
78	117	975	8,458
79	206	1,590	8,755
1880	217	1,988	48,552
81	276	2,602	59,586
82	372	4,336	134,187

Boats of all kinds belonging to Shetland.

Herring Boats only . . .

22246. In consequence of the peculiarities attached to the possession of udal land is there any difficulty in selling it?—None, so far as I am aware.

22247. The absence of a written title does not constitute any difficulty in sale?—I believe not.

22248. How does the person who has no written title make up a title at the moment of sale?—As I have stated, the forms of feudal con-

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veyance are generally adopted, but that is just for the sake of the security afforded by registration of the conveyance.

22249. And a person buying udal land does not feel that he is buying with less security than if he were buying old feudal land?—I believe not.

22250. You stated that when the people said the proprietor had alienated the scathold land from the occupiers or crofters, that meant that he had instituted a process of partition; but surely they would not say that was taking their land away unless the proprietor had actually become the occupier, and partitioned the land himself, or turned it into a farm. Supposing the proprietor got a partition of scathold, and got his own share of the commonty and left it in the occupation of his own crofters, they would not say that he had taken away their land, would they?—As a matter of fact I believe it is generally the largest proprietor in the room or township who institutes the process of division of commonty; and his share in the scathold would be very much larger than any others. The portions of land formerly pastured on by the small proprietors would therefore be taken away and put into the hands of the large proprietor.

22251. But if the large proprietor left that scathold appropriated to him in possession of his own arable tenants, he would not be taking the scathold away; he would only be separating it and appropriating it to particular persons?—I fancy the answer to that very much depends upon the meaning of the words 'taken away.' It is difficult to understand what crofters have meant by the words 'taken away.'

22252. I understood they generally meant that the scathold had not only been partitioned, but taken possession of and occupied by the proprietor as a farm, or had been leased as a sheep farm?—That of course is a case of taking away undoubtedly.

22253. You don't know whether there are cases in which the proprietor lets his own share of the scathold and leaves it in the occupancy of his own tenants?—I don't know. I cannot answer that question.

22254. You say you have not known any case of oppression with reference to the small tenants. As you have volunteered a statement, I would like to ask you your opinion about a case which has been brought before us to-day. We have been told that on the island of Whalsay, which is inhabited by about a thousand people, the proprietor does not allow any competitive shop to be established—that there is only one shop of his own allowed in the island. If that be the case do you consider that that amounts to a kind of oppression?—I am afraid that is a question I ought not to answer. I may have a very strong private opinion upon the matter.

22255. I would not have alluded to it if you had not mentioned oppression?—I only referred to cases brought before my Court.

22256. You said that when there is no settlement between the fishermen and the fish-curer, the debt is carried on to another year; when the debt has lasted more than a year, is it customary for the fish-curer to charge interest?—Yes, I think so.

22257. What is the rate of interest generally charged?—My recollection is that it is five per cent, but I am not quite sure. I have known cases where interest has been changed.

22258. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—If you found 10 per cent. was charged, would you think it right?—I don't know that I would give interest at all; it is a doubtful legal point whether interest is due. As a matter of fact, I have deducted interest in some cases.

22259. But it has not come under your notice that exorbitant interest has been charged?—I don't know of any rate of interest above 5 per cent. that has come under my notice.

MAGNUS TAIT, Crofter, Houselter, Tingwall (66)—examined.

22260. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How many people were present when you were elected a delegate?—Twenty-two.

22261. How many people are there altogether in your neighbourhood—how many families of crofters?—About twenty-eight.

22262. Is your place far from here?—Five miles.

22263. What did your neighbours want you to complain of here to-day?—High rents.

22264. What more?—And compensation for improvements.

22265. Anything else?—Repairs for houses.

22266. What rent did you pay?—£9.

22267. What extent of land have you got for that?—About eight acres, I think.

22268. Have the remainder of the people in the place about the same, or is yours larger?—About the same size. I have been in the croft which my grandfather and father had, and it is double the rent now.

22269. How long have you been at the head of your house yourself?—Thirty years.

22270. What family have you?—Three.

22271. What was the rent when you began?—£6, 6s. 9d.

22272. Is the £9 which you pay bare rent?—The bare rent besides the rates.

22273. The rates are over and above?—Yes.

22274. Have you always had the same extent of ground you have now?—No, the hill pasture is taken clean off.

22275. From yourself?—From all the parish.

22276. When was it taken?—About thirty years ago.

22277. Just about the time you began?—Yes.

22278. What stock do you keep?—About six all winter, and two all summer, and two ponies.

22279. Six cows?—No, two.

22280. How many queys?—Two and two others.

22281. Have you any other horses?—Two, and I am very heavily taxed.

22282. No sheep?—None.

22283. What stock could have been kept on the place before the scathold was taken away from you?—About nine in place of six.

22284. And your rent seems to be bigger than it was?—It is double what is was ninety years ago, when my father was head of the house.

22285. What was the rent then?—£4, 10s.

22286. The scathold was taken away about thirty years ago; to whom was it given?—To sheep farmers for the most part.

22287. And is it a sheep farm to this day?—A great part of it. Upwards of forty families were taken away.

22288. Is that place at the head of Dale's Voe?—Yes; westward of Dales. The chief side of the parish is there.

22289. Is that only about twenty years ago?—No; more than that.

22290. Who is your proprietor?—The Hays are proprietors, but formerly it was three different families.

22291. Who was the proprietor when it was made into sheep farms?—Mr George Hay.

22292. Is he alive yet?—Yes.

22293. He bought the property, in fact?—I suppose so.

22294. And turned it into a sheep farm?—A great part of it.

22295. What is the name of this property?—Aswerhaken

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22296. Who is the tenant of it now?—There are three or four different farmers.

22297. Give me their names?—Mr Chalmers is one.

22298. Who are the others?—Mr Low and Mr Manson, but not of Mr Hay's estate.

22299. Mr Hay has not got the whole land from which these people were turned out?—No, other proprietors in the parish.

22300. But Chalmers and Low occupy part of Mr Hay's ground?—Yes, and a little part of the scathold. The people are heavily taxed for animals—10s. for a pony and a little for sheep.

22301. There is the privilege of certain grazing upon payment?—There is.

22302. What became of the people who were turned out thirty years ago?—Shifted to different places—to smaller places; and some emigrated.

22303. Were they well off?—They were pretty well off when rents were low.

22304. Did they use to turn over a good deal of land for crop every year?—Yes; and got good crops.

22305. Is there any of that going on now?—Yes, a great improvement, but their return for improvement is laying on more money.

22306. Is any of the land on which these crofters were put turned by the plough?—Yes, for the sheep farmers.

22307. They keep some ground under cultivation?—Yes, they keep a piece of it under cultivation.

22308. What kind of crops do they raise?—Pretty fair. The soil is good.

22309. Particularly at the top of Dale's Voe; is not that good land?—Yes.

22310. How many people live at the top of Dale's Voe now; I saw one house?—That is a shepherd's house.

22311. Is that the only one there?—That is the only one of the seven that were there.

22312. How many were there?—Seven

22313. Was that the first time sheep were introduced to this neighbourhood, about thirty years ago?—Yes, there was not a sheep farm before that.

22314. What was the object of introducing sheep, and turning out the men?—I don't know; for the profit of the proprietor I understand.

22315. Was that the only reason?—There were none of the people in debt.

22316. They were quite able to pay their way?—Yes, I did not hear of one being due a shilling.

22317. Were they fishermen as well as crofters?—Yes, but I don't know. I was a seaman for forty-two years, and I had a small pension from Whitehall in London, as a merchant sailor.

22318. You say that among the grievances the people sent you here to represent one is that the rents are too high?—High rents.

22319. And you want compensation for improvements?—To be sure.

22320. And do not want to be turned out?—No, we want a fair valuation for what we have; because if we had more land we would not have sufficient to stock it. It is not caused so much by the landlords as by the factors and ground officers, and assessors, and then the master takes it up. Mr Hay, I believe, is the best rent master; when the day comes you must pay it. He has his cottages in good order; but for my part there has no stone been lifted for ninety-three years, when my father was in it.

22321. Who is your proprietor at this moment?—Mr Hay.

22322. And he keeps your buildings in good order?—Yes, but for my part there has not one stone been removed for ninety years. It is a hovel that gives me a little shelter. My grandfather was in it before.

22323. Have any of you got leases?—No, no leases at all; but if we improve there is £1 put on one year and 10s. another; that is the encouragement we get.

22324. And you don't care for that kind of encouragement?—No, and only forty days' notice to quit; and where can we go?

22325. Are you really paying this rent because you don't know very well where to go to?—No, it is laid on, and I cannot go any further.

22326. Are you continuing to pay the high rent because you cannot better yourself?—To be sure.

22327. What length of lease would you like to have?—I don't care what length of lease I get, because my lease is going out.

22328. Your lease of life?—Yes.

22329. But we were told by a man in Skye, who was seventy-eight years of age, that if he got a lease he would have a try yet?—So I might, but the rent is too high.

22330. But if you got encouragement, and the people in your neighbourhood the same, you would improve a great deal more than you are doing?—I am improving as hard as I can, and the people are all doing the same; but those who do most get 10s., or £1 laid on.

22331. Are you obliged to buy anything for the support of your family?—Yes, plenty times I have to buy.

22332. The croft does not support you?—No.

JAMES GARRIOCK, Reawick (49)—examined.

22333. *The Chairman.*—I understand you desire to make a statement in reference to the deposition of James David Robertson of Walls?—One or two of his statements may have been applicable to one or two cases; but in reference to Melby, who is the largest proprietor and owns more than half the whole property in the three parishes, I beg to state that there were certain inaccuracies.

22334. On what head was it?—In the first place, with reference to the houses, it is the practice on Melby's property always for the landlord to build the houses, and provide timber for the roof, windows, and doors, the tenant putting on the thatch, and erecting the office houses, and in the event of his leaving, being allowed compensation by neutral valuators. The incoming tenant is chargeable with the amount of that valuation, but failing the incoming tenant, of course the proprietor has to stand the loss. Hence the statement as to no compensation falls to the ground. And I may further remark, that I think he made a statement to this effect, that the landlords did not put themselves to much expense. Now, when the late proprietor, Dr Scott or Melby, became heir to the estate, I think in the year 1852, the houses had fallen into a state of dilapidation, and the crofts were all in the old system—the runrig system—and all mixed up. Dr Scott being at that time a staff-surgeon in the Royal Navy, and possessed of means apart from his income, could afford to expend a considerable sum annually in improving his property, which to my certain knowledge he did, in many instances of building new houses, four or five in one season, some of them costing £30 each. He also was at the expense of dividing the land, appointing land surveyors, and having the crofts measured and allocated, so that this previous runrig system might

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be done away with. This prevented three or four tenants having their land intermixed; but it caused the proprietor considerable amount of expense, all of which he has paid. Then there was another statement made by Mr Robertson about the increase of rent in consequence of the churches. I may state that there was a call made by the parish minister for the new manse, and for certain repairs on the three churches. His claim was enforced by the presbytery, and the landlords were obliged to expend something like £2200 in less than eighteen months; and if you refer to the valuation roll you will find that stated. It was not to be expected that proprietors could pay this all out of their own pockets, and the tenants stand no share of it. There was a slight increase of rent at that time, I believe, but I was not then the factor. He instanced also the case of Lawrence Jamieson, as one who had not received justice from his landlord. Lawrence Jamieson is not a tenant on the Melby estate, and I don't think James David Robertson could find one tenant on the Melby estate who has been treated in that manner. The late Dr Scott was one of the most indulgent and kind-hearted of landlords, and certainly used every means in his power to ameliorate the condition of his tenants, and I am bound to say the tenants have been all along managed with the utmost consideration, in fact, if possible with too much leniency. With regard to the roads, the question which was put to him was that the landlord had expended nothing for the making of roads. There has been expended by Melby about £130 out of his own resources, apart from road money.

22335. Making farm roads?—Making roads for the benefit of the parish, with the view that, when sufficient road money had been accumulated, this parish and that of Sandness might be joined in order to facilitate road making between the two parishes. That statement, consequently, is evidently erroneous on the part of Mr Robertson. Then in regard to his own case, as the tenant of Happy Hansel, that croft or piece of ground is not a fair criterion of the rent of the parish. The average rental in Walls is £4, 10s. 6d., or £4, 11s. per croft. The average rent in Sandness is £4, 17s. 6d.; and the average in the island of Foula, which exclusively belongs to Dr Scott, is £3, 10s. I should say the average size of a croft in Walls may be from 4 to 6 acres, and they are similar or rather larger in Sandness; while in Foula they may be from 3 to 4 acres. Thus, I think, it becomes evident that Melby's tenants are not over-rented as compared with any part of the United Kingdom,—and more especially, if you take the island of Foula—and you have been there—you must have found that the rents are exceedingly moderate. I should say, that if the question were thoroughly sifted, there might possibly be room for equalisation; some are possibly a little over-rented, but more, I should say, would be found to be under-rented. With regard to the grievances of the rates, I certainly join with the tenants it stating that the school rate is a burden grievous to be borne. It does seem very hard now, that the poor crofters in Shetland should have to pay 1s. and 1s. 3d. in the pound for what can be got in Shetland for 3d. and in Glasgow for 2½d. Where the valuation is high, of course the rate is small. Unfortunately, in Shetland the valuation is low, and consequently the rate must be high. In the parish of Walls, Sandness, Papa, and Foula, five new schools had to be erected, and the mere maintenance of these buildings must eventually become a heavy tax. I merely hint that this is a real grievance, and I think that is the only grievance the Melby tenants have to complain of. Before I became factor—my brothers were then factors; I have only been factor for eight years; but I was thoroughly conversant with it before I was appointed. For many years, Dr Scott, in consequence of the enormous outlay,

derived very little from the rents; possibly some years not one-third. With regard to the erection of the houses, I may say just now the houses are being erected of a superior description to those formerly put up. I expend annually, on behalf of the proprietor, a considerable sum in the purchase of lime with a view, eventually, to the improvement of the appearance and substantiality of the houses, which in most cases costs the tenant little or nothing. Possibly, Mr James David Robertson and those who appointed him a delegate, may know of tenants in the parish who have been otherwise treated; I speak merely of those under my own immediate charge as factor,—somewhere about 240 tenants,—and I am certain there is not one but has been treated with kindness and consideration.

22336. Speaking about the system of compensation at the end of the occupancy, if I understood you right, when a tenant is leaving, the value of his house—I do not know whether you said other improvements—is ascertained?—Yes.

22337. And the compensation is not given to him by the landlord, but is given by the incoming tenant?—It is given by the landlord in the first instance, and reclaimed from the incoming tenant who takes his place.

22338. The outgoing tenant receives the value of his improvements from the factor or landlord down?—Quite so.

22339. And then it is recovered from the incoming tenant?—Yes.

22340. So that it is not the landlord who pays the compensation?—It is the incoming tenant.

22341. Is the incoming tenant allowed to subtract that amount from his rent gradually, or is it reimbursed gradually?—He pays it as he is able. He may not be able to pay it for many years.

22342. You allow him to extend the payment over several years?—Yes.

22343. And at the end of his occupancy he receives compensation for the unexhausted value in that way?—He does, and provided he has no successor, the landlord pays him.

22344. How is the value ascertained?—By neutral parties.

22345. You mentioned that there was an expenditure imposed upon the heritors for repairs to the churches and manse in one year?—A little more than a year.

22346. That was in virtue of a decision of the Court of Session; was there a law suit in the Court of Session about it?—There was no law suit.

22347. But the fact that there were so many churches in want of repair, and a manse in want of rebuilding, looked as if there had been a culpable delay on the part of the heritors in performing their duties towards the churches and the manse?—It looks like that.

22348. Do you think there had been some unnecessary delay on the part of the heritors?—I don't think so; because the old manse is standing still.

22349. And what about the three churches?—Well, they possibly did require some repairs.

22350. I mean, it only appears to me curious that they should all have wanted re-building and repairing at the same moment; if they had been kept up regularly before that, the charge might not have been so heavy at one moment?—I don't know.

22351. A lawful obligation had accumulated to such an extent, that it was necessary in a year and a half to expend how much?—About £2200.

22352. You say that the proprietors can hardly be expected to undertake that expenditure themselves. Is it not a legal obligation on the pro-

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prietors?—Well, that is the question which is not fully settled yet, I believe.

22353. At any rate the proprietors thought it was necessary, virtually, to raise a sort of rate from the tenant for the purpose of helping them?—That was partly the cause. The landlords found that they could not live; they might as well have handed over their property to the clergy and to the tenants; it would have left them no sufficient income.

22354. Are there any Nonconformists occupiers in the parish?—Yes.

22355. Are the greatest part of the occupiers members of the Established Church?—I should say not. Mr Robertson stated that they were, but that is on the principle of all who did not belong to any other denomination, being put down as belonging to the establishment.

22356. As it seems that there has been some delay in the performance of the legal obligations by heritors, does it appear to you surprising that the Noncomforming bodies should have thought it rather hard to have their rents raised to repair churches and build a new manse?—They considered it a great hardship.

22357. How many years was Dr Scott landlord?—From 1852 to the end of 1874.

22358. About twenty-two years?—Yes.

22359. And you stated that he was a benevolent landlord who laid out large sums of money in the improvement of the tenantry?—I have no hesitation in saying that.

22360. Can you tell me what the rental of the whole estate was at the time he came into possession?—Possibly about £900, or a little over.

22361. And at the end of twenty-two years, about how much?—£1000 or so a year—about £1100.

22362. And what is the rental now?—A little over £1100.

22363. So that from the year 1852, to the present time, it has only increased about £200?—Or £250.

22364. Can you give me any idea of what the sum total may have been which was laid out in improvements?—Not without reference to my books.

22365. On this estate of Dr Scott's have small tenants been evicted, or has any scathold been taken away, or sheep farms formed?—None; the scathold has been measured but not taken.

22366. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that Dr Scott laid out a great deal of money in the way of allocating lands, and employing surveyors to change the old runrig system?—Yes.

22367. Do you think that the money was altogether out of pocket on his part?—It was.

22368. Did he get no return whatever in the way of increased rents at that period?—Possibly, that may have been one of the things that led to the slight increase for all I know; I was not their factor.

22369. And you will not undertake to say that the effect of these allocations and surveys was not an increase of rent upon the people?—I cannot say as to that; I was not paying particular attention to it.

22370. But don't you think it was rather unadvisable for you to say that was laid out on the estate, when it may have been more than repaid by their rental?—I don't believe it was; in fact, I am certain it was not.

22371. Do you mean to say there was no increase of rental?—Not at that particular time; subsequent to that there was.

22372. How long do you mean by the word 'subsequent?'—Really, I am unable to say how many years.

22373. You stated that a great deal of money had been laid out upon the

Melby property—how much has been laid out upon Foula?—Less than any of the others, because the rents are smaller.

22374. Can you tell me anything that has been laid out?—There have been some repairs, but really I cannot say the amount.

22375. Is there a piece of the road upon the island?—There is a bridge which cost a large sum of money.

22376. That is the bridge across the creek; you don't consider that anything worthy of particular mention?—You will allow me to explain that the tenants of Foula are charged a little over the amount of road money levied by the country, in order to create a fund for making paths through the island, and at this moment there is a sum of about £24 accumulated which is to be laid out. It would have been expended last year, but people could not be got to agree as to the line of the road. The inhabitants of the north part wish it there, and those of the southern portion wish to have it there, and the people in the central portion were not agreed as to how it should pass through their place; and the matter is laid aside, until the road is to be led through the island.

22377. And it is quite convenient for you to have the £24?—I don't have it; it is in my brother's books.

22378. It is in the proprietor's hands?—It is not. It is in Garrioch and Co.'s hands, who pay interest for it. It was there when they were factors, and it has been allowed to remain there, because they could allow larger interest for it than the proprietor.

22379. It is as good as if it were in the bank?—Better.

22380. Are you any relation to the firm that has got the store?—I am brother.

22381. Have you any interest in the store?—None whatever.

22382. Or in the establishment in Reawick?—No. May I be allowed to make one remark further?

22383. *The Chairman.*—Certainly?—I forgot to explain with regard to the scathold and stock upon it. There are some tenants who have a considerable number of sheep, and most of the tenants in Sandness have ponies, and I should think that a good many of them could pay their rents by disposing of a two-year-old pony apart from anything else.

22384. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Of whom are you talking?—Melby's tenants in Sandness, and I make that statement to show that the rents cannot be considered too high.

22385. In Foula the tenants are prohibited from keeping ponies?—It has been always allowed to the landlord there to keep half a dozen ponies for his own use, and I have never heard any objections to it.

22386. But tenants are not allowed to keep them?—No.

22387. And therefore they can make nothing by selling the ponies?—But they are allowed to have an unlimited number of sheep.

22388. What is the object of prohibiting ponies in Foula?—I really don't know; it has been always the practice. I don't know any particular reason. It is not a source of great revenue to the proprietor.

22389. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I think they told us they had ponies at one time?—Not so far as I am aware. They have an unlimited right to the hills, and may keep as many cattle and sheep as they choose, and the result is that they keep far too many of both; some of them having eight or ten cows, and only pay £5 of rent, and perhaps they may have 100 or 200 sheep.

22390. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Is there any individual there who keeps that number of sheep?—I fancy there must be. But I would not like to make the statement without further inquiry.

23391. Can you give us any figures as to the actual stock upon the island

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at present?—I don't know; It is very difficult to get at it. As a rule, the tenants are not very willing to state the precise number of their flocks. I forgot, also, to state that about twenty families in Walls—tenants—emigrated to New Zealand. There were valuators appointed to put a fair estimate upon their outlay with regard to the erection of office houses, and implements, and which they recorded cash when embarking or before embarking for New Zealand.

22392. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did these people go of their own accord?—They did.

22393. Were they in arrear?—I don't think they were; they were of the better class.

22394. Would they not have stopped if you had given them greater encouragement?—I am glad you mentioned that. The statement was made that they had no leases. A number of years ago leases were prepared for the Melby tenants by the late Mr Henry Cheyne, W.S., Edinburgh, who was also a Shetlander, and fully acquainted with the manners and customs of the people. These leases were put into the hands of some of the tenants who were requested to peruse them, and were offered to be supplied with them, and not one of them took a lease; and these leases are lying as so much waste paper yet.

22395. Was it in consequence of the stringency of the regulations?—I cannot say as to that.

22396. There may be leases and leases?—I don't think there were any unreasonable clauses in them.

Rev. GEORGE CLARK, Free Church Minister, South Connigsburgh, recalled—examined.

Rev. George Clark.

22397. *The Chairman.*—I understand you wish to make an explanation?—Mr Bruce thinks an answer of mine was misunderstood. He thinks that in speaking about over-crowding, I was referring chiefly to the Sumburgh estate. I was not, I was referring to all the estates. Mr Bruce's is not the worst; Lady Nicolson's is probably the worst, so far as over-crowding is concerned. Mr Bruce thinks you did not understand me.

22398. Who is Lady Nicolson's factor?—I thought it was Mr Macgregor, but Mr Macgregor says he is not. Mr Macgregor is here, and will explain that. He is recognised as her agent at all events.—*Alexander Macgregor*, solicitor, Lerwick. I am Lady Nicolson's agent, and her factor is Mr Sinclair Pottinger, Grimister.

22399. *The Chairman.*—As agent, are you conversant with the condition of the estate?—No, not at all.—*Rev. Mr Clark.* Mr Walker, Episcopalian minister, says to me she has no factor, only a ground officer.

22400. *The Chairman.*—To whom does the ground officer report?—To herself.

THOMAS HENDERSON, Crofter, Olnafirth, Delting (49)—examined.

Thomas Henderson

22401. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When were you chosen to appear here?—On Saturday the 14th.

22402. Was there a meeting called?—There was.

22403. What were you asked to say?—Our grievances which were stated were these. First, that the rents have been raised during the last thirty years fully 30 per cent., while all the improvements have been made by the crofters. Second, that no compensation has been allowed by the landlords for improvements made by the crofters. In connection with this I may say that we have been afraid to cultivate or improve, because there might be more rent put upon us in consequence of the improvements. Third, that the crofters only hold their crofts from year to year, so that the landlords can put them off their crofts at forty days' notice. You are aware that in this country we consume peats, and not coals, and if an eviction takes place we don't know that it is to be until November. Now our peats must be cut and cured in summer, and not winter, and if we get notice to leave there is no resource but to stand and face it—we have no alternative but to face it, or go to the fields. Shelter we might get, but not fire.

22404. That last ground of grievance is not peculiar to Shetland?—No, but we stand a worse chance than the people in Scotland, because we have no coals; we burn our peats on the floor, and then, if we had money for coals, we would have to pay 11s. of freight. Fourth, we complain that the landlords will not give long leases on favourable terms. Fifth, that the hill pasture, or common, in some cases has been taken away and given to others. The crofters have been charged 6d. for each sheep, and 3s. for each pony put upon this common. We understood our hills were common, and belonged to the crofters from time immemorial, which was guaranteed by treaty between Denmark and Scotland, when it was ceded to the latter in 1469. I heard the Sheriff make some reference to that, and I understood that, in days of old, the title deeds for the udal lands bore, that from the highest clod on the hill to the lowest stone on the beach, the tenants were entitled to the pasture when they took a lease of a farm. If we have a claim on them, we want to have it established. The people had the right of the pasture until, I think, about 1830, when, I believe, a man came from another part of the country, and offered a certain amount for the hills in the southern part of the parish, which was accepted; but I understand he failed about two years afterwards. The tenants in the south end of the parish were then called together at Busta, and £34 extorted from them under penalty of removal, and, like the old Highland piper at Waterloo, we had just to stand and face it out. We all paid the money with the exception of a few. That money was paid from 1832 to 1869, a period of thirty-seven years. Then we experienced the heaviest harvest weather which there has been in my time, under the visiting hand of Providence, destroying our crop to a large extent, and the remainder was destroyed by animals from the hills, and instead of receiving sympathy from the landlords, there was an addition made to the rent of 3s. and 5s. as the case might be. Indirectly, we thought that was to be for the erection of a new church and manse, but we were not sure. I produce receipt for 1868-69, showing the increase of 3s. in the pound. We grumbled and growled, in consequence of that increase, but some paid the rent, and some promised to do it, and in about three years fifty per cent. of the people in the parish were falling into arrears. In 1878 our cattle on the hills, for the grazing of which we were paying, were driven together by the factor's order—the factor was the man who did the work, whether he was ordered to do it or not, we cannot say, and 6d. was charged for every sheep, and 3s. for every pony. The stock was numbered in August or September, and no intimation was given to any man to pay until he came to the pay table, and consequently none of the people were prepared at the rent time. I didn't pay at that time, because

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I left the croft, but I went on a new croft, and the year following I paid everything that was asked. I may say that I am glad to see the Commission here, because the people wish the hill back again. The people want many things they can never get, but if we have a claim to the hills we want them back, and if we have no claim we don't want them. But I am almost certain we have a claim, because, as I have said, in our old country Acts it says, that from the highest clod on the hill to the lowest stone on the beach we have a right to the pasture. With regard to the compensation, I must say that any labour that has been expended by the tenants has been buried in the hearts of the landlords, and consequently there has been almost no improvement made. With regard to the leases to which I have referred, I may say that some people don't desire them. For my own part, the croft I have is hardly worth taking a lease of, and the rent I pay is far too much. Five merks of land at 16s. a merk was my rent; but in 1832 and 1869 it was raised, until now I pay £5. I want that increase of rent off, besides having the hill restored to us. Sixth, we complain that the crofter cannot improve his croft under the present precarious system. Seventh, that most of the dwelling-houses are unfit for people to live in. The dwelling-houses and all the offices, have mostly been raised by the tenants. Mr Garriock referred to compensation being given for the roofs, but it is the incoming tenant who always pays that. In my own case, when I left my croft, there was no tenant coming in, and I was due the landlord nothing. The roof stood from the 11th November, when my term was up, until the May following when I removed it, and then it was a good deal worse.

22405. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is Mr Garriock factor on your property?—No, Mr Gifford; but I could not help making that remark. In all cases, so far as I am aware, when a removal takes place, it is the incoming tenant who pays; and in some cases the proprietor has been obliged to advance for the incoming tenant. In all cases the roofs have been left to the incoming tenant, at a valuation; but the proprietor never paid that, unless the tenant was evicted, and was obliged to leave his roofs behind, and then the tenant would go to the landlord for the damages. In certain cases, in nearly all cases, the tenant coming in pays the damages to the one going out. The following are the reforms which we consider are greatly needed:—'1. That the crofters shall get 'long leases on favourable terms; or rather that he shall be made secure 'in his holding while he pays his rent. 2. That where the hill pasture 'or common has been taken away, it shall be restored to the crofter; and 'where sheep, ponies, &c., have been charged for, the charge shall be 'taken off. 3. That the crofter shall get compensation for all improve-'ments, whether in cultivating his croft, building, or improving his dwell-'ing house, or offices, or whatever improvements he may have made, or 'paid for making. 4. That all crofts shall be valued by valuators 'appointed by the Government; said valuators to be acquainted with our 'climate and soil. 5. That no crofter shall be removed or ejected from 'his croft, so long as he pays his rent and cultivates his croft. 6. And 'last, that all sheep farms, however long they may have been used as such 'be discontinued, and again subdivided into reasonable sized crofts. This 'we insist on, because there is a demand in the islands for them. They 'contain the very best land in the islands. Their existence have been 'our chief source of pauperism. And finally, the best interests of our 'population at large, which should ever be our prime object, demands 'it.—THOMAS HENDERSON, chairman.'

22406. Who drew out that statement?—We drew out our grievances amongst ourselves, and this paper was agreed to unanimously, in the

meetings. These are the advantages we most desire, and I got the teacher to draw out the statement as I am no scholar myself.

22407. But the statement, is the *bona fide* productions of the people themselves?—Indeed, Yes.

22408. Have you any sheep farms in your parish?—We have. I calculate that about one-fifth of the parish is laid down under sheep farms.

22409. How long is it since they began?—I was not born in the parish, but I know the farms have been in existence ever since 1855.

22410. Were these farms the means of dispossessing some of the people from the land, or were they the means of the scathold being curtailed?—No, the people were not absolutely dismissed, but there were patches taken off almost all of us.

22411. Was that done by one proprietor or by several?—By several proprietors.

22412. Who is the largest proprietor in your part of the country?—The Busta estate, I suppose, is the biggest.

22413. Was the old laird alive at this time?—I believe it was in the old laird's time, that one-fifth part was given off as sheep farms, when eighteen or nineteen families were removed. Two of the families remained in a fair position, but that was about all. The rest fell off one way or another. Some of them emigrated, some settled down on the hills, and others along the shores. The younger people emigrated. Some of them fell into pauperism.

22414. Has there been discontent ever since that took place?—There has, over the parish.

22415. How many people were present when you were elected a delegate?—About thirty.

22416. And you were quite unanimous?—Yes.

22417. Would you be able to live on your croft if you hadn't something else to do?—No, in addition to the croft, I have been running postman for the last five years.

22418. What family have you?—My father, my father-in-law, my wife, one child, and myself—five in all.

22419. Are you a native of Shetland?—Yes, I am a native of Whalsay.

22420. And do you consider that statement you have made, represents the feelings of the people in the district you represent?—I do.

JOHN BRUCE, younger, Sumburgh (46)—examined.

John Bruce

22421. *The Chairman.*—What is exactly your position Mr Bruce?—I manage my father's estate, and I have some property of my own.

22422. Do you desire to make any remarks upon Mr Clark's statement?—If the letter of James Smith is recorded, I should like to say simply that his statement is not correct. He is not a crofter at all, but a fish-curer and a merchant doing a considerable business, and the premises he refers to are business premises.

22423. This party, in fact, is not a crofter at all?—He is not. He is a general merchant and fish-curer, doing a considerable country business. Mr Clark says the houses are over-crowded, and consequently unhealthy. Connigsburgh is certainly behind other districts in Shetland as to houses, and this is partly due to the bad quality of the stones in the district, and the apathy of the people on the subject. But such as the houses in Con-

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John Bruce.

nigsburgh are now, the houses in other districts were some years ago, and even Connigsburgh is improving in house accommodation. Mr Clark mentioned that there were forty-five families, each living in houses of one apartment. This cannot refer to the Sumburgh estate alone, or even principally. The over-crowding is the work of the people themselves. Of the two worst houses Mr Clark mentioned, one was built by a tenant who pays no rent, and the other is occupied by an old failing man. No house of one room is, so far as I know, let to any family; and there is a rule against double families, which, however, is disregarded. In the case of the family where two children died, the father had been a shepherd in another parish, and had lately come to Connigsburgh, and forced himself and family into the house of his brother-in-law, where there was no room for him. The rule on the Sumburgh estate is to give a new tenant a good house, and leave it to him to keep up. I have had very few applications from the tenants about houses, and I believe there is no great wish amongst them to get better holdings. Building leases, or the promise of compensation when removed, are never refused. There are a number of small properties in Connigsburgh, and, I doubt if their houses are better than the tenants. Mr Clark's complaint against the Local Authority is not fair. They have done all they can, and Mr Clark has been invited to attend their meetings, and had he done so, his suggestions would have received every attention. The inspector was told to show his instructions to Mr Clark.

22424. Are you personally acquainted with the circumstances of most of your people?—I must say I am less acquainted with the circumstances of the Connigsburgh people than with those of the people in the other districts; they are further away from me.

22425. Probably, after this, you will look into the matter more closely?—Certainly, I will.

22426. *The Chairman.*—Are you aware of any houses upon the Sumburgh estate at Connigsburgh which have only one room?—I am not aware that there is such a house. There may be some little place occupied by some old woman, but I am not aware that there is such a house let as a house.

22427. Are you aware that there are any houses entered by the byre?—Yes, plenty; but we discourage that as much as possible. At the same time, it is a hardship to the people to oblige them to take down these byres and build others. They are very much against it themselves, and until you can persuade the people that it is unhealthy, it will not be done.

22428. But might there not be a door put into the wall of the building?—There might, in some cases; but in many cases the house is so built that you cannot get at the wall conveniently to do that,—the byre covers the whole front of the house. That system of entering the house from the byre, however, is gradually dying out. No new byres are built that way, and as the old byres are falling into decay, and new ones are erected in their stead, matters are being remedied.

22429. The proprietor does not build the outhouses?—No.

22430. Is there any regulation on the estate at the present moment under which the new byre is to be built apart from the house, or with a separate entrance?—There is a regulation of the Local Authority to that effect, but not an estate regulation.

22431. Are you aware that the Local Authority has actually interfered to improve or enforce the improvement of houses?—The Local Authority appointed an inspector of nuisances, and this man's duty is to go about and visit different localities, and take action wherever he finds what he considers

a nuisance. He is not a very competent man. Mr Clark says he is of no use at all, but he is the best man we could get. His name is Thomas Williamson, and he is a ground officer on the Symbister estate.

22432. Do you think a health officer so situated would summon his own landlord for a nuisance?—Probably he would deal more leniently with his own landlord than with anybody else, but he would report the matter to the Board, and his instructions are, in case of difficulty, to call in the medical officer of the parish and get his report.

22433. Has the medical officer made reports?—I am not aware that he has.

22434. Have you ever called upon him to do so?—In some cases of fever, I think we did.

22435. Has he ever made a report upon cases of fever in the community?—Not a general report. He has made reports on special cases when asked to do so.

22436. Have you personally been in every cottage, or in nearly every cottage, on the estate?—I think I have been in every cottage, but not very recently.

22437. Have you candidly got the impression, that at the present moment the dwellings of the poor are not in a creditable condition?—I believe they are very bad. They are in such a state that I don't like to see any human being living in some of them. But you will find that, in many cases, the people are perfectly contented, and if you were to build new houses, the people would prefer to remain where they are rather than remove.

22438. I think you stated, that the rule of your estate was, that the proprietor built the walls, and that the tenant supplied the internal furnishings?—The rule is that the proprietor builds the house, and the tenant keeps it up.

22439. We have heard that the building of the houses was divided in this way,—that the proprietor builds the walls and furnishes the roof, and that the tenant provides the internal fittings?—Yes, where there are internal fittings; but in few of these houses are there any internal fittings. Where there is any wood lining, or lath, and plaster, it is mostly the property of the tenants.

22440. Do you find that the tenants in this place make applications to the landlords for new houses?—I have had very few applications at all.

22441. Have you acceded to the applications which have been made?—I have never refused leave to built a new house; I cannot say I have been asked to build one.

22442. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Why?—Probably they thought I would not do it. I have stated in the paper I have handed in, that the reason why we did not build these new houses is, that no landlord can afford to build houses without getting interest for his money, and that no tenant with the earnings of these men, can afford to pay the interest that a really good house would cost. I have attempted a new plan in Fair Isle, and if you call there you will see how it works. There the tenants are building their own houses, and I give a slate roof, and the new cottages are really very nice.

22443. *The Chairman.*—Do you think that if the leases were given on liberal terms, the people would expend their own money and their own labour?—That is done largely on the Sumburgh estate.

22444. Under building leases?—Under leases. They pay for the ground, and the house is entirely built by the tenant, except in this particular district of Connigsburgh where the race is peculiar; but the rest of the estate is very comfortable.

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LERWICK.
John Bruce.

22445 Why is it that there is a peculiarity in the habits of the people of Connigsburgh?—Some few years ago I was asked to send some photographs of typical Shetlanders where no traces of foreign blood could show, for the information of the anthropological section of the British Association. In forwarding the photographs I remarked regarding the Connigsburgh people, that the men had a peculiar appearance—they were dark, short men, evidently of a different race from the rest of the Shetlanders—and I suggested it might be the remains of the Spanish blood introduced at the time of the armada. I was told, however, that it was the Celtic or Irish element that showed in these typical faces. That peculiarity, I believe, does not appear in any other part of the country.

22446. It would gratify me if you were able to state, now that your attention has been directed to the question, that you have it in contemplation to introduce any improvements in Connigsburgh which are possible?—Yes, with regard to the houses, I certainly have been thinking over the subjects for a long time; but it is a very difficult subject to tackle, unless you can take the people along with you.

22447. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have made great improvements in ameliorating the condition of the people of Fair Isle?—Yes, but there I take the people very much along with me. If you get one man to do a thing in Fair Isle every man will do it.

22448. Do you not find that in any other place?—Not in Connigsburgh. The people in Fair Isle are all very much upon a level, and when one man makes an improvement all the rest are stimulated to follow his example. In Connigsburgh there are different classes—the rich and the poor crofter—and the poor crofter does not attempt to equal the rich one. In Fair Isle the people are all very much in the same position, and don't like to see others going ahead of them. If you could get up a spirit of rivalry in Connigsburgh you would soon have finer houses.

22449. Is Fair Isle dealt with in your paper?—Not specially.

22450. You have given leases to the people in Fair Isle?—I have not.

22451. Have you promised them compensation?—I have not, but I intended to issue a document of that kind to them, and would have done so, but there has been so much talk about legislation and what the Goverment would do, that I have been waiting to see what the Government is to do before I take any definite step.

22452. The improvement in Fair Isle has actually taken place?—Yes, I believe, the men have confidence that they will receive fair play.

22453. Has your family been long in Shetland?—Our oldest titles are dated 1572.—*Rev. Mr Clark.* Mr Bruce says he has not, so far as he knows, on his estate at Connigsburgh, families dwelling in one apartment.

22454. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Paying rents?—*Rev. Mr Clark.* I can mention two cases, namely, George Smith and Laurence Tulloch, villeins, each of whom is living with his family in a one-roomed house. —*Mr Bruce.* What I meant to say was, that I let no house of one apartment. In the cases referred to by Mr Clark, the house consists of two rooms, and is let to one family, and another family has come in. We have not the name of any person on the rental book, so far as I know, occupying one room.—*Rev. Mr Clark.* I beg your pardon; George Smith is on your rent roll.

22455. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Don't you think he may have sub-let?—*Rev. Mr Clark.* That may be; I thought George Smith was paying £3 of rent for the one room and his croft, and that Lawrence Tulloch

was also in one apartment, and was paying rent somewhat similar.—*Mr Bruce.* There are two houses.—*Rev. Mr Clark.* Yes, but each house has only one apartment.

22456. *The Chairman.*—Are they attached together?—*Rev. Mr Clark.* Yes, you would think it was one house; and I believe it was one house and one croft originally, but it is not so now. But there is this case of George Smith living in a dwelling of one apartment, and Laurence Tulloch living in a dwelling of one apartment?—*Mr Bruce.* If that is the case, I was not aware of it.

WALTER SUTHERLAND, Crofter, Nesting (75)—examined.

22457. *The Chairman.*—Were you elected a delegate for Westing?—Yes.

22458. How many people were there at the election?—About twenty they spoke to me.

22459. What statement have you to make about Westing?—Well, there are two things which I would like to mention; there is a want of leases and heavy rents; and these prevent tenants from being so active as they otherwise would be.

22460. Who is your proprietor?—The land belongs to the estate of Symbister; and Mr William Irvine is factor.

22461. Have you got scathold?—Yes, we have it yet.

22462. Has any of it been taken away from your holdings?—Nothing in the parish of South Nesting yet, but only a piece of small ground which was not of much value.

22463. What stock do you keep—how many cows?—I keep two milk cows—small Shetland cows—and one two-year old quey and one calf.

22464. Ponies?—Two—a mare and a foal.

22465. Any sheep?—Yes.

22466. How many?—I could not tell you. Nine or ten, not exceeding that.

22467. What rent do you pay?—Exclusive of rates, I pay £4, 10s. now.

22468. How many acres of arable ground have you?—I suppose about 3¼ acres of very bad land. I only have about half an acre of good land; and the animals I have are all of the old Shetland breed—small.

22469. Was your rent ever raised?—Yes; my rent when I took the croft thirty-two years ago was £3, 14s. 10d., and now, rates and all, it costs about £6.

22470. Have you got any road near you?—No, we have a small bit of branch road from the main road.

22471. How far are you from the main road?—Between two and three miles, and we have a small bit of a branch road, about half a mile in length, of which we bear the expense ourselves.

22472. Who made that branch road—who paid for it?—I expect the tenants paid for it.

22473. Did the landlord not do something for it?—I don't know exactly whether he did any thing or not, but they were always taking your money at rent day, and at last in that way they accumulated some money, and commenced the branch road; for there was a large burn there, and they had to make a road over it.

22474. Did they put a road over it?—There is a road over it now, which cost, I am informed, £100, but I could not say certainly.

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22475. Who paid the £100?—It was always collected at the time of rent paying.

22476. There was a little fund formed for it?—Yes, by the tenants. I do not know whether the landlord put anything into the fund or not.

22477. Perhaps he did?—Perhaps so; he might have put in a good bit for all I know. There is one thing I complain of, and that is the want of more labour. There is no encouragement to us to labour on our own land, because I can prove that people have broken up their land and brought it under cultivation, and when other people came and offered more money for that croft, the tenant got a letter, saying, 'You must pay us the money offered by this man or be turned off, and I will take the 'other man;' and it may be that the man who offered was a sluggard, and the other an active man.

22478. Do you know any particular case in which that was done?—I do. It was done in Nesting of late years, when Mr John Budge was factor in Symbister.

22479. Who is the factor now?—Mr William Irvine, of Hay and Co., in Lerwick, and a very fine man he is.

22480. Have you any fishers in your village?—Not now. There is only myself and my brother alive, and we are past that.

22481. In the township are there any of your neighbours engaged in fishing?—Yes.

22482. Are they obliged to fish to any particular person?—I don't think it. I think they pay their way, but I am not sure. I have no concern with their affairs, and I don't know how their accounts stand. They certainly must have an agent somewhere in town.

22483. Do they fish to Mr Irvine, the factor?—No, I think they fish to a Scotchman who has a station here.

22484 Does he treat them well—do you hear any complaints?—I have heard none yet. They have done much good to Shetland, and I will tell you how. They have raised men's wages. I was for eight years manager of a boat in Lerwick, and I had never above 1s. a cran for taking charge.

22485. How much do they get now?—20s. amongst them.

22486. Do you think that the fishermen are better off now than they used to be when you were young?—They are very much better paid. I am telling you I took charge of a boat, and only got 1s. for each cran I caught, and the other men in the boat got 10d.

22487. And how much would the first and second men get now?—I think, by their accounts, they only get a £1 per cran.

22488. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many men were there in the boat besides yourself?—Four besides me. We got 4s. 4d. for the cran of herring, and the fish-curers owned the boats and nets, and we caught the fish and laboured for them, and got 4s. 4d. amongst us.

22489. *The Chairman.*—In those days when you got 1s. and the others 10d., were you obliged to buy all your things from a particular fish-curer?—I could buy from any shop; but I had to stop in Lerwick, and pay for boarding out of my earnings.

22490. The fish-curer did not oblige you to buy from his shop?—No. The principal complaint in Nesting is the want of leases, and heavy rents.

22491. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does the croft you have support yourself and family?—No, but there is only myself and my old wife and two daughters, and we have to buy our food one half the year.

22492. How do you do now when you have given up your fishing?—I am employed yet, but I am fit for very little. Messrs Hay & Co. employ me as a fish-curer, or else I would be the worse off.

22493. You said the Scottish curers, coming here, did a great deal of

good to the country?—They have not done good to me, but to the fishermen.

22494. Are you not a Scotsman yourself?—Yes, my grandfather belonged to Caithness.

22495. I thought you spoke of Scotsmen as if you belonged to another country?—This is a Scotch island, but it is those who have come from the mainland of Scotland who have done good to Shetland. It is my belief that if they had not come, fishermen would have been receiving now the same wages as that current when I was a lad.

LAURENCE HALCROW, Crofter and Fisherman, North Connigsburgh—examined.

22496. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any statement to make?—Mr Clark has handed it in.

22497. Were there many people present when the paper was agreed to?—About twelve or fourteen. Most of the men were at the fishing, but those who were at home were at the meeting.

22498. Did you draw up the paper amongst yourselves?—Yes, and Mr Clark was the chairman.

22499. Nobody helped you to do it? it was composed by yourselves?—Yes.

22500. Does it represent all you wish to lay before the Commission?—Yes.

22501. Have you anything else you particularly wish to say?—I might say a little. The chief thing I want to lay before you is about our roads. I have paid road money for about twenty years, and have got scarcely anything done except what we have done ourselves. The next thing is Mr Bruce's wire fence. It is quite broken down in many places. Sometimes our sheep go in on the estate, and sometimes the tenant's sheep are driven on to our scathold, and that is very unjust, I reckon.

22502. Don't you know that it is proper to have mutual fences when there are two properties?—Yes.

22503. Are you not aware that that is the law?—No.

22504. You should apply to your own proprietrix to get a proper fence?—There should be a proper fence between, because some of Mr Bruce's tenant's sheep feed upon our property, and ours are pointed in his property.

22505. Do you ever point his?—No, because they have plenty meat inside, and are bigger.

22506. Did you ever represent this grievance of the fence to your own proprietrix?—We have to the factor. I never saw the proprietrix in my life. I don't think she ever saw her own property.

22507. Who is her factor?—Mr Sinclair Pottinger; but he has only been factor for one year. The previous factor was there ten or twelve years.

22508. What does the present factor say when you make a complaint?—He says very little one way or another. Of course, we reckoned he had but newly come in, and could not know much about it. The present hill is in contemplation of being divided, and if division takes place we don't know who may come on. It may be taken in altogether, but we hope not.

22509. Who was contemplating making the division of the property?—Both Bruce and Lady Nicolson.

22510. Will Lady Nicolson do anything?—Not unless she is forced;

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she is an old woman, nearly off the stage of time. She will make little repair upon old houses, and she won't build new ones.

22511. Who is the heir?—I don't know. It is not anyone in Shetland; but somebody away in the south; some relation of her late husband.

22512. Is there anybody who takes any interest in the condition of the people on the part of the proprietrix?—None whatever. The people have just to do the best they can.

22513. Has that lasted for a long time?—Thirty or forty years.

22514. How long is it since Lady Nicolson became a widow?—Just twenty years now. I wish to say a few words about the rack-rent system in land. She has forty merks all in patches; and where I live it i stwo miles from one side of the township to the other, and my lot is divided up into above twenty pieces. On each piece I have four different neighbours, all around me, and I cannot get to my piece without tramping on my neighbour's land, and they cannot get to their's without tramping on mine, and the crop is hardly to be seen; and we have to transport manure mostly on our backs.

ALEXANDER MACGREGOR, Solicitor, Lerwick (31)—examined.

Alexander Macgregor.

22515. *The Chairman.*—Do you wish to make any statement?—As I have already stated, I am agent in the county for Lady Nicolson, and it occurs to me to make one or two remarks, following those which have been made by her tenant, Laurence Halcrow. The scathold is at present being divided, and all through the process and division Lady Nicolson has instructed me to meet and consult with her tenants, and their convenience, and to protect their rights. The statement was made by Halcrow, that Lady Nicolson would do nothing unless she were forced, and I think it is only just to her Ladyship to mention this. The Rev. Mr Clark has stated that the tenants all consider me as the medium between them and Lady Nicolson. If so, I have received no complaint or request from any of the tenants yet; and, remembering this, it seems unjust to her Ladyship that such a remark should be made. If they have considered me as their medium, it is unjust of them to come here and make complaints without having given her Ladyship an opportunity of doing what they wish. I make this statement voluntarily, as I consider it expedient and necessary in the circumstances.

JOHN SPENCE, Teacher of Board School and Inspector of Poor, Nesting (45)—examined.

John Spence.

22516. *The Chairman.*—You are a delegate from the people of Nesting?—I am.

22517. Have you got a statement to make on their part?—I may read it:—'A meeting of crofters was held at Vassa, on Saturday the 30th day 'June 1883, for the purpose of discussing any grievances that might be 'found to exist in the district, and to appoint delegates to present the 'same before the Royal Commissioners, presently inquiring into the con-'dition of crofters in the Highlands and Islands. Mr John Spence, 'inspector of poor, was called to the chair. The crofters entered into a

'long and lucid discussion of the land question, and it was moved and 'unanimously agreed to, that the chief causes for complaint are—1st, 'High rents; 2nd, Insecurity of tenure; 3rd, Want of compensation for 'improvement; 4th, Inferior quality of dwellings; 5th, The landlord's 'claim to a share of whales captured in the areas of the sea around the 'coast; 6th, No roads. The chairman was appointed to draw up a 'statement embodying the foregoing resolutions, and to lay the same 'before a meeting to be held on an early day. *Statement.*—The crofters 'of Nesting here assembled do hereby submit that the rents charged for 'our lands are excessive, considering—first, the unproductive nature of 'the soil; second, the uncertainty of the climate; and, third, our 'northern position, the winter having often set in while our crops are still 'on the ground. Our crofts consist of from three to six acres, and are valued 'at about 25s. to 35s. per acre. The average croft will yield, taking one 'year with another, say—

6 bolls meal, at 20s.,	£6	0	0
100 ankers potatoes, at 1s.,	5	0	0
Produce of cows (say 3), at 25s.,	3	15	0
Produce of sheep (say 6 ewes), at 7s. 6d.,	2	5	0
Produce of pigs (say 1), at 45s.,	2	5	0
Produce of poultry (say40s.),	2	0	0
	£21	5	0
Produce arising from ponies, say on an average,	2	0	0
Total return of croft,	£23	5	0

'Now, by deducting from the above total the amount of rent, £9, and 'price of seed 50s., in all, £11, 10s., the sum of £11, 15s. remains 'to pay for all the labour expended on working the croft throughout 'the year, which at an average estimate will equal 600 days' work, and 'yield 4½d. per day for our work. Our rents have increased from time 'to time, so that during the last thirty years they have in most cases been 'nearly doubled. About ten years ago our rents were raised 10 per cent., 'in consequence of repairs being required for the parish kirk and manse, 'whereby we considered ourselves most deeply aggrieved. Insecurity of 'tenure is also a felt grievance. Although our proprietor has not had 'recourse to evictions as others have done, yet the fact that the only hold we 'have on our house and homes is the will of a single individual, who if 'he pleases can turn us out of doors at forty days' notice, makes our 'position most uncomfortable, and deprives us of that feeling of security 'and independence that we otherwise would enjoy. We further have to 'complain that the proprietor allows no compensation for improvements 'made on the land. The chief improvements made by us are breaking up 'pasture land, and bringing it under cultivation; building byre, barn, and 'other offices; and erecting hill dykes or fences, chiefly of turf or stones. 'Now the way-going tenant receives no compensation for any of these 'improvements, whether he has occupied long or short; and, in fact, we 'are deterred from making improvements that we might, by reason of our 'insecurity of tenure and the proprietors policy of no compensation. No 'doubt, the two last grievances stated above are chiefly the causes of our 'miserable houses. It is true the proprietor furnishes the walls and 'roof of the rudest description, which are generally neither wind nor water 'tight. The houses built by the proprietor afford wretched accommodation 'for families of from six to twelve persons they are commonly feet long 'by 12 feet broad, and 6 feet high of side wall. Any enlargement or

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'improvement beyond must be done by ourselves, or if done by the proprietor, interest will be charged for the outlay from year to year at 7½ per cent. We further bring topward what we consider to be a serious aggrievance, viz., the landlord's claim a one-third of all whales captured by us along our shores. The shoals of caain whales which frequently visit our coast have often supplemented and eked out our precarious livelihood. We consider the law arbitrary in the extreme; and most unrighteous for any man to step down on the beach and seize every third fish that we have killed and landed, often at great toil and considerable hazard. While we, thus make known the main grievances under which we are kept down,—grievances not peculiar to ourselves in particular, but to Shetland in general—grievances that we have long and silently borne, and against which we have not risen in rebellion nor taken the law in our own hands, as those in more favoured parts of the country have done —we have no personal ill-will against the landlord or his factor, but against the one-sided land laws, which places us in the power and at the mercy of the owner of the soil—depriving us of that feeling of independence and that freedom of thought and action which is our birthright as loyal British subjects. We thus submit our grievances to the Royal Commission, appointed by our Most Gracious Queen to inquire into our state, and we humbly pray that the Legislature of our country may take our cause in hand, and give us redress. The reforms we want, and which we have a right to claim, are—First, the use of the scathold, which has belonged to the cottar from time immemorial; Second, a fair rent for land, regulated in proportion to its power of production, and fixed at the valuation of a competent valuator appointed by Parliament. Third, fixity of tenure, whereby the landlord shall be bound to give long leases, say ninety-nine years, and grant feus to those who may wish to build houses; and that the lanllord shall be bound to allow a fair compensation for any and all permanent and unexhausted improvements; and that it shall be the duty of the landlord to encourage those who may wish to improve their dwellings.' Signed by JOHN SPENCE, chairman, and twenty-five others. I have not a very extensive knowledge of Nesting, as I have only lived in it about six years; but I have some knowledge of Shetland in general, and of the North Isles in particular. I have drawn up a paper which I should like to read :—'*Observations on the Shetland Land Question.* Rents may not appear to be excessive in Shetland when compared with other parts of the British Isles. But if land in the northern counties of Scotland was rented at 25s. per acre, in Orkney it should be 15s. and in Shetland 10s. I believe the soil in some parts of Shetland is very good, but the climate is extremely uncertain. It is no uncommon thing to see the crops destroyed by snow as early as September. The potato crop is very uncertain, not chiefly from potato diseases, but owing to blasts of wind and frost—a very common thing in Shetland. The people trust more to their potatoes than their corn for their living. Potatoes and fish are the staple food of Shetland. Hence any damage done to the potato crop is always a great drawback to the Shetland crofters. Sheep farming is greatly increased of late years, and has been most derogatory to the interests of the crofters, for the best grain-producing parts of the country have been laid waste for this purpose, have been depopulated, and planted with blackfaced sheep; for example, the best parts of Unst, Yell, and Fetlar, are in grazing; also in the vales of Dale, Laxfirth and Wiesdale, the ruins of cottars' houses may be counted by the score. Hence it follows that numerous evictions have taken place. I am not prepared to mention special cases of eviction, or suffering arising therefrom—only I know that in the North Isles many

'crofters have to quit these, and give place to sheep and cattle; others were 'compelled to give up their croft, owing to the stringent measures under 'which they were placed by the landlord, or his factor. I remember 'being at a large meeting of crofters, held in the island of Unst, a meeting 'called and presided over by the factor on the Garth estate. At this 'meeting it was pointed out that the only condition on which they could 'retain their holdings was by submitting to an increase of 20 to 25 per 'cent. on the rent, and further they had to break up and bring under 'cultivation from half to a whole acre of pasture land every year for nine 'years. They had to enclose their crofts by means of fences, and maintain a 'system of rotation of cropping quite incompatible with a croft of a few 'acres. A good number of persons emigrated, particularly to New Zealand; 'some went to seaport towns in England and Scotland; a few got crofts 'from other proprietors, while several settled down in Lerwick. Eviction 'would, I have no doubt, been more common had it not been for the Earl of 'Zetland's, property, that is in a great measure intermixed with the lands of 'other proprietors. His Lordship never took any part with those who 'assumed the right of depriving the tenant of the common. I consider the 'crofters on his lands the best conditioned in the county, and have the least 'cause, if any, to complain. The chief evil to the Shetland crofter arising 'from sheep farming is the right that many landlords have assumed to 'deprive the cultivators of the soil of their ancient possession, the 'scathold. Of this I shall note more particularly at the close of this 'paper; but being thus deprived of the hills, Shetland ponies have become 'very scarce, and that famous breed of sheep peculiar to the islands are 'well nigh extinct, hence the fine Shetland hosiery, the only thing for 'which the islands have been noted since the days of the invincible 'armada, can now no longer be produced, and the young women who 'gained their livelihood by manufacturing these beautiful and highly 'marketable articles are now forced to work for their living at that 'disagreeable and more degrading occupation of gutting and curing fish. 'The general prosperity of Shetland has increased during the last few 'years, owing to the development of the fishing industry. But there is 'no certainty that the herring fishing in Shetland will retain its present 'high state of development. The happiness and comfort of Shetland 'fishermen can only be maintained by crofting and fishing combined. 'The uncertainty of either of these industries alone would often plunge 'the Shetland household in great straits. Fishing cannot be prosecuted 'to any payable extent on the Shetland coast from October to March. 'The fishing during that part of the year is chiefly with hand lines. Near 'the shore and in the voes or arms of the sea among the islands fish have 'increased in price of the late years, and are purchased by dealers and 'curers through the country. The average price for fresh cod and ling 'will be about $\frac{3}{4}$d. per lb. Cod commonly sell at Lerwick wet, salted at 'about 1d. per lb. From the above quotation of price, combined with 'the limited catch during our six months winter, it is evident that the 'fishermen must have something to fall back upon besides the harvest of 'the sea; and this something is the produce of his croft, which enables 'him to feel at ease during weeks, even months, of storms. Proprietors, 'formerly made it imperative that their tenants should fish to them or 'their middlemen, and a tenant would have been ejected for refusing to 'do so. Even the sons of tenants were obliged to fish to their father's 'landlord. Tenants were also bound to give tithes of all they possessed to 'the landlord; even the scanty produce of the poultry-yard was not 'exempted from taxes. But collecting rents in kind no doubt occasioned 'some difficulty. Hence the lairds allowed their tenants liberty to fish to

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other curers, and recouped themselves by exacting increased rents. The 'rents might not be considered exorbitant, if tenants had been allowed the 'unrestricted use of the hills, or if a fair deduction of rent had been made 'in lieu of the scathold. Hence the great grievance of Shetland crofters 'is their being deprived of the common. Shetland crofters have possessed 'the right of pasturage on the hills during a period of at least 900 years. 'Since the days King Harold Harfagre of Norway, it has been held in 'lieu of a tax said to have been first imposed by him on the freeholders 'or udal possessors of property in the islands. [Udal = Der, from Odin, the 'god of the Scandinavian; hence udal, holding by divine right.] This tax 'was called scat, hence the common is called scathold, or holding in lieu of 'scat. This significant name conveys at once the relation of the cultivator 'of the soil to the common. This, however, was a crown tax originally; 'and at the time that these islands were pledged to the crown of Scotland, 'it was the chief thing, in a pecuniary point of view, that gave them any 'value as a pledge. These facts can be authenticated by history. This tax, 'since its first impost in the ninth century, has been continued, and is to-'day paid by the landlord as holding in trust for the tenant, but paid by 'the landlord in the same sense as the collector of customs pays customs 'dues. Had the revenue derivable from scat never been subverted by 'being farmed out and ultimately sold by the Scottish crown, or its 'favourites, and that in violation of the treaty between it and Denmark, 'when these islands were pledged to Scotland, this grievance could never 'have existed. The revenue from this source, whatever value it might 'now have been, would have been flowing into the British Exchequer, and 'the privilege of pasturage would been held direct from the Government, 'which would have been placed in a different position from any other county 'of Scotland. Up to a comparatively late period, scat and teinds formed 'separate items charged against the cottar. This will be corroborated by 'reference to the land books of the first or even second decades of the 'present century. But a time came when this item disappeared, being 'amalgamated with the rent, and the rent being increased, scat is also 'increased. It is only within a late period that the tenants' right to 'pasture on the hills has ever been disturbed; and I am of opinion that 'its possession for more than 900 years ought to form a right, even 'exclusive of the right conferred by the payment of scat, but surely 'together they ought to render the right undisputed. If your Lordship 'desires it, I can give reference to the source of these historical facts, 'and there are men still alive who can give testimony to the truth of 'having paid scat as a separate tax.'—Hibbert Jamieson's *Statistical Account of Scotland;* the author of *Grievances of Orkney and Shetland;* and Gifford's *History of Shetland.*

22518. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What acreage of croft does your calculation refer to at the beginning of the paper?—The crofts consist of from three to six acres. The people understand merks as the measurement.

22519. You put down the labour at 600 days?—The labour I refer to is chiefly carried on by women, who work daily on the crofts.

22520. They work at the household business—domestic affairs? Yes, the old woman of the house probably attends to that, while the younger portion of the family are constantly engaged in carrying turf from the hills and sea-weed from the shore, and breaking up the green and other things—all the land being hand-wrought with the spade and without machinery. Everything is carried in baskets on their backs; ponies are not used, because there are no roads.

22521. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been a teacher in this country?—Fifteen years.

22522. Have you ever held any land yourself?—Yes.

22523. As a crofter?—Yes.

22524. Do the children attend school well?—They attend pretty well; but the roads are a great drawback. No children can attend during the winter season, because of the want of roads.

22525. What is the farthest distance any of the children travel?—On the average, the children travel two miles.

22526. Do any come a greater distance?—A few.

22527. How much?—Perhaps two and a half or three miles at the most.

22528. Are they often prevented from coming in winter by the state of the ground or the burns?—Very often.

22529. Is there any compulsion exercised—are those who don't send their children to school regularly visited by the officer?—Occasionally they are, by a person appointed by the School Board; but the people have a great many excuses, such as distance, and so on.

22530. Is the attendance improving?—No, it is diminishing almost at a ratio; it is about as low this year as I have seen.

22531. Is that from any want of attention on the part of the School Board?—I don't think it is. The School Board seem to be doing all they can. The great complaint is the want of roads, and crossing burns in the winter time.

22532. Of whom is the School Board composed?—Seven gentlemen elected by the people.

22533. Who are they?—The factor on the estate of Symbister is the chairman.

22534. The Clergyman?—There are no clergymen on the board.

22535. Who are the other six members?—We have a farmer; and Mr Anderson, merchant, Lerwick; Angus Donald, Lerwick; the minister of Whalsay; Mr Zachary Hamilton; and Mr Sutherland.

22536. Is there any representative of the crofter class on the School Board?—No.

22537. Have the crofters ever shown a desire to be members of the School Board?—No; not to my knowledge. They don't consider themselves qualified to come forward on public matters; they are chiefly sea-going men—fisherman, crofters, and sailors. They wish to send forward people whom they consider better qualified.

22538. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the usual wage for women in this country?—Wages have risen very much since the fishing industry developed. The common wages twenty years ago would have been 6d. a day and victuals.

22539. What is it now without victuals?—About the fishing stations it may be more, but in the country where I live I pay 8d. a day for people working to me, and victuals.

22540. That is 1s. without victuals?—More than that; perhaps nearly 16d., because we generally give them plenty of victuals.

22541. But to make this croft pay, the landlord would not only have to give it free, but he would have to give the crofters £10 besides. If they have 600 days in a year at 1s., it not only represents the whole rent, but £7 or £8 besides. Is it worth while to keep a croft if it produces no more than that?—It does not produce more than that directly, but it produces it indirectly, by giving a house to the family, and allowing one to be his own master. The fisherman can sit down and take his leisure for a few days, whereas the man who is bound to work day by day must work continuously.

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GIDEON SINCLAIR, Crofter, Torrarait, Lunnasting (83), assisted by WILLIAM SINCLAIR, Torrarait (55)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LII.*)

22542. *The Chairman.*—You were a fisherman when you were young?—Yes.

22543. Have you a statement to make?—I have. 'A meeting of the 'crofters, tenants, farmers, in Lunnasting district, having met in the 'public school at Queeness, on the 7th day of July 1883, for the purpose 'of submitting statements and grievances, and to appoint delegates to 'wait on the Royal Crofters' Commissioners expected to Lerwick soon, 'and give all evidence and information touching the various points con- 'nected with the land question,—the meeting unanimously agree to 'appoint, and hereby appoint, three delegates to represent the parish, and 'to wait upon the Royal Commissioners at Lerwick, and to give all the 'evidences required—said delegates to consist of Gideon Sinclair, Torrarait, 'John Pearson, Sweening, and William Sinclair, Torrarait Laseo. State- 'ments by a few of the oldest crofters, as follows:—(1) Thomas Hercule- 'son, East Dyke,* aged 74 years, has held a croft for about fifty-four years. 'Rent of East Dyke for the first twenty years, £2, 8s. and three 'days' work (equal to 3s.); said land rent consisted of scat, 4s., or '1s. 4d. per merk less. about 1s. 4d. teinds, 2s. 1d. for each cow, and '1½d. per head for sheep, the number unrestricted, and sheep numbered 'at the end of every seventh year. Thinks it about seventeen years since 'the landlord first commenced to raise the rent, and it has gradually risen 'till it is now £6, 12s., excluding assessment. Scat less, and old 'teinds still charged, and the sheep teinds now 1s. per head, number 'limited to fifteen. Part of the scathold appropriated by the landlord, 'enclosed by wire fences; could have kept more than double the sheep about 'twenty-four years ago, or till such time as the enclosing of scathold 'took place. Considers the farm with about half the present rent 'with a right to all scathold as previously enjoyed. No croft in 'Shetland can be kept without the privilege of scathold, to which 'every tenant considers he has a right. (2) John Halcrow, aged 76 years, 'held a croft called the West Pund of Lunna for about thirty years. 'When he first took the farm, he paid an annual rent of £2, and 'continued to pay that rent for about three years, when the landlord 'increased it 4s., and continued to increase the rent till at the expiry of 'eight years the rent was about £2, 5s. 8d., and was afterwards raised 'to £3, 16s. The first four years had a right to scathold, and could 'keep as many sheep as he wished. At the end of the first four years 'the landlord enclosed all the scathold or pasture, and allowed the 'tenant to keep no sheep, but allowed him to keep two cows on the 'pasture, for which 8s. per. head was charged. The tenant cultivated 'and extended the farm, built dykes, &c., and three years ago he was 'evicted. (3) Gilbert Johnson,* 83 years of age, held a croft for sixty- 'seven years; removed to Lunnasting from Delting in 1824; paid land 'rent, including all casuals, £4, In the year 1824, scat 6d. per. mark, 'three days' work, equal to 3s.; three fowls, equal to 1s. 6d; boat teind, 1½ 'gallons oil, equal to 2s. 3d.; paid 2s. 1d. for cow teind, paid 1½d. for 'parish minister's sound freights; sheep teind 1½d. per head, and the 'sheep numbered at the end of the every seventh year. In Delting held 'a farm in Dale, and paid a rent of £7, consisting of scathold 'Disputed with the proprietor about the scat being too high, and the 'proprietor said that the scathold did not belong to the proprietor, but 'belonged to Government, and that he had to charge the tenant in

* See Appendix A, LII.

'proportion. Sheep farms and evictions:—The landlord has enclosed 'the greater part of the scathold here (pasture), and turned it into sheep 'farms, and in consequence there has been a number of evictions. John 'Simpson,*Hamnavoe, Lunnaness, age 69 years, has held a croft in Lunna-'ness for about fifty years; paid a rent of £2, consisting of scat, 'sheep teind, and days' work, and at that time could keep as many sheep 'as he wished; and after holding said farm for some years a great portion 'of the scathold was appropriated by the landlord, viz., a part of Lunn-'ness, Setterness, and part of the pasture at or near Lunna. The only 'compensation was increase of rent £5, 5s. 3d., and the number of sheep 'limited to fifteen head, for which 9d. per head is charged, and only 'allowed to keep four cows. The pasture or scathold is now so very 'limited that it is quite insufficient for the tenants in Lunnaness. The 'rents now charged are excessive, and the whole scathold to which the 'tenants consider they have a right, and a part of which has been appro-'priated by the landlord, should be restored. Evictions from Lunna, 9; 'Evictions from Vidlin, 4.'

22544. You have had five proprietors since you were there?—Yes, and the rent was never raised above 1½d. per head of sheep; but when Mr Bell got it, he thought that was too little, and he laid on another 1½d., making 3d., afterwards 6d. was put on, making 9d.; and then he put up a division rail between, and for putting up that he clapped on another 6d., making it 1s. 3d. a head we had to pay. He has not lifted the land rent so much as he has lifted an enormous rent for sheep. When my son saw that we had to pay from £3, 15s. to £10, 8s. 7d. for all we had done, he thought he would leave; and for my part, I can neither fend nor anything, for I cannot earn 6d. The town was uninhabitable, and we trenched about four acres of ground and laid about 150 yards of drains; and for all his pains, making drains and dykes, and putting everything in good order, and spending his whole labour and strength on the spot, he has now to leave it to another man. I think he ought to be paid for his trouble. Although he was not warned from his place, £10, 8s. 7d. was too much rent to put on.

22545. *The Chairman (to William Sinclair).*—Have you something you wish to say?—What I wish to say is this: I took a piece of new ground from Mr Bell, about three acres in extent, and I have stayed upon it for fourteen years, and have been working away until I got it cultivated, and I have purchased picks and shovels out of my money; and the croft has been raised from £3 to £5, 5s. 4d.; and now he says, 'If I am not 'satisfied, I am at liberty to go.'

22546. Had you a lease?—No; I think it hard that we should have had to spend our money and our labour, sometimes working up to our knees in frost and snow, to be put out for nothing. The life we have endured upon that spot of ground no one knows. Sometimes we only got two meals of meat in the day, and sometimes we did not taste bread for eight days, but lived on fish continually. And, after all our labour he says 'I am afraid you are badly satisfied, you must go;' and £30 would not pay me for what I have done.

22547. Have you always been a crofter?—*Gideon Sinclair.* No; I have been at the fishing every year.

22548. You never were a trader?—No, I have no trade. Things went on very well in Mr Bell's time as long as he kept it in his own hand. One time when he laid on rent, he said, 'your place will be no dearer while I live,' and I said, 'Will you give me your handwriting on it?' and he said 'No. To give you a tack would cost you something; and, if I give you my word it is as good as a writing.' And now he says he

* See Appendix A, LII.

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does not recollect saying such a thing. Mr Robertson, to whom we are now fishing, takes all our fish, and gives 1s. less per cwt. than other people, and we durst not put any past him.

[ADJOURNED.]

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SANDAY, ORKNEY, FRIDAY, JULY 20, 1883.

(*See Appendix A, LIV.*)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

WILLIAM MUIR, Small Farmer and Trader, Sanday (42)—examined.

William Muir.

22549. *The Chairman.*—You are a delegate for North Ronaldshay?—I have not been officially requested by the North Ronaldshay people to represent them?—*Rev. Mr Armour.* Mr Grant, Free Church minister of North Ronaldshay, was suggested to be delegated, and I believe he was perfectly willing, had he remained in the country, to be present. But he is on his way to New Zealand, and it is in lieu of Mr Grant that we have preferred a request that Mr Muir should be allowed to say something.

22550. *The Chairman.*—We shall be delighted to hear him, but he seems to disavow the character of delegate from North Ronaldshay?—*Mr Muir.* At the request of Mr Grant, I appear, but not officially for North Ronaldshay.

22551. Are you delegated from Sanday?—Yes.

22552. Have you a statement to make on behalf of a locality in Sanday.

22553. What locality?—part of the parish of Lady.

22554. What is the name of the township or place itself—is it just one part of Lady?—Yes, part of Lady parish.

22555. Is Lady a separate parish?—It is separate from the other two parishes in this island.

22556. Is it a *quoad sacra* or civil parish?—A civil parish.

22557. You have a statement to make on behalf of the people of Lady?—Yes.

22558. Have you got it in writing?—I have. I may explain that the most of what I have to say is contained in this statement. I may also add, that I am not intimately acquainted with all the small details of how the people are situated, and therefore, I am less able to give information than many of those who are present at this moment.

22559. Was the statement you are to submit, drawn up by a person in the parish of Lady?—By myself.

22560. After consultation with them?—With the delegates who were appointed.

22561. When you were elected, how many persons were present?—They were not counted, but it appeared in the public prints that there were somewhere about forty present.

22562. Heads of families?—All householders, and was this statement made known to them subsequently; was it read to them, and did they all adopt it?—No, I am responsible for the statement.

22563. But it embodies the sentiments of the meeting?—Yes, I think so.

22564. Because I see it is not signed?—No, I am entirely responsible for it. '(1) The soil on which the most of the people who have grievances 'in this locality live, "is common," which the proprietors have questionably 'taken possession of. Some, if not all of those who built houses on this 'barren ground entered upon a nineteen years' lease, with the promise of 'valuation at the expiry of that time. (2) This promise of valuation 'was not fulfilled by the factor; instead of paying this valuation, he has 'claimed the buildings, and charged in some cases more than double the 'original rent. (3) The system of letting and renting, which applies to 'large and small farms alike, is entirely at the option of the owner. 'The tenant is no free agent, but must submit to the owner's terms, or be 'ejected. Tenants have reclaimed lands, and have been punished for so 'doing, by rise of rent. (4) There is, or rather there was, another class 'who were so unfortunate as to have a few acres of fairly good soil in 'close proximity to a farm of some pretentions; whenever the opportunity 'offered itself, those small holdings were swallowed up by the larger farm. 'This practice has been carried out to such an extent that now there are 'five farms, almost joining on to each other, to the extent of eight miles, 'which means that many families have had to leave their homes. (5) 'Then there is another class called "cottars" who hold a piece of ground 'from the large farmer, and at any time is liable to be called upon, when 'he must leave his own work, and attend to that of his masters. (6) The 'extremely large farm, and the extremely small one, are the evils which 'chiefly lead to our pauperism. The large farmer employs those termed "bowmen" when these men get old and unable to work, they are cast 'aside like some old worn-out machinery, and are compelled to apply to the 'Parochial Board for support, the same thing applies to the occupier of a 'few acres of ground which is incapable of supporting a family. (7) The 'manufacturing of kelp is compulsory on many of those small crofters, and 'they do not consider that they get a fair share of the profits made on that 'article. (8) The law protects the lower animals against cruel and 'improper treatment, much more, do we think, should it protect man 'against cruel oppression and tyrany.' I have another statement which I am requested to read to your Lordship.

22565. Is this a particular case or private grievance?—A particular case:—'Statement by me, James Slater, Odinsgarth, formerly tenant of 'the farm of Beafield, of which farm my late father was tenant for upwards 'of twenty years. Before, on the same estate, he was tenant of the farm of 'Gorn, and my grandfather before his day was all his lifetime tenant 'there. It came to pass that the farm of Gorn was added to the farm of 'Beafield, and after my father's death I succeeded him in the farm of 'Beafield as joint-tenant along with my brother for a short time, and then 'I was myself the tenant. After improvements on the said farm, our rent 'was raised repeatedly, until our lease became null. The last of my 'improvements on the farm of Beafield was a new steading, partly put up 'by the proprietor and partly myself, after which I only occupied the farm 'for six years when I was evicted. James Brims, Esq., factor, gave me to 'know that the reason why I was put out was that I was not farming Bea-

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'field up to the mark. Now, I do maintain that this is altogether unfounded. 'I can prove by neighbours all round that this was not the case. The 'object in my eviction could not be my bad farming, but, as afterwards 'appeared, the purpose was to accommodate the present occupier. That 'this is a true account of the case is sufficiently well known, and it is not 'likely that its truth will be called in question. I am prepared to lead 'proof, if necessary, to show that I have never been behind my fellow 'tenants in the style and manner and results of my farming. I certainly 'did suffer great losses by cattle because of the sand, which I had a right 'to complain of, but without getting any sympathy or remedy. I have 'also to inform you that my very aged widow mother, who was eighty-four 'years of age, was put out of her home along with me. She only lived three 'weeks after her removal, such usage was never before known on James 'Traill's, Esq., estate, and I do trust it will be the last such case that will 'ever occur in connection with the respected proprietor's property.—JAMES 'SLATER.'

22566. You state the soil on which most of the people live, who have grievances, is common—do you mean commonty or common land?—Yes.

22567. What was the nature of this commonty?—It was all heather; the poorest soil on the island, and nothing but heather.

22568. Does it resemble what they called scathold in Shetland?—I suspect it does, but I don't know.

22569. And how was it occupied—was it occupied by the adjacent crofters in common?—It was occupied in common, by the people all over the parish, I believe.

22570. You say that it was taken possession of questionably by the proprietors—was it allotted in virtue of a decision of the Court?—I am not able to answer that question; the proprietors arranged or divided what was considered common by themselves and the inhabitants, and by what authority they divided it I am not able to say.

22571. Are you aware of an old Scotch statute by which the proprietors are allowed to divide the commonty among themselves, and constitute it freehold property?—I am not.

22572. The proprietors divided it among themselves—was their right to divide it questioned at the time by the people—did they raise any lawsuit upon the subject?—No, I don't believe they did.

22573. You state that the tenants who entered upon it under the proprietors, after it had been divided, entered upon a nineteen years' lease?—Many of them did; I cannot say that all did.

22574. With the promise of valuation at the expiry of that time—was that promise an article in the lease, or consigned in writing?—Consigned in writing.

22575. This promise was never fulfilled by the factor?—No, not in every case. I know some cases in which it was not. I don't know of any cases in which it was fulfilled.

22576. The statement here is, that the promise was not fulfilled by the factor; it does not say any particular case, but generally?—I have this document here [showing document]. The party from whom I received this did not wish his name to be made public.

22577. The statement in your paper is that the articles of the agreement in the nineteen years' lease were not fulfilled—do you know of any suit being raised on the part of the tenants, to compel the proprietor to fulfil the terms of lease?—Not one.

22578. If there was a valuation on the articles of lease, why did the tenants not sue the proprietor—have they any doubt of obtaining justice?

—They have; whether rightly or not, they are under the apprehension that they have no law to support them in case of injury.

22579. Do they think that the Sheriff's Court here, or the Court of Session would not support them, in a case of inquiry, if there was a valuation clause in the lease?—The common injury from which they suffer is, I understand, that when the nineteen years' lease is entered into with the promise that they are to receive a valuation at the end of that time, when the lease is out the proprietors say, you must allow this valuation to sink, and we will only charge you so much rent in future, and it usually is an advance on the past rent, so that, instead of receiving the promised valuation, they receive nothing, and an advance of rent is put on for their own improvements during the last nineteen years. The farmer has no encouragement to improve his soil, because he is actually punished for improving it.

22580. You are speaking now of a case in which the farmer remains on the land, and keeps the farm for a new lease?—Yes.

22581. But then it is a voluntary arrangement between the proprietor and the farmer for a new lease?—Yes, it is so far; but the tenant has invariably to fall in with the proprietor, simply, because he does not wish to leave his home, and it is ejectment if he does not fall in with the proprietors arrangement.

22582. There must be some cases in which the farmer does not go on with a new lease, but leaves the farm—in these cases have the proprietors paid for the improvements?—I don't know of a single case in which a removal of that kind has taken place, and I am, therefore, unable to answer.

22583. You say here, that the system of letting is entirely at the option of the owner that 'the tenant is not a free agent, but must submit to the 'owner's terms, or be ejected;' do the tenants not sometimes leave the land of a proprietor with whom they are discontented, and try to get land elsewhere?—Wherever they get a chance they do that.

22584. But still you told me you did not know of any such lease?—In which they received valuation; I don't know of any case in which they received valuation and went away. There may have been some cases, but I have not thought over that matter.

22585. You say that wherever there are a few good acres in a very small holding, at the particular place, that is always consolidated with a large farm?—Yes, I have been told by many of the older people that that is the case.

22586. When a small holding like that is consolidated with a large farm, what becomes of the small holder; does the proprietor provide him with some other place, or is he thrown out on the world?—As a rule, he has been thrown out on the world.

22587. Do you know of cases in which the proprietor has taken care to provide him with another place?—I don't deny but there may be cases of that kind, but at the present moment I don't know of them. I believe there are those here who can name cases of that kind.

22588. When the proprietor takes away a small holding, and consolidates it with another farm, does he pay the outgoing tenant a sum for the house which he leaves?—I am under the impression that he pays him nothing, but I am not prepared to say that that is the case.

22589. The next complaint is that the cottars are obliged to render service in labour to the farmers—do the cottars pay any rent for the houses, or do they pay their rent in labour?—I know some of them who pay their rent to the tenant, and receive payment for their labour besides. There are others, I believe, on a different footing; but I am not perfectly acquainted with those cases, and therefore I am not able to give much in-

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formation on the point. It was merely the general grievances I put down, not being so well acquainted with the matter as the most of those present.

22590. 'The large farmer employs bowmen,' what is the meaning of that term?—Bowmen are married men, who have houses given them to live in by the tenant; and they work to the farmer the year through, and receive so much money as wages, and so much meal, and so much milk, during the year.

22591. He is in fact a hind, or farm-servant?—Yes, a farm-servant.

22592. What is the origin of the term 'bowman'?—I am unable to say.

22593. 'The manufacture of kelp is compulsory on many of the small 'crofters,' when a small crofter is held bound to manufacture kelp, does he pay his rent, and is he pledged to manufacture kelp for a certain number of days in the year, or how is it?—I understand he pays a rent for a small croft, but is, in addition to that, compelled to make kelp, and he receives pay for that labour, at so much per ton of kelp.

22594. Is the number of days of labour in the year limited or specified?—It is not specified; but there is a certain season of the year at which it must be made, or it is of no service.

22595. Is it at the same season of the year at which the crofter requires less time for his own croft?—Usually, it is about seedtime when they are required to work kelp.

22596. In the cases in which the small tenants are bound to give labour to the farmers, either rural labour or at kelp, is the labourer at liberty to send a representative, instead of labouring himself—can he hire another person to do it?—I believe so.

22597. Do you know on what terms—does the crofter pay the farmer, or the proprietor, or the man he sends?—When the cottar, who works for a farmer, sends a representative, he pays that representative himself.

22598. He doesn't pay the farmer or proprietor a sum of money, but pays the labourer?—He pays the farmer a sum of money for the soil he has from him, and he receives wages for the work which he gives to the farmer; I know that is so in some cases. So far as that goes, he is perfectly satisfied with his bargain. But there are those I am told who are not so well off in that respect; but I am not able to explain the exact nature of their grievances. There are others here able to explain that.

22599. What I want to understand is, when a man cannot work himself, and sends a representative, does he pay the farmer a certain sum of money, and does the farmer pay the representative, or does the labourer himself pay the representative?—The labourer himself pays the representative, because, as I understand it, he is like a small tenant on the large tenant's estate who pays his rent to that tenant, with the provision that he gives him labour when asked to do so, and if he is unable himself to do the work, he has to send a representative.

22600. And when the farmer pays wages, and the man works for him, does he pay the same wages, to him, as he would pay in the open market, or less?—I am unable to answer that question.

22601. *Mr Cameron.*—You say that the large farmer employs these bowmen, and when they get old and unable to work they are cast aside like some old worn-out piece of machinery, and compelled to apply to the Parochial Board for support. What would you propose to substitute for that grievance?—I am not prepared to say what I would substitute.

22602. A farm cannot be carried on without labourers?—No, certainly not, but I merely state that that request of some of these men who feel it is a burden upon them, and some of those receiving fair wages. In other cases, I believe they are placed at a greater disadvantage, for when old age

sets in upon them, their wages have been so low that they have not been able to lay past anything for their own support, and therefore, when they are unable to work, they are quite helpless.

22603. Is that different from what prevails in other parts of Great Britain?—I am not aware.

22604. I ask that because this paragraph would seem to suggest that when the labourer gets old, he should be supported by the farmer; is that what is intended.—No.

22605. But if he is not supported by the farmer, and has not money to support himself, how can he be supported, except by the parish?—I merely state the grievances which the people have suffered from.

22606. But we want to know the remedy suggested?—I am unable to state the remedy.

22607. *The Chairman.*—Have these bowmen of whom you speak separate cottages, or do they live in the farmer's houses?—Separate cottages.

22608. Are they generally married people?—Yes.

22609. When they grow old, do their sons or families not contribute to their support?—They are often so kept when they have sons who are able to support them.

22610. Is the son frequently taken by the farmer instead of the father?—Yes, he is sometimes taken on, and he, to a certain extent, largely supports his father when the latter is unable to work. In some cases the son supports the father.

22611. Have the females of that class—the mothers and daughters—got any subsidiary means of gaining a livelihood—do they spin or knit, as they do in Shetland?—No, there is no work for them.

22612. There is no small industry?—No small industry here to support them.

22613. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many farmers are there in the parish who employ bowmen?—I am not able to say; I should think about four. But perhaps I am wrong; I have not considered the question.

22614. What number of bowmen may there be among these four farms?—I am unable to say.

22615. Are there half-a-dozen on each farm?—I don't think there will be that.

22616. You produce a case as an instance of this grievance complained of here—number one grievance. You don't wish his name mentioned, but I suppose you have no objection to state the facts?—The party is willing to have the facts of the case recorded.

22617. And there are other persons similarly situated?—Yes.

22618. Are the facts of the case not these, that this person took some land a considerable time ago on a nineteen years' lease, with the promise of meliorations for the building at the close of the lease?—Yes.

22619. He was allowed to remain not only nineteen years, but thirty years, and at the end of thirty years he entered upon a new lease?—Yes, I think that is so.

22620. In the first lease he covenanted to pay 10s. a year, and under the new lease he got another nineteen years' tenure at 25s., and the meliorations were dropped?—Yes.

22621. And the grievance is, that the meliorations should have been dropped?—Well, he was compelled to do so. He did not wish to pay his advance, because he did not think the place worth it; but he says he was told that if he did not accept of this, they would pay him his valuation and let him go, and rather than do so he agreed to the arrangement.

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22622. But he covenanted to have the place for nineteen years, and he had it thirty years at 10s. a year?—Yes.

22623. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What rent do you pay?—£15.

22624. Of land rent?—Yes.

22625. What do you pay for your place of business?—There is no valuation put upon it. The house I live in is separate in some respects; I just bought it and paid a small amount for it, so that is separate from the farm house.

22626. How long have you been in business?—Between four and five years.

22627. Are you a native of this parish?—Yes.

22628. You have not been able to give very precise answers to some questions about the crofters, I presume therefore, you have not done much as a crofter?—No.

22629. May I take it for granted that you were selected by the crofters to represent them, because you are in comparatively independent circumstances—I was.

22630. They preferred you because you were a merchant, and supposed to be independent?—I don't think that is so; they selected me because they could not get any one who would communicate with the Royal Commissioner, and I agreed to do what I was able for them; I think that was the reason. Not that I was acquainted with the state of affairs, for I told them I was not, because I had been out of the place for a good many years, and did not know the circumstances.

22631. Did the crofters not select you because you were considered a more independent man than the generality of themselves?—I am not aware that they did.

22632. Was it because they thought you a more intelligent man?—Well, I think that may have had something to do with it.

22633. You admit superior intelligence, but not superior freedom from higher powers?—I am not able to state the reason, because I am in the dark regarding that.

22634. You have been asked a good deal about the bowmen, which seems to be a grievance, may I suggest this as the probable cause? Were you asked to state this about the bowmen, that they have really no permanent holding in the parish?—Yes, they are engaged, I understand, from year to year; they have no other holding.

22635. And, I think, the crofter when he gets old remains on his little place?—Not always.

22636. But he may?—He may if it is arranged with the farmer.

22637. But the bowman is liable to be put away when he is old and useless, because the farmer wants another bowman for his business?—Quite so.

22638. Is it not possible that there are some bowmen just now upon the poors' roll who may not be natives of the parish at all?—That may be so, I believe it is so.

22639. You have spoken about four or five farmers who have got bowmen. Are these farmers, in some cases, strangers to the islands?—I think in every case they are natives.

22640. And the bowman they employ are also natives?—There may be one or two exceptions, that is all.

22641. When the bowman gets old and useless the farmer requires another man to do the work, does he provide a new house for the new comer, or is the old man obliged to shift as best he can?—I think the latter is the way.

22642. And that to some extent accounts for the grievance, that they

more readily become a burden upon the rates?—I think that is the reason.

22643. You stated there were five farms nearly joined together, which occupied in extent eight miles?—I said so.

22644. Mention the names of these farms?—These farms, I may explain, are not all in this parish, but, one begins in this parish, that is the farm of Hamarbreck, the others are Howe, Backeskail, Worselter, and Stone.

22645. How long is it since these places have been constituted and erected into large farms?—I am unable to say.

22646. Within the last thirty years?—It has been a thing of gradual growth.

22647. When was the first commencement?—I am unable to answer that question.

22648. Is it comparatively recent?—No, I think they go far back comparatively, a number of years.

22649. Since you cannot give us the date of the oldest one, can you give us the date of the latest?—I could not.

22650. Surely you must have heard your neighbours, and others, speaking about the matter?—These points were never spoken of, and therefore I am not able to answer.

22651. Have you heard that the people have been removed from, and dispossessed of their places in these large farms, in order that they (the farms) might be constituted in former times?—There have been such cases, but I am not able, just now, to state their names, because it goes further back than my day.

22652. Surely you have heard of cases that had happened before your day?—Yes.

22653. Is it, or is it not, a fact that the land now occupied by these five farms was, at one time, in the possession of a number of small tenants?—Yes, it was so.

22654. What became of those people?—Your own paper states, that whenever a croft is vacant it is absorbed?—Some of them, I believe, are in Australia, and some in other parts of the world, and some are in different parts of Orkney.

22655. Are you safe in saying that the bulk of the people who were living upon these five farms had to leave the island of Sanday altogether?—It is doubtful. I am quite unable to answer that question.

22656. But you know some who have gone abroad?—Yes, I have heard them say so; and some people have remained here, but what number I am unable to say.

22657. What is the population of the island?—2075 I think.

22658. With the exception of those who took big farms, are there any other farms of any size?—Yes, there are.

22659. A good number?—Yes, a good number, but not a very large number.

22660. And the crofting population in possession of half the island?—I do not know exactly what is called a croft.

22661. £30 and under?—They would occupy, I think, fully a third of the island.

22662. The crofters or the big farmers?—I am unable to answer that question.

22663. Do the crofters and others complain of the existence of these large farms?—Some do complain of it, but generally, the complaints are about their own places being too small. But they, as a rule, don't suggest how they are to be put into a better position.

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22664. Are you aware of any cases of small holdings—say of £5 of rent—being increased or doubled—a thriving crofter with that rental being enabled to double his holding?—I am not aware of any case of that kind.

22665. Are the people on the island now—the small people—better off than they used to be?—Yes, they were better off, I daresay, pretty far back.

22666. You spoke about the proprietor having divided the common land without the consent, and against the interest of the people—was any of what used to be common pasture taken away from the smaller tenants?—I understand that a great many of these small tenants were put off the arable land at that time, and put out on the common to cultivate that soil or leave as they chose, and to make the best of it, and it is, to a great extent, these small crofters who have cultivated the common, and who consider themselves aggreived by the rents being raised upon them, after they had got it into a condition to bear a croft.

22667. It comes to this that many of the people who were removed, in order to constitute these big farms, had either to leave the island, or were settled upon common pasture, and compelled to take it in?—I don't know that they were compelled to take it in, they were allowed to build upon the common pasture, and they did so, and for a number of years, they received nothing for their labour, simply because they had to live upon their crop.

22668. When I said compelled to take it, I meant in order to gain a subsistence for themselves?—I think it was voluntary in every case that they did build on the common.

22669. And they took it in and also reclaimed it?—Yes.

22670. But what was the use of going to the common,—it was of no value, unless they made it a means of subsistence?—Because they would rather try to live there than leave their native place

22671. Then we come to another stage—after they took in the land the rent was raised?—Yes.

22672. And that is one of the grievances?—Yes. The principal grievance, I understand, is that the holding each has, is so small that they cannot live upon it, and it occupies their time so much that they cannot properly attend to anything else to make money. It is a miserable life for them to be living upon the few acres they have of that soil.

22673. Is there no land on the island unreclaimed, that could be reclaimed by the crofters?—There is very little that I am aware of.

22674. What do the people wish themselves in order to enlarge their holdings?—If you say there is not much to take in, I am afraid it must be at the expense of the big farmers?—That seems to be the impression amongst a number,—that it should be at the expense of the big farmers.

22675. You know the word meliorations, I understand in the paper you gave in they complain that, that is systematically defeated?—Every man has been defeated by the landlord.

22676. Let us take this case, that a man is going to improve his land, and build a house, and that he has got a lease to give compensation when he is removed, at the end of his lease is he not very much in the hands of the landlord as to whether he will ever get the compensation or not?—Yes, that is what they feel.

22677. The only chance of his getting compensation is if he should wish to leave the country?—Yes, I believe that is about how it stands.

22678. Because, if he does not want to leave he sticks to his home, and the rental is increased by way of compensation?—Yes.

22679. So that the only chance, in your opinion and the opinion of

those who sent you, a man has of getting the compensation provided for in his lease is, that he is of his own accord, going to leave the country?—Yes, I think that is how it stands.

22680. Are the people generally inclined to move from the island or to cling to it?—They are disposed to cling to the island very much.

22681. Are leases common in the island?—I think they are very general in the island?—

22682. What is the length of the lease?—Fourteen years is, I think, very common.

22683. But notwithstanding that they have that lease, and that they have voluntarily entered into it, they believe it is a one-sided bargain?—They do believe so.

22684. Do you believe it yourself?—I do.

22685. Who is your landlord?—J. C. Trail.

22686. Is he a resident proprietor?—No.

22687. Does he lay out any money in improving the state of the crofting population in any way?—He does. He allows so much when they put up buildings. He allows a certain proportion of the building, but the tenant has to do the quarrying and carting, and the building of the steading; and at the end of his lease, and when he leaves, they consider this steading their own. It is then the proprietor's.

22688. Is there a good deal of that going on at this moment in Lady parish—a good deal of improving buildings?—There has been a good deal of that in the past and it is still going on.

22689. Is there good fishing in the bay in front of us?—It is not considered good fishing. There is a number of small boats going out, but it is not considered a fishing place.

22690. The people depend more on the land than on fishing?—Entirely so.

22691. Are there many proprietors on the island?—There are, of proprietors of any size, five.

22692. Are there any resident proprietors on the island?—One resides in the island for a good part of the year.

22693. Is his principal residence here?—During the last two or three years his principal residence has been on the island.

22694. Do the proprietors contribute to the schools in the way of giving prizes, or do they take any means of encouraging their smaller tenants?—None, whatever, that I am aware of.

22695. Are the rates—school and poor rates—high or reasonable—do you know what they amount to?—I am not very certain. I think it is 1s. in the pound.

22696. You don't complain of them?—No, it is not complained of much.

22697. How many schools are there on the island?—Four.

22698. *The Chairman.*—We expect some people from Ronaldshay, but in case they don't come, it is desirable you should say something about it. Have you a statement to make about it?—The statement I have to make about North Ronaldshay is rather an unsatisfactory one, because I expected a statement from Mr Grant, who is now away, and I have not received it. The grievance there, I think, is principally the tyranny of their proprietor. They have no roads on the island—not a single foot's breadth—and their houses are miserable; there cannot be worse, I think, in the country. To look at them from the outside they are mostly like the stone dykes that we have here. They have seen no lime, and the proprietor will not be at the expense of improving them. He gives them no encouragement to improve. They have no leases, and they are living in such a way

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that they may be put out any day, and the people feel that. Then two or three years ago, if I remember rightly, to show how they are oppressed by the proprietor, they went into Kirkwall with a boat—they had arranged before going to start a fishing station—they went into Kirkwall and brought out a boat full of salt, and engaged an agent in Kirkwall for their fish. They then came back to North Ronaldshay, and went to Dr Traill, the proprietor of the island, and told him what they had done, and asked him if he would give the use of a store which was standing on the beach for the purpose of the fish-curing. He refused to give them the use of that store, and without it they could not carry on their fish-curing. They sold part of their salt in the island for family use, and the rest they sent back to Kirkwall, and sold it there at a disadvantage. Now they considered that a very great grievance, because it deprived them of means of livelihood, or of making an addition to their means of livelihood from their small crofts. They feel it hard that they have not the liberty to do what they wish. As to the complaints which they have about their farms and their rents, I am unable to say anything about that, and only regret I have not the particulars to lay before your Lordship.

22699. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are they principally fishermen, or farmers?—Fishermen and farmers.

22700. What number?—About 500.

22701. Principally farmers?—They are mostly all small crofters, and they go to the fishing as well.

22702. Why did they not ask for the store before they bought the salt?—I am unable to answer the question.

22703. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is Dr Traill the sole proprietor?—Yes.

22704. Has he the fish-curing as well?—No.

22705. Is it let to somebody?—No.

22706. This was then, simply an arbitrary act on the part of the proprietor, to disoblige the people?—I don't know what object he had in it, but they looked upon it as an arbitrary act without a cause.

22707. Who carries on the business of the island—is there no fish-curer there?—I don't think there is.

22708. *The Chairman.*—Do you know whether the people offered to give the proprietor any rent for the store?—I am unable to answer that question.

22709. Do you think the refusal of the proprietor was due perhaps to the expectation which he had of getting rent for the building, which was not realised?—It occurs to me now—whether it was the actual reason or not, I don't know—but it occurs to me that there was some reason given that there was a small dealer there who bought fish from these people, and who complained to the proprietor, I am told, that if he allowed the people to start a fishing station it would deprive him of the small business he did in exchanging goods for fish.

22710. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—In fact, there is a dealer in the place?—A dealer, you cannot call him a curer.

22711. He did not want his monopoly disturbed?—That was the report.

22712. *Mr Cameron.*—Have any people been evicted from North Ronaldshay?—There is one man, I am told, who was evicted, or his father, and who is now living in Kirkwall.

22713. Do you know any more than this one?—I am not aware, because I have not inquired.

22714. Do you know the reason why he was evicted?—I don't know.

22715. Do you know why the people are in fear of eviction, if there

have been no cases of eviction except this one?—The only reason they attribute for it is the helpless state they are in;—they are afraid of offending the proprietor, and they are under the impression that for the last offence he may possibly put them out.

22716. Why are they under this impression—if they have no experience of these arbitrary removals?—I cannot answer that question.

22717. *The Chairman.*—Do you know whether there is any other shop at all of any kind, except this one you mention?—There are other two; but they are both smaller.

22718. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Do you know whether the Ronaldshay people got notice of our coming here?—I sent a notice over there.

22719. Is there any reason why none of them are here to-day, besides the reason for Mr Grant's absence?—I think one very strong reason,—perhaps the principal—is that they are afraid they may offend their proprietor.

22720. Have they any reason, more than any other of the islanders whom we are visiting, to be afraid of that?—They have in some respects more reason, because some have leases, and in some of the other islands they have none.

22721. Through the whole of the Western Islands which we have visited, where there is not a lease given to any crofter, we found no lack of evidence and no lack of freedom of speech, without fear of proprietors—why should it not be the case here?—I think the people are more retiring than the Highlanders—more timid.

22722. Surely they are not less brave than the Highlanders?—Perhaps not.

JAMES COOPER, Cottar and Fisherman, Rothiesholm, Stronsay (32), assisted by DAVID COOPER, Crofter and Fisherman, Stronsay (65)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LIV.*)

22723. *The Chairman.*—Do you pay rent to the laudlord or the farmer?—The farmer.

22724. To whom was the written statement entrusted?—To both of us, and we did not write it out to be delivered to the Commissioners, but only as a memorandum of the grievances, and I shall read it, or you may read it:—'We are delegates from the district of Rothiesholm, Stronsay, 'to represent the state of the cottars in that district, whose farms are 'sub-let to them by the tenant of the main farm Rothiesholm. First, we 'wish to make known, that the farms we occupy have been cultivated 'by us, and our ancestors, except two; from ground not arable, most 'of it hill in its natural state, which for the first three years could not 'pay for its cultivation by its produce: and some part of what we had 'cultivated has been taken and put into the main farm, and hill given in 'exchange, but no payment for cultivating the ground taken from us or 'rent diminished, because we got hill in exchange. At present our farms 'differ in size between five and eleven acres or thereby, of what we call 'arable, and from six to twelve or thereby of hill. Putting them all 'collectively, we pay about 11s. per acre. Our houses we have to build at 'our own expense, and if taken from us we have no compensation, so this 'gives us little encouragement for improvement. The next we would 'make known is that which is felt to be slavery in the district. Most of 'us during winter and spring, however necessary our work at home, or if 'we should have an opportunity of earning five or ten shillings else-

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'where, must go when called to work on the main farm for 2s. for ten 'hours of ordinary work, and 2s. 6d., for draining. Also we have to 'make one ton of kelp, and as much more as we can, and sell it to the 'tenant of the main farm for £2, 5s. per ton, or whatever price kelp is in 'the markets. During summer and autumn, except about five weeks in 'harvest, we feed and lodge a woman to work on the main farm. Her 'wages is 1s. for ten hours work. During the weeks referred to in 'harvest we have to send a man along with the woman to work on the 'main farm; both have their cost for each day they work, and whether 'their work should be five weeks or more, the man's wages is £2, 10s. 'and the woman's £1, 10s. Also, we require a cook to prepare and carry 'their food to the harvest fields; her we have to feed and pay. Our 'desire is that in the future we may be free from bondage, and have the 'ground we have cultivated let to us by a proprietor and not sublet by a 'tenant.'

22725. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many families are there on the island?—There are eleven families in that case, but we have two more though we have not their signatures. We only represent one district, but there is another report from another district lent, it is not the same as ours, for which reason we could not put it collectively.

22726. Are the eleven families all in the same condition as that you have described?—Yes. There may be a little difference, but that is the general substance of their condition.

22727. What extent of land has each of them?—From five to eleven acres of arable land, and some six to twelve acres of hill uncultivated; and, I may remark, that in my senior's day, about fourteen of the little farmers were put into one farm, and many more before his day. The tenants have, most of them had to seek a home where they best could.

22728. How long ago is it since that time?—The last case was about five years ago, I think. It is about forty years ago since it commenced.

22729. How many people were removed then—how many families?—The last time eighteen, I think, were removed out of their houses, and some were disinherited altogether, and some were obliged to take up the subject to the tenant of the main farm.

22730. Had many of them to leave the island altogether?—A few of them did. Many were old men who had spent their strength in cultivating the hill ground. They might have got a bit of hill ground, but they could not cultivate it. And if it were cultivated it might have been taken into the main farm again.

22731. It is a sheep farm?—Yes, partly; it is about 1500 acres now.

22732. Do you know the rent of it?—Something over £400, but I would not say distinctly.

22733. What rent do you pay?—£5, 10s. for my own place.

22734. Is that about the average?—It is according to the size. The average rent, taking the whole, is about 11s. per acre, and the arable ground is about £1.

22735. What stock are you able to keep?—The general stock is about two or three cows—some a horse and a cow; and some perhaps have a heifer in addition.

22736. Are you allowed to keep sheep?—Yes, if we could support them ourselves. The time was when we were at liberty to go through the hill, but now there is more exemption from that.

22737. Before the main farm was let, was the hill common among the crofters?—Yes, among the crofters in that district at least.

22738. Was it not so through the whole island?—Not in my day.—*David Cooper.* It was all common in my day. I remember the flocks

being on it from different districts. It was all of course counted common.

22739. And were they allowed to keep as many cattle and sheep as they liked?—Yes, and no man to hinder them.

22740. Are you a fisherman?—Yes, our farms are too small to support us, without our devoting part of our time to the fishing.

22741. I suppose the corn and potatoes you raise are not sufficient to support you?—No.

22742. How long do they last?—Some for a year, and some for only eight or ten months, according to the size of the farm. And many of us have to maintain a woman. I mean we have to buy her food and also to support her family.

22743. When was that regulation established?—About five years ago.

22744. Who did it?—The present tenant; we are not in connection with the proprietor at all; we hold altogether from the present tenant.

22745. Does he live there himself?—Yes.

22746. What kind of fishing are you engaged in?—The cod fishing during the winter, and the cod, herring, and lobster fishing in the summer.

22747. *Mr Cameron.*—You say you are almost all engaged in the fishing?—*James Cooper.* Almost; that is, we attend so far as we can to our ground; we cultivate our ground in the first place.

22748. Is it the wish of the people whom you represent that they should have sufficiently large farms to enable them to dispense with the fishing?—Yes, I believe that is the wish of all we represent.

22749. So that if your wishes were carried out, there would be no fishermen?—Just so.

22750. Is there any complaint of overcrowding—that the people are too crowded together in your district?—Not too crowded, but we are always driven out to the hill. If we were not driven out there would be plenty of room. The district is about 1000 acres or thereby, and there is only about thirteen of these cottars on the main farm.

22751. In point of fact, you have a farm on which you can keep a cow, a horse, and a heifer, on an average?—Yes.

22752. You occupy yourself in fishing, and you earn money by labouring for the farmer at the rate of 2s. per day for some kinds of work, and 2s. 6d. for other kinds?—Yes.

22753. Do you think that it is a hard case?—Yes, I think it is. If we had opportunity of going to the fishing, and making 10s., if the farmer requires us we must go to the farm if called upon, and get 2s. And when we want to go to the farm we are not required.

22754. What do you suggest—and what would you like to see done?—We would like to have our liberty, to hold from the proprietor and not under a sub-let—not to be in bondage; and we would like more ground—as much as could keep a family without our having to spend part of our time at the fishing.

22755. In that case would you work for the farmer?—No, we want to hold from the proprietor as the farmer does.

22756. And supposing you were free, and held from the proprietor, would you work for the farmer?—Yes, we would be willing to work for him if he required us to work for pay.

22757. And what wages would you expect—higher than you get now?—Just the current wages.

22758. Would it be higher than you get now?—Yes; it is not always current wages for a man's work to get 2s.

22759. Current wages are higher?—Yes, in general, they are.

22760. You think that the arrangements can be made satisfactorily

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between the farmer and yourselves, so that the farmer would not be under the necessity of importing labourers from outside the island?—Yes, I believe that.

22761. Do you agree in that?—*David Cooper.* Yes.

22762. You think farmer and crofter would make such a satisfactory arrangement as regards labour, that the farmer would not be under the necessity of importing labour from other parts of the country?—Yes, it would be no difficulty for him to get labourers for all his work out of the district.

22763. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is the name of the proprietor of Stronsay?—*James Cooper.* J. Heddle.

22764. What is the name of the farmer?—James Twatt.

22765. For whom do you fish?—We are quite at liberty in regard to the fishing; we can sell to any salesman we think fit. We have no connection with the proprietor or tenant in regard to the fishing.

22766. The tenant does not compel you to fish for him?—No.

22767. Is there any curer or merchant in the island?—Yes, but we are not bound to one more than to another.

22768. Are there more than one?—Yes, there are two cod curers and different herring curers.

22769. And are they competing keenly, so that you may have a good market for the fish?—Yes, and if not we can send them to Kirkwall.

22770. Is there only one main farm on the island?—That is the main farm Rothiesholm, but there are different main farms in other districts.

22771. You are speaking of big farms in your own district?—Yes.

22772. Has it been there always—that big farm, or is it comparatively recent?—It has always been there from the first I can remember; but many little farms have been put into the big farm.

22773. But there was always a big farm?—Yes.

22774. Although it has been added to?—Yes.

22775. You stated in answer to a question, asking what you wanted done for you, that you wanted to be free?—Free from the bondage of the tenant, so that we should not be obliged to go at his pleasure.

22776. Do you know the rules in other parts of the country that proprietors don't allow such a thing as sub-letting?—So far as I am aware there is no sub-letting in our island, except in this district.

22777. Is it not a general rule in Scotland, that the proprietor does not allow any body to sub-let?—Yes, I understand it is a general rule.

22778. And you want that rule applied to your part of the island?—Yes.

22779. You say you are rather limited in the extent of ground you have, and would like it enlarged; are you willing to pay a fair rent for what you might get?—Yes, taxes accordingly.

22780. And I suppose there is plenty of land on this main farm which would suit the thirteen families you represent?—Yes, plenty.

22781. You say the people pay about 11s. an acre on an average?—Yes, hill and arable.

22782. Does the big farmer pay more than that on an average?—No, he pays less.

22783. It would really be for the interest of the proprietor, as well as yourselves, that you should get this additional land?—Yes, I believe it would give more money for his ground if we all paid it to himself.

22784. Are the people as well off now as they were in your younger days, when they had the free run of the hills?—*David Cooper.* No.

22785. In your young days were the people pretty well off?—Yes, pretty well off; they had the hill before them, and they had their

sheep and cattle, and they were paying nothing. Perhaps in some places they paid 1s. or only 6d. a head.

22786. At that time—the good old times—were you paying your rent direct to the landlord?—No, to the tenant.

22787. And it was not a burden upon you then?—No.

22788. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How many day's labour does it take you to make a ton of kelp?—*James Cooper.* According to the circumstances, the weather, and the place we get the sea-weed in.

22789. Can you make 2s. a day at £2, 5s. a ton?—I can scarcely calculate on that, because at some of the stands we have to carry it away twice, and then cart it out. We cannot spread it out where it comes. I cannot say how long it takes to make a ton.

22790. What is the price of it in the market just now?—I think not often below £7, so far as I am aware. At least it is as high as that often, I know.

22791. I thought £2, 10s. was about the price?—It is more than that.

22792. It is from drift ware you make the kelp?—Yes, but it is best kelp, not tang kelp.

22793. You say you are obliged to keep a woman servant;—that is one of your own family you are obliged to supply at 1s. a day?—If we have one, and if we have not one of our own we have to get another, and feed and lodge her; and all she gets is 1s. a day. We get no benefit by her in the least.

22794. Are the current wages in Orkney 1s. a day, besides food, for women?—I think about Kirkwall, it is more than 1s.

22795. And their food besides?—No, they have to provide their own food.

22796. Does this woman not pay you for her food?—No.

22797. The woman gets 1s. a day from the farmer and food from you?—Yes.

22798. And that is the common wage in your country?—Yes; and it takes about £3, 10s. to feed her, and there is no compensation for her: it is a gift.

22799. Does the farmer keep any hired servants?—A few men servants.

22800. How many does he keep?—About six generally.

22801. One for every pair of horses?—Yes, and perhaps a cattle man, and perhaps an old man for other work.

22802. To these he pays regular wages?—Yes.

22803. And to what extent does he ask you to work for him in the course of the year?—We must be ready any day in the course of the six winter months, when called upon.

22804. In practice, how often does that occur?—Sometimes it may occur frequently, and sometimes not for a while; but whenever he calls, we must be ready to go.

22805. In harvest time have you to go?—Yes; man and woman.

22806. Exclusive of that time, are you called for labour twenty days in the year?—Much more.

22807. The whole fourteen of you?—Not all of us; all of us are not exactly under that bond. There are eight under that full bond. All have not to keep a woman, but almost all of us have to work ourselves.

22808. You cannot say how many days in the year you are called upon to work exclusive of the harvest labour?—I cannot say. My fellow delegate might be called upon more than me. Some may be called oftener and some fewer, when the farmer thinks proper.

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22809. When are you paid?—When we are settling the rent at Hallowmas term—about the 11th November.

22810. Then you pay your rent?—Yes.

22811. Do you generally have to get money from the farmer, or have you to pay?—I never get money; I have always to pay.

22812. What is your rent?—£5, 10s.

22813. And your wages never come up to that?—No, never.

22814. *The Chairman.*—You stated you wished to hold that land direct from the proprietor, and to have nothing to do with the proprietor?—Yes.

22815. Supposing your position were altered, and that you were placed in direct connection with the proprietor, would you farm the manufacture of kelp from the proprietor—would you take it from the proprietor and work it for him?—Yes, we would be willing to do it, only we would want the current prices for it.

22816. But the manufacture of kelp would not cease on that account?—Oh no, we would not wish it to cease.

22817. You have heard and understood what he has said, and you agree with it generally?—*David Cooper.* Yes.

WILLIAM GRAY, Crofter and Fisherman, Eday (45)—examined.

William Gray.

22818. *The Chairman.*—Were you chosen a delegate?—I was sent over with a paper.—'We the undersigned, as representing the crofters 'of the island of Eday, beg humbly to submit to your Lordships the 'undernoted grievances:—1. Being rented for our own improvements, 'such as cultivating, draining, and trenching hill ground, and in most 'cases building our own houses without any help from our proprietor. 'Moreover, we are all tenants at will, and are liable to be warned 'out any year at his pleasure, without any compensation for our 'improvements. 2. Inadequate remuneration for compulsory making 'of kelp, and preparing and shipping peats. 3. Being deprived 'of the right to pasture our cattle on the hill ground adjoining our 'crofts, whereas now we are obliged to pay in addition to our rent 'for every beast pastured, as it is impossible to keep them on our 'cultivated land. 4. The great destruction of our crops by hares, and not 'being allowed to use means to protect our crop or destroy the 'vermin. 'We herewith humbly submit to your consideration the fore-'going grievances, and crave—1. Compensation for our improvements 'and fixity of tenure; 2. Making kelp and shipping peats to be entirely 'optional, and market value given; 3. Restoration of our former rights 'to the hill pasture; 4. Full liberty to kill the hares on our own crofts. 'And your petitioners will ever pray.' Signed by HENRY CORMACK and seven others.

22819. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Who is the proprietor of the island?—Mr Hebden.

22820. Does the whole island belong to him?—Yes.

22821. When this hill pasture was taken from you, which you complain of, to whom was it given?—It was a common—it was added to the sheep farm.

22822. It was added to the sheep farm?—Yes, of course there is some on which there is nothing, but it was intended for sheep purposes.

22823. I don't understand. There was some added to the sheep farm, and you say there was some taken from you upon which there is nothing at all?—Bad ground.

22824. Who gets the peats?—Of course, we all use the peats.

22825. In some respects, then, it was not taken from you, if it is your own peat ground?—Yes, the privilege was taken.

22826. You are talking of shipping peats—where did the peats go to?—South, to several places.

22827. And are you obliged to work at the shipping of these peats?—Not I; but in other parts of the island they are.

22828. And do they get paid for it?—Yes, so much.

22829. How much do they get a day?—They are paid by the fathom.

22830. So much piece work, as it were?—Yes.

22831. And do they think they don't get enough?—Yes.

22832. Of course, they are obliged to do the work?—They must do it.

22833. Whenever they are called upon to do it?—Of course.

22834. Is it the proprietor himself who carries on this industry in peats?—It is chiefly the factor.

22835. For the proprietor?—Yes.

22836. And is it the factor who manages the kelp too?—Chiefly—the most of it.

22837. For the proprietor also?—Yes.

22838. How much do the people get for the kelp?—About 4s. and 5s. the cwt. or £4 or £5 the ton.

22839. £4 or £5 the ton?—Yes.

22840. We were told in Stronsay they only got £2, 5s. a ton?—Then it is the same here; I am wrong.

22841. Whatever it is, the people say it is too little?—Yes, they mean to say so.

22842. Are there many large sheep farms upon the island of Eday?—Three I think.

22843. And your complaint is chiefly that the hill pasture was taken from the small crofters, and added to these big farms?—My complaint is chiefly that we should have compensation for improvements in the building of houses; and we complain that we are rented too dear.

22844. What kind of fixity of tenure would the people like to get?—I don't know; according to your own idea.

22845. A lease?—Well, I suppose so.

22846. What kind of lease would the people think suitable for that place?—I could not just say.

22847. How many years?—It is chiefly nineteen years that is given.

22848. And compensation for the improvements that you would make in those nineteen years?—Yes.

22849. At the end of the lease—is that what is meant?—I suppose it is.

22850. Was the paper read to you all and talked over together?—Yes.

22851. At the present moment you are obliged to work the kelp?—Yes.

22852. And you are obliged to ship the peats?—Yes.

22853. And you wish to be at liberty to do that or not just as you please?—Yes.

22854. It is not so much the low rate of wage they get for that work that they complain of, as being compelled to do it?—It is the low rate of wages too.

22855. Both?—Yes.

22856. Could your former rights of hill pasture be easily restored now, supposing the proprietor were willing?—They could.

22857. Except in those places which have been brought under cultivation—it would not be so easily done there?—There is a good part of Eday not cultivated.

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22858. I see part of your improvements was cultivating, draining and trenching the hill ground?—Yes.

22859. You would not like to restore that back to pasture?—But there is an immense amount of common, you know.

22860. Are the hares there numerous?—Chiefly in winter; they spoil the turnips.

22861. Where do they go in summer?—They don't spoil the turnips in summer.

22862. Don't they spoil young corn in the beginning of summer?—Of course they spoil the whole.

22863. Are there rabbits as well as hares?—Yes.

22864. Are you allowed to kill the rabbits?—They don't do so much harm, so far as I know.

22865. Are they not so numerous?—I don't know; I cannot say. There are a good many, but a great quantity are killed.

22866. You are allowed to kill the rabbits?—There is chiefly a trapper who kills them.

22867. But there is nobody to kill the hares?—No one gets leave to kill them.

22868. Does the proprietor himself kill them?—In certain cases.

22869. I suppose a good many of the small tenants have a lease?—No.

22870. And you wish to get leases?—I suppose so, if they could be got.

22871. Does the proprietor reside in the island?—Yes.

22872. Have you any idea of the number of small crofters in the island altogether?—No, I don't know.

22873. A large number?—A good lot.

22874. And are they all engaged in the fishing as well as in crofting?—The most of them.

22875. What fishing do they follow?—Herring and cod.

22876. They have no complaint about that?—No.

22877. They can fish wherever they please, and for whom they please? Yes.

22878. Are there plenty of shops on the island?—A good many.

22879. There is no restriction about them?—No.

22880. What is about the rent of a crofter in Eday?—£5, 10s. I think.

22881. How many acres of arable ground will you have?—I could not say; about three, and I brought most of it in myself.

22882. And how much hill pasture?—Over three or four.

22883. About three acres of arable ground and three or four of hill pasture?—Yes.

22884. What is about the number of your stock?—I have one cow and a calf.

22885. A horse?—No, I cannot keep a horse.

22886. Any sheep?—One sheep.

22887. And is that about the rent and about the stock of the crofters, taking one with another, all over the place?—There are some who have more and some less.

22888. Do you consider the rent you pay too dear?—Yes; I put up the houses myself.

22889. Did you get any assistance from the proprietor at all?—None.

22890. And you have no security, if you were leaving, that you would get anything for them?—None.

22891. How long is it since you put them up?—Thirteen or fourteen years ago.

22892. What were you doing before that time?—Sitting in the house without any land.

22893. Are there many being turned away out of Eday?—Yes, there are a good many.

22894. Have there been people turned away since you remember yourself?—Yes.

22895. About how many families have there been?—I could not just say.

22896. Off and on?—About eight or ten in one season.

22897. And were these crofters just holding crofts and stock, and paying rent much about the same as you are doing yourself?—They were fully bigger—from £7 to £8 and £10.

22898. What were they turned away for?—For a farm.

22899. In order to clear a place to make a big farm?—Yes.

22900. Where did they go?—Some got leases in the island, and some went out of it.

22901. Were the places they got as good as the places they left?—Just hardly; some were maybe nearly as good, but some were far worse.

22902. Did they get the place of other crofters, or new ground?—Some new ground, and some empty places.

22903. And when they went to the new ground, where there were no houses, were they obliged to put up their houses?—Some did, and some did not; and some got wood and lime, and some did not.

22904. Supposing you had for your croft a lease and a smaller rent, do you consider the croft enough to keep you?—I don't see any way, unless I were getting an addition from my neighbour.

22905. And you would not like to do that?—No, I don't want to take it from my neighbour.

22906. Is your croft fenced round about?—Part of it is.

22907. Is the arable ground fenced?—Yes, it is in part, but not in a way that creatures could not go over it.

22908. But is the hill pasture common?—Yes.

22909. It is the common of your neighbours as well as yourself?—No, I have it to myself; it is only separated from my neighbour's by a mark.

22910. Who put up the fence?—It is a small bit of a ditch or drain; it is not a fence to speak of. I dug and made it with the spade.

22911. There is a great part of the island uncultivated?—It will never be cultivated.

22912. All bad?—Mostly.

22913. And is there part that is still not cultivated that can be cultivated?—Of course there are places.

22914. Would not that be one way of making the crofts bigger?—Most of the crofters are along the shore, and this is up on the hill, and that would not do very well; they are far from where we are, these patches and if we did not get them, we could not buy them.

22915. How do you manure your croft?—With sea-weed.

22916. Do you consider that good manure?—I don't know; it is the best we can get, and it is not very good to keep sometimes.

22917. What breed of cattle have you?—Just the common breed.

22918. Those that are about here?—Yes.

22919. Is the school near enough to you?—About three-quarters of a mile.

22920. Do the children all go to school?—Most of them at the present time.

22921. All the people can read and write?—Yes.

22922. *Mr Cameron.*—You said you had no land before you took this croft?—No.

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23923. Who occupied the land you have now?—A man who is dead long ago.

22924. Had he a house?—A small bit of a house, but it is down, I reckon. The roof was off it.

22925. You say you have no lease?—No.

22926. Are you aware you are entitled by law to kill hares?—I don't know.

22927. You are not aware of it?—I am aware I can kill them on my own property.

22928. Are you aware that others can do so too?—Yes; they can do that with their own.

22929. Do you want to kill them on somebody else's?—I don't know, but we have not the liberty on the island to keep a gun.

22930. Can't you snare hares or kill them without a gun?—We don't get the liberty.

22931. But are you not aware that the law gives you liberty to kill hares on ground in your own occupation, and that you may kill them by snares or otherwise?—Yes.

22932. Is the reason that you don't kill them because you cannot afford to get a gun, or cannot afford to buy snares?—It is because we cannot get leave to do it.

22933. Are you afraid that, if you kill hares, you will get notice to quit?—We would just be put out.

22934. But you are all aware you have the *right to kill hares*?—Yes, on our own property; I know that.

22935. What is done with the peats you spoke about?—They are shipped.

22936. Where to?—South.

22937. Are they sold?—Yes.

22938. From what does the demand for peats arise?—I don't know; it is chiefly, I think, for distilleries and things of that kind.

22939. Is there a distillery at Kirkwall?—Yes, but I don't think they use any of them at Kirkwall; I think they go south.

22940. Do you know if they use peats?—I don't know.

22941. Do they go in a large ship?—In a schooner.

22942. Where does the schooner take them to?—I don't know; to towns and places—as perhaps Leith, or some of these towns.

22943. Is there anything remarkable in the quality of the peat which creates a demand for it?—I could not tell you; there is surely that, or they would not be wanted.

22944. Has there always been a demand for peats since you remember?—Since I first remember.

22945. You don't happen to know why there is a trade here?—It is a plentiful place for peats.

22946. And they are very good peats?—Yes.

22947. *The Chairman.*—Have you ever brought the question of the hares under the consideration of the proprietor? Have you ever all complained together about the hares?—No, but we have complained at certain times. They have been complained of many a time, but no complaint has ever been brought by the whole of us.

22948. Has the proprietor ever given you any answer, or has he ever refused?—There was no allowance for it.

22949. But did he say he would not give an allowance?—There is no allowance to kill them at all.

22950. Did you ever hear of anybody being molested or threatened because he killed the hares?—Yes.

22951. Is the proprietor a fish-curer?—No.
22952. Does the factor cure fish?—No.
22953. What are the old houses in the island like—are they bad?—The most of them are now getting new ones.
22954. But were the old houses very bad?—Some of them were bad enough.
22955. How was the door placed—did they enter the house through the byre, or always by a separate door?—In the earlier times that was the case, I suppose, with some of them.
22956. Have most of the houses been rebuilt in your time?—Most of them.
22957. And now they are decent houses?—Built and repaired.
22958. Is there any fence in the island?—No.
22959. You don't think that the houses are, in any cases, sources of ill health?—No, not so far as I know.
22960. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You said there were three large farms on Eday?—Yes.
22961. What are their names?—There are two of them not very large.
22962. What is the name of the biggest?—Of course there are four, but one of them is not so big.
22963. Name them according to their size?—Greentoft.
22964. Next?—Carrick.
22965. Third?—I suppose it will be Stenoway.
22966. And the fourth?—Stiel.
22967. Is the hill pasture of these large farms held distinct from the commonty which the small tenants have?—Yes, it is quite distinct.
22968. Where are the peats coming from that are shipped away to the south?—Away on the west side of the island.
22969. Is it upon the crofter's pasture or the big farms?—Yes, on a part of each.
22970. And part of it on the land of the big tenants?—No, on the commons; it is not in their boundaries, it is outside.
22971. Outside the boundaries of everybody?—Yes; at the one big farm.
22972. When were hares first introduced into the island—they are not natural to the place, are they?—It was Mr Hebden who took them to the island.
22973. When?—Maybe about twenty years ago or there about.
22974. Did he bring the rabbits too?—No, they were natives of the island.
22975. *Mr Cameron.*—Is that why you have a tenderer feeling towards them?—Yes.
22976. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Does the proprietor, in point of fact, protect the hares?—Yes.
22977. You were told, a little ago, that by the law of the country you were entitled to kill rabbits and hares; but in point of fact you don't kill them?—No.
22978. It is a dead letter that law in Eday?—Yes, at present.
22979. And the reason is you are afraid that if you killed them you might be turned out next year?—Yes.
22980. You have only one cow and one young beast?—Yes, a ewe and a lamb.
22981. No horse?—Yes.
22982. One sheep and one lamb?—Yes.
22983. Is that the state of the crofters generally?—Some of them have that, and some have more. Some have a cow and maybe two cattle, and

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maybe a horse, and maybe some have two cows,—and up and down that way.

22984. You told us that a number of people were shifted out of their places, and that some had to go away, and some got places elsewhere—was it for their benefit that the people were put away from where they formerly were?—It was for the sake of the ground being made into bigger farms.

22985. Not for the benefit of the people turned out?—I don't think it.

22986. What extent of arable ground have you got?—I think, maybe, three acres or thereabout, but I could not just say; I never measured it.

32987. Are you able to make a living out of your croft?—I make it out of the sea.

22988. Were it not for the sea, your family could not exist?—They could not live.

22989. What family have you got?—Five children and my wife.

22990. If you could get your croft enlarged, and doubled, would you be able to stock it?—No, there is no chance; it is all hill ground.

22991. But if you got it—or got a nice slice out of one of the large farms, would you be able to stock it?—I don't know; not very able. I make my living out of the sea.

22992. But would'nt you put by money out of your earnings from the sea, for the purpose of stocking the big croft?—The one year is good, and the next year is bad, and the bad year takes away the benefit of the good one.

22993. How many people did you say were in the island altogether?—Pharay and Eday go together—800 perhaps. I am not certain at all.

22994. How many crofts may there be altogether on the whole island?—I could not say, for the island lies in that way that the greater part of the people are along the shore.

22995. There well be fifty at least?—I could not say.

22996. Who has got the biggest share of the two islands—is it the crofters or the four big farmers?—It will be the four big farmers, I suppose.

22997. Have they the biggest and the best?—Some of it is.

22998. Can you give us any idea how many people are living upon those four large farms—how many people will be in the employment of the farmers?—There is one of them has five pairs of horses.

22999. There will be at least one ploughman for each pair of horses?—And they will have 200 sheep.

23000. But how many families will there be altogether on those four farms?—I don't know; there are nothing but bowmen, and those who work out.

23001. Can you not give us an idea of how many of those families there will be?—It is mostly young men who are working at the farm, and maybe a bowman or two.

23002. But I suppose, taking it all in all, there will be very few families on these four farms?—Not a great many.

23003. You have had more than one meeting in the island about the appointment of delegates?—Two; but most of the people are away at the fishing.

23004. Your island set the example to the whole of Orkney in being the first to start?—No, it was not the first.

23005. Which was the first to start?—I don't know; I think it was Rousay, but I am not certain altogether.

23006. Does Rousay belong to this district?—It lies away to the westward.

23007. Should they be here to-day?—No, I don't think it; they will, perhaps be in Kirkwall.

23008. How many people were present at the largest of the two meetings to which you refer?—I think about a dozen, or a score; the people were away at the herring fishing this week.

23009. How many were present at the first meeting in June?—I don't mind altogether.

23010. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Before you were in your present place, you were in a house with another man?—Yes, in the house with my father; the land was taken from him, he was not fit to labour it, and I was sitting with him. And then I went to the big farm, and sat in the house four years, on the ground of the big farm, and wrought in the harvest for the rent.

23011. And then you got this place where you are now?—Yes.

23012. Are you better off with this place dearly rented than you were with the house?—It is near the shore for the fishing, that is the main thing.

23013. Are there many people in Eday without land?—No, there are not very many, except poor people who are not fit to work; all the others have a little land.

23014. What rent was your father paying for the houses without the land?—He was just sitting under a man who had it, and we just gave them so much work when required; but it was in Mr Laing's time that he had the land.

23015. But if he lost the land he paid nothing for the house?—Nothing, but the value of our work to the man who had the land.

23016. How much did you work for him?—Just any time he required my services.

23017. And you got wages for that?—We got leave to live and work in the house.

23018. Did you get wages when you worked?—We did not get wages, we just got leave to sit in the house.

23019. What is the size of the farm of Stiel?—I don't know rightly; it is chiefly wrought with a pair of horses and one fordel chiel.

23020. Two pairs of horses?—Sometimes two.

JOHN MAXWELL, Crofter, Housebay, Stronsay, assisted by DAVID SMITH, Houseby, Stronsay (42)—examined.

23021. *The Chairman.*—Make your statement.—'First, as to living '—We are bound to furnish a woman hirer for each croft, to work on the 'farm of Housebay for six months in the year. The wages each hirer 'earns is paid to herself, while we have to find her in board and lodgings 'during that time, with the exception of about five weeks in harvest when 'they are furnished with their "cost" by the tenant of Housebay. 'Again, we are each bound to furnish the tenant of Housebay with a man 'labourer during the harvest weeks, when he receives his wages and "cost" 'from Housebay, while we are bound to find him in lodgings. Again, we 'are each bound in addition to the above to find during the harvest weeks 'a third hirer, to cook food and carry the same to the other two to the 'field, as the distance from the crofts is such as not to admit of time for 'the other two to come home to their meals, the time allowed for each 'meal being one hour, the labourers thus having to take their meals in the 'open air. This third hirer we have both to pay lodgings and board at

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'our own cost. The Commissioners will thus see how hard this system 'of hiring must press on us in our small crofts, when we with a few excep- 'tions have to buy meal for ourselves, families, and the Housebay hirers 'for most of six months in the year. Second, as to rent—The crofters are 'all highly rented, in fact the rents have been several times raised, and we 'have always been told by the factors, that we either had to take them at 'the rents or leave them.'

23022. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many families are there in your place?—About thirteen.

23023. Are your crofts generally of the same size?—No, there is a difference in them; but most of them are about eight acres.

23024. Of arable land?—No, altogether; very little arable land in the summer.

23025. How many acres have you yourself?—It is said to be near about fifteen.

23026. How have you so much more than the rest?—It just happens to be taken in out of the outside common, more taken in.

23027. How were you allowed to take in from the common?—It was not I who did it, it was the proprietor.

23028. Is there a common on which you are all allowed to pasture your cattle?—There was, but there is not now, it was all taken in.

23029. When was it taken in?—About twenty-three years ago, I suppose.

23030. Was it, before that, common to all the crofters?—Yes.

23031. Were they allowed to put as many cattle upon it as they chose?—There was no person to make objections then.

23032. Why was it taken from them at that time?—The proprietors changed it among themselves.

23033. Was it joined to a sheep farm?—No.

23034. Is there any sheep farm near you?—No; unless what the tenants have on their own property.

23035. What rent do you pay?—£11, forbye taxes, road money, and poor rates.

23036. What do the taxes come to?—In through the second pound; I am not sure of the shillings.

23037. What cattle are you able to keep?—I just keep one cow, a stirk, a calf, and a horse.

23038. Any sheep?—One ewe, and her produce.

23039. How much of the fifteen acres is arable land?—About five acres, I think.

23040. And what crops do you raise?—Oats, bere, potatoes, and turnips.

23041. Are you able to raise sufficient food for your family and your cattle?—Yes, almost, I think. The grass is very pinched, but the winter keep is better. A great part of it is hill pasture, and it grows very little grass.

23042. How is it you can keep only one cow?—We cannot have grass for more.

23043. Have any of your neighbours more than one cow?—Some of them have two, but the greater part only one.

23044. How many of you have horses?—Every one has a horse a piece.

23045. Small ponies?—Yes.

23046. Do you plough your land or dig it?—We plough it. We join with our next neighbour and plough it.

23047. Have your neighbours any sheep?—Yes, most of us have one ewe.

23048. What kind do you keep?—The big kind.

23049. Cheviot?—Yes.

23050. Is it not the Leicester breed?—Yes, I think so—*David Smith.* Half breeds.

23051. Are there any fishermen amongst you at all?—*Maxwell.* No, not in any of these crofts.

23052. Are you not near the sea?—Yes, but we require to be at home to manage our crofts.

23053. Are you all able to live off your crofts without fishing?—Scarcely, I suppose. My family is quite small now, and I put by with the bread I have; but everyone does not do that.

23054. Do you hold the land from the tenant for whom you are obliged to work?—No, but these labourers work to the tenant.

23055. Then how can the tenant compel you to furnish the labourers to him? Is it the laird who obliges you to do that?—Yes.

23056. It is part of your agreement with the laird?—Yes, we are bound to work for the tenant of Houseby when required, and then hire women for six months.

23057. Do you consider it a grievance that the labourers have to take their meals in the open air?—Yes, it is the usual custom.

23058. And do you complain of it?—I cannot say much about it.

23059. Is it not the custom all over Scotland and England for outdoor labourers to take their food in the open air?—Most of them do so at the harvest here.

23060. That is not what you complain of?—No.

23061. It is having to carry food?—Yes, the compelment to have a hirer when we cannot get them on terms. They get the wages for themselves, and we have nothing for keeping them in meat and lodgings.

23062. What does it cost you, as an individual, to supply the labourer who is specified in this paper, and to feed him?—I never took that to a close account.

23063. What would you give to be freed from this burden—how much money?—If we were freed from that, we would still be high enough rented.

23064. Would you rather than a couple of pounds be freed from this burden?—It would be better.

23065. Do you all complain of your rents?—I think the most of us have reason to do so.

23066. Is your rent one of the highest?—Well, I reckon that myself.

23067. Is there any one who pays more rent than you?—None but one on the property.

23068. What does he pay?—£15, I think; but he has twenty-nine acres.

23069. And what is the smallest rent paid by anybody in your neighbourhood?—I am not certain; maybe about £6.—*David Smith.* I think, maybe, between £3 and £4—I am not altogether sure—with one or two exceptions.

23070. You don't make kelp, do you?—*Maxwell.* Yes.

23071. For whom do you make it?—The proprietor.

23872. How are you paid?—We have £2, 5s. per ton.

23073. What time does it take you to make a ton?—It is altogether according to the weather; in dry weather we may make it in a short time, but in wet weather it may lie a month on the beach.

23074. What have you made this year?—Very little. The weather was wet, and it wastes away, and does not come to anything in that case.

23075. *Mr Cameron.*—It is stated in this paper that the rents have been raised several times?—Yes.

23076. When were they last raised?—Four years ago.

23077. Do you remember how long it was before that, when they were raised?—Maybe six or seven years.

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23078. What was the reason given for raising the rents at that time?—They thought we had too good a bargain.

23079. Were any advantages conferred upon the tenants at the time the rents were raised in any shape or form?—None.

23080. You were exactly in the same position as before?—The same position.

23081. By what amount were the rents raised each time?—The first I paid was £5, the second £8, and lastly, £11, forbye all the rates, road money, and school money, and poor dues.

23082. Was your condition exactly the same, except that the rents were raised?—Yes.

23083. You got no additional land and no house built?—No.

23084. And nothing was done for you when the rent was raised?—Nothing.

23085. Is that the case with the other crofters?—Yes.

23086. What do you sell off the croft each year?—Very little; we generally keep a two-year-old.

23087. What do you get for the two-year-old?—Sometimes between £12 and £28—maybe £15.

23088. It is a shorthorn cow?—Yes.

23089. What do you get for the produce of your ewe? do you keep the lamb until it is a year old and then sell it?—Yes.

23090. What do you get for it?—We generally sell the lambs when they are young, and we get £1 or 22s. for them.

23091. That is about all you sell off the croft?—That is all.

23092. What do you do with the wool of the sheep?—We keep that for the family.

23093. Have you ever compared your rents with the rents of crofters in the neighbouring property in Orkney?—That differs very much.

23094. Do you think that you are high rented because you don't get enough out of your croft, or is it that you think you are high rented compared with the rent you paid sometime ago?—Yes, the ground being dead, what arable ground we had was only about 5 acres, and the rest is just the hill taken off the common.

23095. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you taken in any land?—*David Smith.* No.

23096. Did you take in any land?—*Maxwell.* Yes.

23097. How much?—When I came to that place first it was all lying—at least the greatest part of it—in a natural state, and I filled it in, and reclaimed it to the extent of about 6 acres.

23098. You increased the cultivated part by about 6 acres?—Yes.

23099. What help did you get from the landlord for that?—None.

23100. And your rent has been raised from £5 to £8, and then to £11?—Yes.

23101. Did you ever get anything from the landlord?—Nothing.

23102. And the taxes are now much heavier than they were many years ago?—They are much the same as they have been this good while past. The poor rate alters a little.

23103. But is not the school rate a new rate?—Yes.

23104. What is that in the pound?—There were none of these rates when I first took the place.

23105. The rates have not increased very much then?—Yes, they have increased generally every year.

23106. How much do you pay besides £11?—I pay 6d. in the pound for road money, 1s. 2d. in the pound as poor rates, and I am not sure what the school rate is; and there are some small rates besides.

23107. You will be paying altogether about £13?—Nearly, but not quite so much.

23108. Do you consider this rent which you have to pay in the form of labour a very invidious thing?—I do.

23109. If you had to pay it at all would you prefer to pay it in money? I pay the greater part of it in money.

23110. But you would prefer to pay it to the landlord directly?—I do pay it to the proprietor or his factor.

23111. I mean the money you have to pay for the servant for the big farm, would you not prefer to compound with the landlord?—It would be far better.

23112. You don't like this burden at all?—No, I don't.

23113. Do you agree with the other witnesses about the payment of this burden. *David Smith* I do.

23114. You have not taken in any land?—No.

23115. Has your rent been increased in the same way as the other man's?—Yes.

23116. What was it at first?—£6, odds.

23117. And now?—Now it is £7, 10s. of rent for the 9¾ acres.

23118. That is the bare rent?—It is forbye taxes and the bondage.

23119. And you get no additional land and no allowance for improvements?—No.

23120. For houses?—The house was repaired last summer.

23121. By the landlord?—Partly.

23122. How much would it cost him?—I could not say that. I paid the mason work of it myself, and the landlord paid the rest; and I quarried, and carted the stuff.

23123. Have the rents of all the people you represent here to-day been raised in some way?—Yes.

23124. But did any of them get any advantage in the way of increasing the extent of their ground?—No, there are some of them who have been paid for draining.

23125. Did they ask any additional land?—No.—*Maxwell.* They would get more; but they are too close together, and there is no land that can be given them. There is a boundary dyke between us and the farm.—*David Smith.* There is plenty of land.

23126. Would you like to get the extent of your holdings increased?—Well, 9¾ acres can do very little for a family.

23127. Do you get your living out of it?—No.

23128. It does not support you?—Nothing like it.

23129. Are you a fisherman?—No.

23130. Do you go away to labour?—Yes, sometimes on the farm at Housebay and elsewhere, if I can get it.

23131. But it does not support your family this nine acres of a croft?—No.

23132. Supposing you got more land, in some good place, would you be willing to take it and stock it?—If I got a chance I would try it.

23133. Are there many of the people in the same position as yourself, and who would be of the same mind; that is, who would be willing to do their best if they got the chance?—Yes.

23134. Can you sell anything off your farm, and if so, what?—It may be a year's-old stot or sometimes a lamb.

23135. What would you get for the stot?—£6 or £7.

23136. And you can do it every year?—No, it does not happen often.

23137. Have you anything more to add yourself that has not been

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mentioned?—I would like to get clear of bondage if that is possible; it is our chief malady—our grievance.

23138. Do you consider that an invidious form of paying money?—Yes; we have nothing against the tenant of Housebay as a master; it is a bad regulation between us and the landlord.

23139. Is there any reason why that burden should be put upon you, can he not get labour?—It is just the same as other farms; no doubt of that.

23140. Have these large farmers got any cottars living upon the farms, who do nothing but work for the farmer; or do they prefer not to keep such people and come to you?—They come to us; they just have their horsemen.

23141. They have no people except the regular servants?—Yearly servants.

23142. And for what extra labour they want they come to you and the other crofters?—Yes.

23143. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What do you consider the cost of keeping this woman whose labour you supply to the farm?—It will cost us about £3, 10s. a year. I don't think we could do it for less.

23144. Your rent now is £7, 10s.?—Yes.

23145. Would it be worth while to pay £2 or £4 more rent, and not be bound to keep the woman?—It would be better indeed; but we pay too much forbye that.

23146. You are paying too much now; but of course part of the obligation is to keep this woman?—Yes.

23147. Do you get anything for keeping this woman?—No, and probably he might summon us out if we did not keep one.

23148. Then you always keep one?—We always have to keep one.

23149. You always do keep one?—Yes.

23150. And that costs you £3, 10s. a year besides your rent?—We keep her the whole six months of harvest, whether that is long or short.

23151. *The Chairman.*—When you keep this woman to work for the farmer do you often give him a member of your own family, a daughter or sister, or do you hire somebody in?—When we have not one of our own we have to hire another person.

23152. Do you generally have a daughter or sister?—Not generally. —*Maxwell.* It is a general thing, but some of us have not

23153. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—I suppose when there are any women in your family, they don't like going out to labour in that way?—Not well.

23154. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who is your laird?—Mr Traill.

23155. Does he live in the island?—No.

23156. Where?—Caithness.

JAMES TWATT, Tenant of Rothiesholm, Stronsay (40)—examined.

James Twatt.

23157. *The Chairman.*—Were you present when the crofters or small tenants from Stronsay gave their evidence?—Yes.

23158. Have you any statement to make with reference to what you heard?—I would try to answer any questions put in reference to it.

23159. There was a complaint made by the small tenants that they were obliged to labour to the farmer. These small tenants are subtenants on your farm, I presume?—Yes.

23160. They complain that they are obliged to furnish labour and to labour at inconvenient times, and at unsatisfactory rates: we would like

to hear you upon the subject. Do you occasionally exact the labour, for instance, of a fisherman, at a time when he might have made profitable employment by going to the sea?—No.

23161. When you call upon a labourer for his service, do you consider whether it is convenient for him to go or not?—I do consider that to a certain extent.

23162. If, for instance, a labourer came to you and said, 'I cannot 'come to-day, because it is a good day for my fishing,' would you allow him to go to the fishing?—Yes.

23163. And when it is inconvenient for the labourer to go to you, will you accept a substitute for him?—Yes.

23164. And when you accept the substitute does the labourer pay you some money, and do you find the substitute, or does the labourer himself send the substitute?—The labourer himself sends the substitute.

23165. What wages do you give a male adult labourer?—2s. per day, and 2s. 6d. for draining.

23166. But when the tenant sends you a substitute whom he hires himself, do you think he pays the substitute more than 2s. 6d. a-day, or does he only pay him 2s.?—I don't know.

23167. Is 2s. a-day the common wages of the country, or do you think that the wages are a little better than 2s. a-day?—In some parts perhaps it is better.

23168. How long have you been a tenant of Rothiesholm?—Nine years.

23169. Since the beginning of your lease have the wages of your labourers been raised—do they get more now than they did before?—They do.

23170. How much have their wages been raised?—They used to get 2d. per hour—20d. a-day—but now they get 2s.

23171. Do you pay them now not by the hour but by the day?—Yes.

23172. Have the hours of labour in the country, generally speaking, been shortened or lengthened, or are they the same?—Just the same.

23173. There was a cousiderable complaint about the obligation to furnish female labour; what sort of female labour is generally furnished? The small tenants complain that they are obliged to furnish a woman, and that they are obliged to feed her, and that the food costs perhaps £3, 10s.; but do they generally send members of their own family, or do they hire women?—When they have them, they send women of their own family, and when they have not they have to hire them.

23174. Do you think in most cases they are members of their family, or do they hire in some cases?—In most cases they have them within their own family.

23175. You pay 1s. a day for female labour?—Yes.

23176. Do you think they have to pay more than 1s. a day when they hire them?—No, I don't think so.

23177. Do you think you could command female labour in the open market for 1s. per day?—Yes, in our island.

23178. You heard the people complain a good deal of this; and at the same time they stated that in case these obligatious were abolished, the farmers would be able to find labour in the open market. You think you can find female labour at 1s. a day?—Yes, I could not find it without them, because I am isolated in one end of the island.

23179. You could not find it without them?—No.

23180. Could you hire female labour, as they do in the south country,

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for the six months to do that description of work on the farm which the female labourers do?—I would not get them.

23181. Do you think you would be able to find labourers for 2s. 6d. a day, if these people were not bound to labour for you?—Not out of the place.

23182. Supposing these obligations to labour were all abolished, and that you were all free, you would not be able to pay as good a rent as you do now; it would be more expensive to you to find labour?—Yes, it would.

23183. The supply of obligatory labour in your neighbourhood enables you to pay a better rent than you would otherwise be able to do?—Yes, it does.

23184. Would you have any objection, in case it were so ordered, that these obligations to labour should be dissolved, would you be on easier terms with the people, supposing always that you had an ensured reduction of rent, would you like it better, or do you like the system of obligatory labour better?—If I could find the labourers, it would not matter to me.

23185. Do you find that these obligations to labour cause any dissatisfaction between you and the people?—I believe they are dissatisfied.

23186. When they are obliged to come and work for you, do you think that they work in a grudging manner—do you think they do as little as possible, or do they work as well as possible? Do you think they would work better if they were free?—I could not say; I have not had the experience.

23187. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you have much kelp made for you?—Yes, some.

23188. What quantity in the course of the year?—About twenty or thirty tons.

23189. And you give £2, 5s. a ton for the making of it?—Yes.

23190. Have you any idea what wages that affords to the people who make it?—I cannot say, because they make it at times that are suitable, and they are not counting their time, I suppose; and it is according to the weather and how the ware comes.

23191. But when you say they make it at suitable times—you mean the time suitable for making kelp?—Yes, the time suitable for making kelp—the dry weather.

23192. They must choose the time according to the weather?—Yes.

23193. And may be not a time convenient for them?—Yes, it may be.

23194. Is there much profit to be made on kelp?—There is a little.

23195. Is there much demand?—Not so much; it is down this year from what it was last year.

23196. What is the market price of the kelp, such as you make here?—£4, 15s. per ton.

23197. That is the highest class of kelp that is made—where do you sell it?—At Falkirk, to Fairlie & Co.

23198. I suppose in taking the farm here you considered it as part of the natural profit of the farm, that kelp could be made upon it?—Yes.

23199. You have been nine years here?—Yes.

23200. You found the cottars on the farm that are there now?—Yes.

23201. Did you find them all there?—Yes.

23202. And have you kept them all on?—No; there are some of them not there now, but where they are I don't know.

23203. Did you replace those who left by others; did you bring in others in place of those who left?—In place of some of them.

23204. Had you any great demand for their places?—Yes.

23205. Was there more than one applicant for every vacancy that occurred?—Yes.

23206. You could not take in more people than there were vacancies for?—Yes, I could.

23207. What became of those who left?—Some of them went to Kirkwall, and some of them are in the island still.

23208. Was it of their own free will that they left, or did you discharge them?—Some of them left of their own free will.

23209. And some you removed?—Yes.

23210. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you a lease of your farm?—Yes.

23211. You have not got it with you, have you?—No, I have the plan of the farm.

23212. Can you mention as nearly as possible the substance of the clause that is in the lease which regulates this matter of the service of these people?—No, I could not.

23213. Can you not tell us the import or purport of it?—I could not.

23214. Does it give you the power to remove them if they don't do it?—Yes.

23215. You said to the Chairman that you consulted the convenience of these people to some extent?—Yes.

23216. When you want any labour done which must be done, we shall suppose, instantly, or in a hurry, don't you expect the people to come whether it is convenient for them or not, if it is convenient for you?—Yes, if it is the day for threshing with the mill. I have a steam mill, and if it is the day for it, which is one day in the week, I generally want them to come that day, but not any other day.

23217. But one day in the week they must come?—Yes.

23218. In fact, your bargain is with the landlord, you make no agreement with the people?—I have an agreement with them in regard to their holdings.

23219. What agreement is that?—They pay their rent to me and furnish the labour.

23220. Can you raise their rents?—Yes.

23221. Although your own rent is fixed for the term of your lease, yet you have the power of raising their money rent; is that so?—Yes.

23222. But you have no power to exact more of that labour than is stated in your lease? you cannot increase the number of days, can you?—There is no exact number of days stated.

23223. There is no number of days fixed in the lease?—No.

23224. Can you ask them to go for 300 days in the year?—No.

23225. Why not, if it is not specified; it is simply your own good will that you don't choose to do it?—I don't require it.

23226. But supposing that you did require the labour for every lawful day in the year, there is nothing in the lease from the proprietor to prevent you demanding it?—Nothing.

23227. What is your present rent?—£421, 11s. 9d.

23228. Will you tell me what rent you would pay, or you could afford to pay, the proprietor if you had not this labour?—I cannot say.

23229. Could you pay one-half?—Oh, yes.

23230. Come as near as you can?—I could not give a definite answer to that.

23231. Could you pay £300?—I could not give a definite answer.

23232. Would it be a good deal less rent which you could afford to pay if this involuntary labour were removed?—Yes, a good deal less.

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23233. Are you quite satisfied with things as they are?—Yes.

23234. You don't complain of it?—No.

23235. Do you know whether the landlord complains of it?—I don't think he does.

23236. The only persons who complain are the people?—Yes.

23237. *Professor Mackinnon.*—The number of families is thirteen?—Yes; that is, of cottars.

23238. And the total acreage of the farm is?—1636 acres.

23239. Seven of these thirteen families occupy about 189 acres according to this complaint—does that represent the whole of their holdings?—That is squared off, they don't hold that.

23240. Of those who were sent away there were some whose places were not filled; what did you do with their crofts?—Some of them were taken into the farm.

23241. And the others?—The places of the others were supplied by other people.

23242. Under your lease you can send them away any year—can you send them away at any time?—There is part of the east side of the hill which the proprietor wished to have removed for the purpose of taking in sheep.

23243. But I should like to know the power you have under the lease to deal with these families. Have you the power to dispossess them all, or any of them, whenever you please?—Yes, I have the power.

23244. That is, of course, at any one term. You could not dispossess them in the middle of a year?—No; they occupy from year to year.

23245. You have power to raise their rents or to reduce them?—Yes.

23246. And to call upon them for service any day?—Yes.

23247. Does any one of them ever make as much wages by his service as his rent?—No, I don't suppose he does.

23248. Is the female labour separate from the male labour?—Yes, the female labour is for the six months in the summer.

23249. And for that you pay 30s.?—1s. a day.

23250. Would you be quite prepared to compound with these men for 1s. a day—would you take from these men the amount of money you pay for these female servants?—No; because I could not get labour for it.

23251. You could not get labour at your end of the island without this regulation?—No.

23252. And under this lease they are bound to work at kelp as long as you wish them?—From a ton or upwards, each house.

23253. Each house is obliged to make a ton?—Yes, or as much more as they like.

23254. Or as you are pleased to ask them?—No.

23255. They are bound to make a ton, and they may make as much more as they like?—Yes.

23256. And you pay them how much?—£2, 5s. per ton.

23257. What is the average amount of kelp a family makes per year?—From a ton to three or four tons.

23258. Some of them make three or four tons?—Yes.

23259. So that some of the labour is voluntary upon their own part?—Yes.

23260. Does that imply that they consider they make a fair wage at the extra portion of kelp?—Yes.

23261. Of the 13 families how many of them, do you think, make only one ton in the year?—I cannot say exactly, the quantity of kelp generally ranges from 20 to 25 tons in the year, but I have had it as high as 30 tons.

JAMES BRIMS, Solicitor, Thurso, Factor for Mr Traill of Ratter (55)—examined.

23262. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You have been present to-day?—I have.

23263. We had one representative of this part of the island, who referred to Mr Traill's tenantry; you heard what was said?—I did.

23264. Have you any statement to make with regard to that?—Which part of it?

23265. Anything you wish to remark upon in the first place?—In the first place, in regard to the meliorations and improvements upon the estate here, I believe Mr Traill, my constituent, is as indulgent to the tenants on the property in Sanday and Stronsay as any other landlord all over the north of Scotland. I may mention that I am connected with the county of Caithness, where he has large property with a rental of £8000 or £9000; and he treats his tenants in Orkney on the same principle as he does the tenants there. The late Mr George Traill, when he was proprietor, did increase the rent occasionally, but he never did so without getting a valuation made by a competent party. The improvements consisted principally of drainage, and a good deal of the money was spent in building good substantial houses upon the estate. The proprietor took up the greater part of the money he borrowed, and a good amount from his own private income. The tenants did not insist upon getting their houses done until their land was first improved, and I think very wisely too, so that we are still going on spending money in building and providing good house accommodation in the way of dwelling houses and office houses for the tenants on the estate. It is a rule upon the estate that leases are always granted for 14 or 19 years as the tenants may prefer. I always recommend them to take a long term, as I believe it to be of most benefit to themselves; and I find it a very curious thing that, when I enter into a lease with an Orkney tenant, he always insists upon having a break at the end of the first second or third year, and I never hesitate to give them that option, because I know it is never taken advantage of. It never has been taken advantage of. I am very much astonished to hear, as I have done to-day, certain grievances stated. It quite surprised me to hear there was any grievance at all on this estate. It is stated that the land is too high rented. I now hold in my hand the last valuation Mr Traill got from a gentleman whom you will all recollect—the late Mr M'Phee of Elgin, who was, I believe, supposed to be one of the best valuators in the north of Scotland. And I may state that the crofters, of whom there are fifty-one on Mr Traill's estate in this island alone, are paying at present from 10 to 25 per cent. less rent than Mr M'Phee valued these crofts at in 1876, and these rents have still remained at the same amount; so that, so far as the complaint of over-renting is concerned, I think there is no ground for it. The next complaint they make is with regard to the kelp. The price paid to the tenants for the manufacture of kelp is said to be £2, 5s. That is correct to a certain extent; but they leave out of view that the tenants deliver at the rate of 20 cwt. to one ton, whereas the marketable amount is 21 cwt. so that the real price is £2, 7s. 3d. I make up, generally every year, a statement, with observations, so that Mr Charles Traill's property or income tax be as assessed upon it, and I have brought with me the statement for the last two years. There I find that for the year 1881, the amount of kelp made upon Mr Traill's estate both in Sanday and Stronsay was 109 tons, the proceeds of which had a market value of £545, 10s. 3d. Of that sum he paid away in expenses £70,

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6s. 3d., and he paid to the crofters who gathered and manufactured and burnt the kelp, £255, 14s. 9d.; so that the balance coming to himself was only £219, 15s. 3d. for the year. But from that there remains to be deducted the taxes he paid upon the rent charged him for the kelp shores. I believe it is not generally known among the tenants—and I think they should know it—that the proprietor is assessed—charged with a rent for his kelp shores—in proportion to the amount of the profits made out of them, that is, the quantity of kelp manufactured—so that out of the £219, compared with the £255 paid to the people, who wrought the kelp, Mr Traill has to pay all the taxes falling upon him as proprietor in connection with the proceeds of the kelp.

23266. I suppose the proprietor pays a double rate on the kelp?—Yes, he first pays the due and then the income tax upon the profits. He pays upon the £219 income tax, and then the property tax upon the rent put upon the shores—that is one-half of the net profits. For the year 1882 the manufacture of kelp was much less—71 tons 15 cwt., the market value of which was £357, 10s. 3d. The expense of keeping up the kelp tools and shipping and other expenses connected with it, amounted to £59, 11s. 7d., and that year there was paid to the tenants £167, 14s. 2d., having a balance of £130, 4s. 6d. for the proprietor, subject to those deductions I have already mentioned for public burdens and taxes.

23267. *The Chairman.*—How much was the net profit to the proprietor?—I have not been able to get that, as the vouchers are out of my hands, but perhaps £30 or £40; so that for the year 1882 he would really not have £100; and the tenants get £167, 14s. 2d. This year, I am glad to say, it will be a little better; it will come up to about 100 tons instead of 71. I may mention the fact that, some years ago, the profits of the kelp were such, when prices came down, that Mr Traill had some thoughts of giving up the manufacture of it altogether. But I spoke to him on the subject, and said that from my knowledge of the tenants in Sanday, which extends back now since 1858, nearly a quarter of a century, that I did not think they would be able to pay their rents unless they were employed in the manufacture of kelp, so that he has still been carrying it on simply and purely for the benefit of the tenants, to enable them to pay their rents and support themselves. This year, I am sorry to say, we have been threatened with a reduction in the prices. The price formerly was £5, 10s. a ton. This year, all over, all we could get was £4, 15s., only we have made an arrangement with Mr Fairley, who purchases the kelp, that if he gives a higher price to any proprietor in Orkney we will get the benefit of it, so that the tenants will benefit by getting the full profits that can be made out of the kelp,—that is, that he will make the best bargain he can for them. I may mention that some of the tenants recently sent a petition to Mr Traill somewhat in the lines they have taken to-day, stating that the crofts were high rented, and that they wanted to get the kelp handed over to themselves, to gather, manufacture, and sell in any way they thought proper. I do not think, taking into account the interests of the tenants themselves, that that would be a good arrangement, because they could not sell it, at the same advantage that the proprietor could do; and, as I have said, the kelp manufacture here is carried on by the proprietor, not for his own interest, but simply as a source of revenue to his tenants on his estate here. I don't think I have anything more to say.

23268. There is a clear revenue from it?—The benefit he derives will be under £100, but that does not take into account the trouble I have with it in selling, and corresponding and making up accounts; I charge

the estate with my own factor's fee and expenses. I was very much astonished to-day to hear from these witnesses who came from Mr Trail's property in Stronsay, on his estate of the Housebay, the statement made, in the first place, that their rents were too high, I have to make the same remark with regard to that which I did with regard to the Sanday property. Mr M'Phee valued these properties, and their rents are in the same proportion as those of the Sanday tenants. With reference to the charge that the proprietor has done nothing to assist the crofters, I may mention that in the case of James Shearer, who pays a rent of £4, 15s., I have actually incurred accounts to the amount of £33, 15s. 6d. in connection with his holding. In the same way an expenditure has been incurred in assisting the witness Maxwell to erect a dwelling house on his croft. The rule in regard to the dwelling houses on Mr Traill's estate is this, that the tenant puts the stones upon the ground and builds them, and the proprietor provides wood, woodwork, slates, flags, and lime. That is done for the purpose of keeping down taxes. On many estates the proprietor incurs the whole outlay, and charges interest on it, but I adopted the arrangement I have mentioned for the purpose of keeping down the rates of the tenants; so that their rents are not increased any further. We have assisted these cottars—as we do upon the whole estates in Stronsay and Sanday—in draining and improving their ground, and we have done that in some cases by getting them to do the half of the work; for example, the proprietor opens the drains, and the tenant fills them; and in other cases, where the ground is shallow, we provide them in addition with tiles, and they do the filling in. Another thing we have done there, is that the proprietor paid the late tenant of Housebay when these lands at Housebay were being improved, for ploughing up their ground to them. Their own horses were weak, and the horses of the larger farm were much stronger for ploughing up the rough ground, and they got assistance in that way to improve the land for themselves. I may mention that the quality of the land at Housebay is very superior; except in the island of South Ronaldshay, there is no better land in Orkney. There is a vein of red clay which touches Orkney, and which runs into Forfarshire and East Lothian, and forms the richest soil in the kingdom. If the land had been in East Lothian, it would have been worth £5 or £6 an acre; but they don't pay anything like that, and I am glad they derive benefit from it. I am always willing to encourage the smaller tenants, more especially, and I very frequently get it thrown up to me that I am kinder to the smaller tenants and crofters than to the big ones. That was said to me by one of the largest tenants on Mr Traill's estates in Orkney on my way north a few days ago. Then there is another grievance which I may explain in regard to working for larger farmers. Some years ago all these cottars at Housebay were cottars holding directly from the tenant of the farm. At the end of the last lease the tenants requested me to take them out of the hands of the tenant, and allow them to come directly under the proprietor. I consented to do that, because I believed it would be for their benefit; and one principal reason of that was that the proprietor would spend and actually did spend more money than any tenant would do in improving their lands and houses, and making them more comfortable than they had been hitherto. The obligation with regard to the working is simply this, the tenant of the farm there, who holds a farm of over 1200 acres of land, said to me, 'If you take these cottars from us, I cannot carry on 'this farm, and cannot take a new lease unless you make some arrange-'ment whereby I can have the benefit of their work and labour in the 'farm.' The arrangement I made was as simple and easy for them in the

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circumstances as it was possible to make; and that arrangement was this,—that these tenants were bound to give labour, that is to supply a woman in the spring season of the year when the crops were being laid down, and at the thinning of the turnips, and during harvest—that they were bound to supply a hand—and that the tenant of the large farm was bound to pay them the current wages of the district. I thought that was the fairest arrangement I could make in the circumstances. At the time these crofters expressed themselves as quite satisfied with the arrangement, knowing, as I believe they do know, that unless some arrangement of that kind is made, the large tenant would not be able to hold his farm or to work it properly. That is the position of matters.

23269. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—How do you settle the current rate of wages?—I leave that as a matter of arrangement between the large tenants and the crofters; but, as I said, the crofters are quite entitled to get as high wages as any other person in the island.

23270. Have they ever complained that they did not get as high wages as were current?—They have, and I have spoken to the tenant about it; not so much to the present tenant as to the former tenant, his late father. The wages have been increased.

23271. What are the wages for labour?—I think 2s. a day and 2s. 6d. for drainers.

23272. Are you aware if that is the current rate of wages in Orkney?—I have been making inquiries, and I believe that is the current wages in this island as well as in Stronsay.

23273. Where there is no forced labour—where it is optional?—Yes. I understand 2s. 6d. is current wages in Caithness too.

23274. There is a difference between 2s. 6d. and 2s.?—Yes, but 2s 6d. is the sum for a skilled workman.

23275. Are they compelled to keep a woman in their house to supply a woman's labour, if there is none in the family?—My understanding of that arrangement was this, that it was generally a member of their own family they did supply, but any girl would be taken to help in farm work. But I have known in one or two instances of a man whose family was grown up and left, who has been obliged to supply a woman.

23276. You insist upon that?—That is part of the arrangement.

23277. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I think you stated that the proprietor kept up this kelp manufacture entirely for the benefit of the tenants?—I have said I requested him to do so. He had some thoughts of giving it up altogether, because prices were going down, and for all he got out of it, it was little worth.

23278. But two years ago did not the tenants get £255 and he himself £219?—Yes, but that is subject to deduction of the burdens paid upon rent of the kelp shores.

23279. How much may these burdens be?—Perhaps that year about £40.

23280. That is, the tenants got £255 for their labour, and he would get £180?—Yes, for his rent of the kelp shores; but you have to bear in mind he advances the money before the kelp is sold,—the tenants are paid immediately after the kelp is made, at the Martinmas term, and it may be months after that before he gets the proceeds of the kelp.

23281. The difficulty is in seeing how the £255 paid to them and the £180 to the proprietor, makes it entirely a matter for their convenience to carry on the business?—We don't consider £100 a very large sum but it is still a source of income; but I am much afraid the kelp, will go out altogether.

23282. In that case might it not be considered better to give them a

higher rate if the £100 to the proprietor is nothing?—We increased the prices some years ago, and gave them a higher price.

23283. The statement of the tenant was that his rent was raised three times within the last fifteen or twenty years—it is now double what it was?—It will be double what it was.

23284. £5, £8, and £11, is what he states?—The late Mr Purves, my predecessor, fixed the rents. Housebay is rather a peculiar case; it was lying in a state of nature almost when the present tenant's father entered upon it. He and Mr Macrae took a lease of it for twenty-five years, and the proprietor and they spent a large sum of money in improving it. After breaking the surface of the soil they came upon the superior red clay I alluded to, and they continued to improve the place so much that they set an example to the whole of Orkney, and gave an impetus to the improvement of the whole of the north islands on that occasion. And to provide work for the place he built a wall across the back of the farm, leaving out what was supposed to be sufficient allotments for fourteen of these crofters, and assisted them to build houses. That would be between thirty and forty years ago. Of course these old houses, had, at first, thatched roofs, which are now out of order, and we are in the course of assisting the tenants to build new and more comfortable houses with slated roofs.

23285. This man Maxwell stated that no improvement was made upon his croft exceptiug what he did himself?—That is not the case; he got assistance to make drains and build his houses.

23286. You are not able to give the particulars in that case?—No; if I had known I could have done it. But as I have said, I have actually paid the late tenant of the farm of Housebay for the use of his horses in ploughing up the ground for all these small cottars, and assisting them in improving the land.

23287. When you state that the tenant is not able to hold his farm except under these conditions, you mean he is not able to pay such a high rent to the proprietor?—I mean that; and the father of the present tenant told me he could not keep the farm at all if he did not get the labour. He could not otherwise get the labour to work it. It is an arable farm.

23288. Could he not import labour?—He could not, unless a lot of Irishmen.

23289. That is to say, he would have to pay less rent?—Much less rent. I don't believe he could pay half the rent if he had to import the labour.

23290. Of course he could import the labour exactly as the tenants are obliged to import it, if they haven't it themselves?—No, because they have a certain portion of labour; it is only in one or two cases that they have to import it.

23291. In the case of the delegate who was heard here, and who hadn't the labour, it would be quite as easy for the farmer to procure it as for the delegate?—He could go to another estate. But supposiug he lost the whole of them he could not get the whole of them in the island; that was the statement made to me when that arrangement was entered into.

23292. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were these tenants imported by Mr Macrae?—No, most of them are natives; they went across from Sanday a year or two ago. Mr Macrae, thirty-five years ago, imported labour to make his drains and enclosures, and build his houses; but the usual farm work was done by people belonging to the island.

23293. The same people who are there now?—Or their predecessors.

23294. *Professor Mackinnon.*—But I suppose he could import the one

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as well as the other?—Not so well, because he only requires them at a certain time of the year, and he could not provide them with accommodation for all the year round. You could not get a hirer for a month or two from the mainland of Orkney or Sanday.

23295. But the tenant who has not the labour is obliged to bring it from somewhere?—There is a small village in Stronsay where, I believe, they can get them; there are a number of people there, who earn their living during the herring fishing season; and in the spring season, before the herring fishing, these women are to be got.

23296. Are these not quite as accessible to the farmer as to the small tenants?—Yes, but the difficulty is this, the large farmer told me he could not get the number. You may get a few, or one or two.

23297. It is a very great convenience to him?—No doubt about that; and I enter into these feelings of the small tenants in this respect, that I emancipated them from the tenant, and took them to hold directly from the landlord.

23298. *The Chairman.*—I understood you to say that when the profits of this kelp manufacture became very small, the landlord had it in contemplation to give up the manufacture of kelp altogether?—He just spoke to me saying he might give it up altogether.

23299. But you kindly suggested to the landlord, that if it were given up altogether they might not be able to pay their rents?—Unless he provided some other source of employment for them.

23300. You state that if they had not this resource of the kelp they would not be able to pay their rents?—Yes.

23301. And for the sake of the tenants, therefore, you continued to manufacture the kelp?—Yes.

23302. But surely it was to benefit the landlord also?—Oh, yes, it was.

23303. That they should be able to pay their rents?—Certainly, it was looking to his interest as much as to that of the tenants

23304. It is the interest of both; it was not a pure act of benevolence?—Not altogether; it was keeping the joint interests in view.

23305. I perfectly understand that, in most cases, the supply of female labour is not so great a hardship to the people, because some member of their own family performs the obligation and receives reasonable wages; but you yourself admit that it is a great hardship to a family to have to hire a stranger to live with them, whom they must feed, and supply to the farmer?—The small crofters made a complaint to me, but you must keep in view that they got the houses and small crofts under this stipulation.

23306. Therefore the case of a family having a female amongst them, and that of a family having to hire a strange female who shall live in their house, is very different?—Very different; from a monetary point of view.

23307. Is there any provision under which a family that has to hire a person might, perhaps, make a money payment instead of hiring a foreigner into their house?—No, there is none.

23308. Do you think that some stipulation of that sort might not be arranged for?—I should be very happy if it could be, to make the tenants more contented, and at the same time supply the labour required for the work of the large farm.

23309. On the whole, you say, you have emancipated the tenants from the thraldom of the farmer, and have placed them in direct relationship with the proprietor. Well, I doubt not that is a benefit—we have heard, in fact, the statement that it is a benefit. Don't you think you could perform a second act of emancipation, and free the people altogether from

the labour obligations and commute it in some form or other for a money payment?—I should be very much pleased indeed, and I have thought of that very frequently, but I cannot get the means. In fact, large farmers say they cannot get labour themselves.

23310. When the farmer of whom you spoke said he could not take the farm unless he had the obligatory labour, did it occur to you to see whether any other farmer would take it without the obligatory labour?—No, not at the time; because I make it a rule when the lease of a tenant holding a farm runs out, he shall not leave the property. I never like to advertise a farm if I can make a reasonable arrangement with the sitting tenant.

23311. You state that if the kelp manufacture were abandoned to the tenants they could not get as good a market as a single man; why should they not be able to club together, work the kelp manufacture, and pay the rent to the proprietor, and sell the kelp themselves?—I think that is easily explained by any person acquainted with the manufacture of kelp. They would not manufacture it of the same quality. I have seen fresh kelp in Glasgow which I would be ashamed to see come from Sanday, in consequence of the mixture of stones. The same thing has been tried here and we have to send a man round to see that the kelp is properly made, and I am glad to say that the quality of the kelp manufactured here is now much appreciated.

23312. You state that the profits of the kelp are small, and to an opulent proprietor like Mr Traill, of little value, but that still there is a net profit of £119 a year. Now is that not almost altogether a source of rental unconnected with outlay—I mean there is no expenditure on buildings or repairs, to speak of?—There are shores we have to keep up connected with it, and in former times we had to incur considerable expense with the kelp boats, until a pier was erected so that a ship could come alongside.

23313. Then there is outlay on the part of the proprietor?—Yes.

23314. Is there a current outlay, or is it all incurred now?—There is current outlay, and although the kelp shores were valued, I suppose the profit the proprietor takes would not be equal to the rent of the kelp shores.

23315. On Mr Traill's estate here, are there any small occupiers holding from the farmer, or do they hold everywhere from Mr Traill himself?—In the island of Sanday they all hold from the proprietor directly, with the exception, I think, of two or three upon a farm in the immediate neighbourhood of this place; but those houses were left to the tenant for the accommodation of his farm servants. I understand, however, he has let them to some of his bowmen, and given them a little land and a small wage for working on the farm.

23316. And in the other islands where Mr Traill has property, how are they placed?—They all hold directly from himself. I may mention with regard to these three small cottars or bowmen on this farm, that the lease is out at Martinmas first, and they have applied now to hold directly from the proprietor himself.

23317. Since you have been connected with the property has there been any consolidation of small holders and the formation of large farms?—Very little since my connection with the property; all that was done during the management of the late Mr Purves.

23318. About how long ago?—Fully forty years ago; at least more than thirty years ago.

23319. Is the term bowmen peculiar to the county?—One of the best antiquaries in the island will explain that—Mr Denison. He says 'how' is the old Norse name for the principal farm of a township, and the 'bowmen' were men or servants living or working upon the 'bow.'

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23320. What is the employment at this moment of bowmen? Are they employed merely as hinds or farm servants?—Merely farm servants in farm towns. Another derivation, some people say, is that farm servants used to be paid in kind with so many bolls of meal, and that it was from bollmen the people drew the term; but I believe the true derivation is from bow man, or the principal man on a farm.

23321. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Does it apply to all men and lads or to a man with a family?—A man of family who works a pair of horses.

23322. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that forty years ago, in the time of the late Mr Purves there was a good deal of consolidation of small holdings?—Yes, the property at that time was not properly divided and little or no improvements were made upon it. The properties were then divided into small farms and a better class of houses built, and a considerable amount of drainage made at a large expenditure of money.

23323. Was there a good deal of that all over Orkney—of consolidation of farms?—I believe there was.

23324. I suppose you are aware that the descendants of the people whose farms were then taken away, and who may now be in foreign lands, did not look with favour upon that?—They certainly did not at that time.

23325. You now tell us that these large farmers state to you that, unless they had this labour which you may call forced labour, they would not be able to carry on the farm?—So they have told me.

23326. Then, in point of fact, this new system of large farms, which is of comparatively recent growth, requires to be kept up by the forced labour of the small people whose predecessors were removed from the lands; is that so?—Well, to a certain extent it is. But on the large farms with which I am connected these small people were not. For instance the farm of Housebay was occupied by one or two tenants.

23327. Is it any wonder, under the circumstances, that these people would consider it a very great hardship—in the first place they do not approve of the farms; and, in the second place, that they are obliged to prop them up?—No, I don't wonder at it.

23328. You have stated yourself, and I am personally aware of the matter, so far, that you were always a friend to the smaller tenants—you stated that the rents had been fixed some years ago, upon Mr Trail's estate by the late Mr M'Bey of Elgin?—He made a valuation, but did not fix the rents.

23329. And that the rents were less then, than fixed by Mr M'Bey?—Yes.

23330. Why was Mr M'Bey called in at all?—That is a personal matter.

23331. Was it because you did not like to do it yourself?—No; Mr Trail had some thoughts of selling his estates, and his agents in Edinburgh thought it would be better that a neutral person should make a valuation of the estates, and fix the rents which should be paid, rather than that his own employees should do it.

23332. Was Mr M'Bey informed what the object of his valuation was to be—for the purpose of getting a good price out of the estate?—He was told that Mr Traill had the intention of selling, or at least thoughts of selling it.

23333. I presume the tenants were not consulted about this valuation?—Of course not.

23334. Was it not a distinct object to get the largest possible price that could be got in the market?—Of course, Mr Traill would expect that would be done.

23335. Is it not the case very frequently that a person in your position, however good-willed towards his tenants, does not like himself to go and make a general rise of rents, but gets somebody from a distance to do it?—Well, so far as I am concerned I always object to it as far as I can; I don't look with favour upon it.

23336. Are you not aware from your own experience and otherwise, here, that it is a common thing for a person from a distance, particularly a land surveyor, to be taken and arbitrarily, of his own will as it were, to fix the rents of the tenants for the future—to be asked by the proprietor to do so?—Yes, it is the only case I know when Mr M'Bey was asked to come.

23337. I am not speaking of anything you yourself were connected with; but I appeal to your own experience as a lawyer. Is it not a common thing to bring a man from a distance to raise the rents?—It has never been done on any estate I am connected with, except one in Caithness—the estate of the Scotscalder—a good many years ago.

23338. Do you know it is a practice in other estates?—One or two proprietors in the north of Scotland have done it, but it is not a general rule.

23339. Factors are so hard that they do it themselves?—A reasonable factor could arrange a new rent under lease.

23340. You have mentioned the name of Mr Purves as the factor under whom the consolidation of the farms took place; is he living?—He is dead.

23341. Has he left any descendants?—Yes.

23342. Is one of them a Mr Thomas Purves, very well known?—Yes.

23343. Resident in Caithness?—No, in Sutherland just now. He has a farm in Sutherland and another in Caithness.

23344. You stated that the proprietor, when the produce of kelp began to get low had some thoughts of giving it up. Had he no notion of that so long as the prices were high? Did he speak to you about it then?—I suppose you are aware of the fact that the present proprietor only came into possession of the estate a few years ago. In former times, the price of kelp was very high and large amounts of money were to be made out of it. Of late years it has been falling off considerably.

23345. Did it never occur to you that it would be wise to leave the matter in the hands of the tenants themselves, and that the proprietor should get a lordship for every ton?—No, I don't think so, I had quite an opposite view, from the fact that I believe the quality of the kelp would deteriorate.

23346. But, don't you think that would cure itself—that if the small tenants found they were preparing an inferior article which did not bring a high price, or no price whatever, they would find it necessary to turn it out in the way they do now?—I believe that argument would have no effect at all from the simple reason that there is no competition for the purchase. There is only one man who will buy Orkney kelp and that is Mr Fairlie, and if he got it in bad condition he would not take it. I think it is the interest of the people to keep up the quality.

23347. You stated that these big farmers say they cannot go on unless they get this forced labour, and that they must otherwise leave the place altogether. Would it really do any great harm if they did go?—It would do this harm that the proprietor would not get the rents.

23348. But we heard a delegate say that his rent, in proportion, was higher than that of the big farmers; is that correct?—In some cases that is correct, but not in every case. In some cases the big farmer pays the

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higher rent, but I know other cases where it is the reverse. I have made a calculation of that.

23349. What estates are you referring to just now—the county of Caithness or Orkney?—Orkney; but the same remark applies to Caithness.

23350. Are you not aware there is a great demand for land on the part of the people and small crofters generally?—I know there is, but whenever there is a farm vacant there is a large amount of competition—for every farm large or small.

23351. You mean there is a competition for farms as long as they have labour?—The thing does not apply to farms in Caithness, only to one or two farms in Orkney, where they have not the same population to fall back upon for labour.

23352. Are you satisfied yourself with the present state of matters with regard to this forced labour? If you saw your way to do away with it, wouldn't you do away with it?—I would be glad to do away with it if it could be supplied by any other means.

23353. Would you say that, take it north and south, the small farmer pays as much in proportion as the big one?—That is a question I can hardly answer. In some cases the small farmer does pay a larger rent, but in other cases he does not. This may be explained—for this reason that the large farms generally have a pretty large amount of hill ground and rough pasture, which is not so valuable as the arable ground, and taking the average the rent is less. But for the arable ground, I believe it is about equal, or as nearly so as possible.

23354. Are there many sheep in Sanday?—No; Sanday is not an island adapted for sheep. Stronsay is, and on Housebay there are a good many.

23355. Do you think the rents upon Mr Traill's estate are moderate?—I do.

23356. Taking it all in all the crofts are moderately rented?—I believe they are; in fact I have a great objection to charge one shilling more than a man is able to pay, or than the land is worth.

23357. Do you find people troublesome in making applications for this and that?—No, I find as a rule that the Orkney tenants, once we got an arrangement completed with them and a lease entered into, give us no further trouble.

23358. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—There was another point raised by the tenants, that when they were settled upon new lands, and with the promise of valuations for improvements at the end of the lease, you had a system of giving them a new lease, and doing away with their right of meliorations?—That has not been the practice since I had the management. There was something of the kind in former years, and perhaps I may explain how it occurred. When the improvements first began to be made there was a certain number of acres of land allotted, and the tenants either built a house or houses themselves upon the place, or they were assisted by the landlord. The rent was purely nominal—perhaps 2s. 6d. or 5s. for a few acres of land, at the end of a fourteen year's lease—that was the duration of lease in former times—an arrangement was made by which the rent was increased to £1 and 30s., and in some cases the meliorations were sunk; but I have been making it a rule to buy up the meliorations of the tenants—which comes very heavy upon the landlord; I have been doing it by degrees, and then the property becomes the landlord's.

23359. Then you charge the full rent?—Then we charge a fair rent. There is a case where the lease is out at Martinmas, and £400 was expended by the tenant on buildings; when he got his last lease nineteen

years ago he got the farm for less rent, but I have now arranged to pay him that £400, and we will get the full fair rent.

23360. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—From the same person?—From the same family.

JOHN HAY, Crofter, Cross (54)—examined.

23361. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How are you employed?—I was employed by some of the big farmers chiefly as a servant.

23362. Were you appointed a delegate to appear here?—Yes.

23363. By whom?—By the crofters and cottars.

23364. Of what district?—I was first elected by the south end and then approved of by the whole.

23365. Where was the meeting held?—At Mr Peter Muir's, the first one, in the room belonging to the central school.

23366. You heard what Mr Muir said to-day?—Yes.

23367. Have you a paper?—No.

23368. Have you a statement to make?—Yes. The chief grievance I can gather from the whole of these meetings, is that we have too little land and that what there is of it is too poor; and that we want fixity of tenure, and compensation. There is also a grievance about the sea-weed which is used as manure for the land, and another about the kelp. The first I mentioned was that we have too little land. I suppose a crofter to have, say, 4 or 6 acres of good land. Well, the disadvantages which the crofter feels, is that he requires to buy a horse and cart, a plough, and harrow, and several other implements, before he can cultivate even these 4 or 6 acres. He has that horse to get; and then the croft does not supply one-half or one-third the work for which he has the material. One horse cannot plough, and, consequently he has to join with another crofter having about his own dimensions of the farm, and the consequence is that it is only every alternate day he can get in the labouring season to go on with his own work. He is idle when his neighbour is at work, unless he can get a job from a big farmer or from some one else. This is very well while he is young and strong; then he may perhaps find a job, but not when he gets old upon this small croft, and when his family are all grown up and away—they go one by one, and the last one has to go because there is nothing for him to live by or to clothe him, perhaps not even so much bread as will be food enough, from so small a lot of land. The consequence is that the old man, as long as he is able must labour away at his small croft, and when he is entirely failed he must give it up to the proprietor, and he has no chance now except, indeed, he calls upon the Parochial Board for relief; whereas, had he a few acres more, he could have retained a son, and perhaps a daughter along with him had there been anything for food and clothes for them. He applies to the Parochial Board, and they send him to the poorhouse and he gets board for himself and his wife. In this way he is a burden upon the parish, but if he had only a little more land his son and daughter might keep the thing going, and the public at large, and the man himself, would be much better. That is all I shall say about the man who has a small croft of good land. But there are other crofters who have poor land. That mainly consists of heath, reclaimed and ploughed and cultivated. Well, even then it yields very little. There is some of it lying bare at this day. Now the quantity of grain obtained from that is so very little, that, although the rent is not high, it can never yield very much. I have seen some of that land which has been cultivated now for twenty years, and I don't believe it is any

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better than when the first crop came off it; in some cases it is worse. Then another kind of poor land is that adjoining these shores, where the cliffs are high and where the sea breaks over these cliffs and the waves saturate the ground when it is just about to blossom, and in that ground there is never any grain; nothing for meal nor anything,—and I have even seen it so saturated that is was of no use even for fodder for animals. Another kind of poor land is the sandy land. There are several crofts of that kind which yield fairish crops, but the grain is not heavy. But, although it beats heath in grain crops, they have I believe, a greater disadvantage, because those who occupy the sand can raise neither cattle nor sheep to be any help to them, for if they attempt to keep any beyond a few months they die on their hands. I spoke also of fixity of tenure. I have seen what I should call ravages committed amongst the crofters and cottars in that matter. I have seen just wholesale evictions, whereby the whole district was depopulated to make way for a large farm. Of these men there remains not one now, with the single exception of an old man who occupies a house on the farm of Howe; he and his sister are all who remain out of 12 or 14 cottars holding from the principal farmer. When the principal farmer left, and a new farmer came, that was the time when this wholesale eviction took place. That was the largest eviction I have ever witnessed, but now and again I have seen evictions. I have seen them often; I have seen them in the south end. I remember a man called Richard Peace was evicted for some dispute—there are men here who can explain why he was summoned to remove; the information could be got, but I think it was some dispute about sea-weed or kelp.

23369. When did that large eviction take place?—Somewhere between twenty and thirty years ago, maybe nearer thirty; but the case of Richard Peace is more recent. There was an eviction in Burness, where three families were evicted apparently for no public cause, at any rate. But I will give an illustration of that, as I am personally acquainted with it. I rented a small croft from Colonel Balfour, or at least, from his factor, I had been three years there and the barn was useless, and there never had been any stable. I asked the factor to put up a new barn and a stable, and he answered that if I required a new barn and a stable I could put them up for myself. But I forgot to say that I would do it myself if I got security. I was told about that, that if the security I already had did not please me, I could leave. Well I saw no chance for myself or family, so I built the barn the one year and I built the stable the next. By this time I had a pair of horses. I had occupied this barn and stable two years when I was summoned to remove at Martinmas. I had no place to go to; my old mother was alive, and I asked her liberty to get myself and family in the end of her small croft so that I could get time to look out some other way. I asked that at the factor, but was completely refused and sent out. One neighbour took one horse in beside his own and another took my other horse, and there was an old hole of a byre which contained my cow and calf. Now my fodder got done at the end of the year, and I had nothing to give my horse. I sold the youngest one for £4, 10s., and the man who bought him—I believe he is here just now—kept him a very short time until he was offered £40 for him. Now these were losses I sustained from being summoned to remove.

23370. Why were you summoned to remove?—There was no reason; I was not due them a farthing. I was not having any row with a neighbour; but simply, I believe, because my old mother had a small croft alongside; and I suppose they thought, because she had that, that I was getting a byre and horses with a view to assist her as well as doing my own work

23371. How was that a reason for removing you?—I don't know that. I cannot answer that question further than that it was thought that that was the reason.

23372. To whom was the land given?—To a Robert Cursitor.

23373. At the same rent?—At the same rent. About the sea-weed; the large farmers generally claim most of it, and if the small crofter requires any he won't be allowed; or if the large farmer has a ton, he will perhaps sell it to the small crofter, and I believe that is only to those on the same estate. But since the kelp has been discussed I don't think I need delay you about it. But there are some things I may be allowed to mention. A man had not stored his kelp, and the consequence was that when he went into the market he got 10s. less for it because it had not been stored—that was the man who made it. Well, there was no store supplied by the proprietor, yet because of not storing he lost 10s. a ton. I think that is the most of what I have to say.

23374. With regard to your removal, you said it was because your mother had a small croft?—Yes, that was pretty freely discussed.

23375. Was she paying her rent, or were you paying it for her?—She was paying it.

23376. Had she or any of your people applied for parochial relief?—She was in receipt of parochial relief for an imbecile sister, she had none for herself.

23377. The chief thing of which you complain is that you have too little land?—Yes, of a good kind at least, of the arable.

23378. What you want is that your croft should be extended in size?—Yes, if that were possible.

23379. Is there land that can be given to you within easy reach of your present habitations?—There is plenty of land in the parish. There is a farm which, I believe is some 1200 or 1400 acres, and the one next that is three or four farms thrown together, and I could not say how many acres it might contain—perhaps 500 to 800. And the next would be perhaps 500, and another 500 or 600 acres. These are only approximate figures. The last mentioned farm is Howe on which the wholesale eviction took place.

23380. You seem to think it a hardship to be obliged to keep a horse, because there is not sufficient land for the horse to work?—Yes.

23381. But is it not better to have a horse to do the work, which saves a human being from work, than to have none?—Yes.

23382. People in other places complain that they are not allowed to keep horses, but are obliged to do the work themselves that the horses should do?—Yes.

23383. You spoke also of old people being left alone, and their families going away. Is that not a universal necessity for young people?—They are forced to do that when there is nothing for them to live upon.

23384. Can they get no work here at all?—They might, if they remained, cultivate the croft.

23385. But can young men not get fishing to do?—But what I meant was, there is a family say, take mine for instance,—I have several sons; one is in England, and another is in Kirkwall, and another was engaged at a mill, and I have just one little boy forbye. I am able to work as much as I have been doing yet; but the croft I have, and my wife alive, would not be able to support us unless I was to make some other shift for work Now it comes to be hard if a young man has to be hampered like this, and some of them feel it to be so. They

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think that, if they have got a little ground they would prefer to stick with the old folks if they could make a living.

23386. To live and work with their parents and succeed them at their death?—Well, unmarried, and if the proprietor should agree about that there could be no objection.

23387. But suppose the young man insists on getting married, would he still live with his father?—I suppose he might. I am only supposing it to be when the man is very old, and if the son gets married about that time, it is not likely the old man would fash them or be any hindrance to the young man. I would consider it much better for the old man to be beside his son, than in the poorhouse.

23388. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What warning had you before you were removed?—About six weeks.

23389. Had you been requested to support your mother's imbecile sister?—Not then; I was never requested to support her.

23390. That was not the cause of your removal?—No.

23391. Who was Colonel Balfour's factor?—Mr Calder.

23392. Is he alive still?—No, he is dead.

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WALTER TRAILL DENISON, Farmer, West Park, Cross (53)—examined.

23393. *Mr Cameron.*—We shall be glad to hear any remarks you may wish to make?—I should say I came here entirely unprepared to make any statement, or I should have been better able to answer any questions which may be put to me. At the same time I don't think the commissioners have had properly represented to them the state and working of things in former times, so that you can hardly judge of their present condition. From all the evidence you have heard, to day I don't think you have got a proper account of how matters stood say eighty years ago, when the improvement in agriculture began; and that must be taken into account, I think, before you can judge of the conduct of proprietors.

23394. Where is your farm?—In Cross parish.

23395. What is the size of it?—Some where about 300 acres.

23396. Is it an arable farm entirely or part pasture and part arable?—Mixed—grain and cattle.

23397. Is it worked on the five-shift rotation?—Yes.

23398. What breed of cattle do you keep?—Crosses or shorthorn or the old Orkney breed.

23399. How long have you been on the farm?—Since 1851.

23400. You are a native of this island?—I am.

23401. And you are well acquainted with the circumstances of the people, both the large and the small farmers?—I don't know. I am pretty well acquainted with the old system, because from my antiquarian tastes I have given a good deal of attention to the old system in Orkney.

23402. I have no doubt what you could tell us would be very interesting?—Yes, but that would take too long time.

23403. But the work the Commission has to do is more connected with the present system?—Yes, but before you can judge of the conduct of proprietors in dealing with crofters, you would require to know something of what they had to do. I don't wish to force it upon you.

23404. As you have been here resident in the island, occupying a large farm since 1851, I am sure you are able and willing to give us what information you have relating to the present system of affairs?—Yes, I

don't believe there is living a man more anxious than I am for the welfare of the Orcadians.

23405. You have been present at our meeting to-day and have heard the evidence given by the delegates of the crofters?—I have.

23406. Does it occur to you to make any remark, which may arise spontaneously, upon the evidence?—One remark shocked me very much, but it was more a personal matter, and that was what was said about Dr Traill. It was stated that his conduct was tyrannical, and that I cannot believe from the nature of the man. He is well known as a most mild and generous man by all who know him; and the remark which was made struck me as being the most ridiculous thing I heard. I don't wish to go over the whole of the things that were said.

23407. With regard to the rents of the crofts and the comparisons that have been established between the rents paid by the crofters and the rents paid by the large farmers, is it your opinion that the crofters pay as high or higher or lower rents than large farmers do?—If you will allow me to confine myself to my own district I will gave you facts. My brother and I took the farm of West Burgh in 1851 at £160, and all the land at that time was in a state of cottarage. I don't think you understand that. Colonel Balfour was anxious to improve the labouring classes, and arranged so that they rented from himself instead of holding from the tenant, except in the case of three cottars on our farm. Our land was rented in 1851, and so was that of all the crofters, and their rents where there has been no vacancy and where they have not offered higher rents themselves, are all now what they were then while our rent has been increased from £160 to £220.

23408. So that while your rent has increased from £160 to £220, the rent of the crofters in your immediate neighbourhood has remained stationary?—Yes, except on those crofts which may have become vacant and the crofters offered a rise themselves.

23409. That is, with the exception of those cases where there were changes in the holdings?—Yes; others have remained as they were in 1851.

23410. Have you observed any improvement in the system of agriculture adopted by the crofters in your neighbourhood?—Most assuredly; and that is one great argument in favour of large farms, that mostly all the improvements have been and will be introduced by large farmers; for instance, the breed of cattle could not have been improved unless by the introduction of shorthorn bulls by the proprietors or large farmers.

23411. The improvement you have noticed in the system of agriculture pursued by the crofters, was, in a great measure, owing to the example given them by large farmers and by the assistance offered to them in improving the breed of cattle?—Yes. Of course they pay for any assistance they get in that way, but I think the example of the large farmers has done a great deal.

23412. Did they do nothing more than show an example?—Did they give any assistance in the shape of an improved breed of bulls?—The system I have is that the crofters pay for that.

23413. But they have derived some advantage from the improved breed of cattle introduced by large farmers?—Most assuredly they have.

23414. In regard to the mode of cultivating their land do you notice any improvement among the crofters since 1851?—Yes. When we came to our farm in 1851 there were two acres of turnips on it, and I don't know if the crofters—I don't remember—had more than you could plant in a patch in a garden, and now they all have a regular proportion of turnip crop to feed their cattle during winter. They sell some of their

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cattle, year olds and two-year olds. On our farm we have on an average 40 acres of turnip.

23415. The crofter's holdings are all enclosed by fences?—Yes.

23416. Their arable land?—No.

23417. Their pasture land is not enclosed?—No.

23418. We heard that the boundaries of the pasture land were marked off by stones or marks of some kiud and not by fences?—Not by fences.

23419. Is that the cause of any disagreement amongst them?—Not that I am aware of, because they all tether their cattle. The crofters in my district have also a small park which they rent, but I think they generally tether in it as well.

23420. Do the crofters in your district keep any sheep?—I think so, but not a large number.

23421. What breed are they?—Crosses with Leicester and Cheviot, and then they are crossed in and in; perhaps a shepherd would not say that was the proper word.

23422. They work their land on the five-shift rotation?—Generally they do. Some of us work on the six-shift where there is a large supply of sea-weed, which enables us to take two crops of grass.

23423. With regard to the cottar system, you have heard the evidence given by one of the more recent witnesses that the cottars object to holding land under a large tenant rather than under the landlord, and being compelled to work for the tenant at a fixed rate of wages; does that go on at all in your neighbourhood?—Oh; Yes.

23424. What is your opinion about it?—I don't see how the large farms could be well wrought without labourers. The history of that with regard to our farm is this; there are ten or eleven crofters and they were obliged to work to us when we wanted a hand on the large farm; but as they have improved in circumstances and the price of cattle has risen they have nearly all refused to work and we have not enforced it. In 1851 when we came to the place they were all anxious for the work. I have only enforced the work in the case of three who are cottars on my own farm. I distinguish those who hold from the tenant as cottar, and those who hold from the landlord as crofters.

23425. What did you do for labour when these crofters refused to work?—Did without them, and fell back on my own three. I did not enforce it on them so strictly at first, but when the others refused I fell back on them.

23426. Do you think if the cottars were to hold directly from the landlord without any restriction as to labour, that the farmer and cottar would be able to arrive at a satisfactory understanding between themselves as to the labour and the price to be paid for it?—I don't think so, because if the cottar was well off and getting good prices he would refuse to work at a reasonable wage; that is my opinion.

23427. But where else could he get work?—He would not need to work if he succeeded other ways.

23428. Are the crofts sufficiently large to maintain a family without anything else?—I think most of them are.

23429. What size of crofts are they about you?—I really could not say.

23430. What rents do they pay?—Some of them £4, but I could not say exactly. Some of them are under £4.

23431. But a crofter could not maintain himself on a croft of that size?—That depends on the quantity and quality of the land.

23432. But the land which he could probably occupy for so small a rent, unless it was a very low rent, would hardly enable him to support

himself?—It is a very invidious thing to say in a public place; it is regarded a most unneighbourly thing to say your neighbour's land is cheap rented.

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23433. But if a crofter held direct from the landlord, would he not be compelled by force of circumstances to work somewhere? and in that case where would he find work except that of the large tenant who is his neighbour?—It is a very difficult thing to deal with. I wish there was some other system, for I detest the idea of a man working for me when he is not willing to do it. But weather favourable for working on the large farm is favourable to the crofter. The three cottars on my farm I took on the express understanding that they should work for me—I told them the whole thing—and there is only one of them who has ever quarrelled about it. I threatened to rent him higher, and we had some talk about it. I always said to him. 'Put yourself in my position and see what 'you would do.'

23434. What did he say to that?—He did not say what he would do.

23435. Did he decline to put himself in your position?—He did not say much as far as I remember.

23436. Taking the good side and the bad side of it, what is the impression you have of this system of cottar holdings with forced labour?—I don't see how the large farmers could get on without it. I cannot imagine how Housebay, for instance, could be worked without labourers being obliged to give work to the farmer.

23437. Is it the custom all over the islands to work in that way?—I think it is pretty generally the custom.

23438. But not universal?—Not universal.

23439. Do you know how they manage in those parts where it is not the custom?—They get through somehow, but I think it must be difficult. Colonel Balfour's crofters in the south part of the parish are not bound to work.

23440. And how do the large tenants get on there?—I suppose they get on as best they can, but with difficulty I should think.

23441 What is the poor-rate in your parish?—About 1s. 2d. including school rate for the tenant; or it may be 1d. more or less.

23442. Does that include the road rate?—No, the road rate was 1s. in the £1.

23443. And the other two 1s. 2d. or 1s. 3d?—1s. 2d. I think, the tenant's share of it, and the people the same, of course.

23444. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you a native of Orkney?—I am.

23445. Do your family belong to it?—They do.

23446. For a long time?—I think they came in the 16th century—at least that is the tradition—from Fifeshire.

23447. Do you hold any land of your own?—None; I have no land right or interest except the farm I hold.

23448. Are you surprised that these cottars and small people who are obliged to give this labour are dissatisfied?—I don't know exactly how to answer. I am not very much surprised, it is just human nature, I suppose.

23449. You said to one of the cottars to put himself in your place; I want you to put yourself in his place. Would you be pleased with this state of matters?—It is the bargain I made. I told the men these were the rules, and he was very glad to get the place, and I would hold that as an honest man he was bound to implement his bargain.

23450. You said that you were not able to get labour elsewhere, and were bound to fall back upon your own three cottars?—Yes.

23451. Are you very strict on these three people in the number of days?

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—One of them thinks so. I don't know that I am very hard. I could not tell you the number of days I employ them in the year; I have never looked into that.

23452. Do you think it is a good system, or can be good, in these modern days when everybody should bring his labour to the dearest market, and that is perfectly understood all over the country, that there should exist a system whereby it is necessary to prop it up artificially in this form?—I think it is bad, if we could only find a better. It is a most unpleasant thing to me to ask a man to work who is not willing to do it. But the man who complains was very glad to take the house at the rent he is paying, and but for the work I would get more rent for the cothouse.

23453. Could you get on at all on the farm without this labour, paying a smaller rent?—It would be a very difficult thing, especially in the most important time when the turnips have to be thinned—very difficult indeed.

23454. You cannot give me a direct answer?—No, because I have never tried it; I don't know. I have no permanent hirers but girls or boys to work at the turnips, unless these cottars.

23455. Unless the proprietor made it compulsory on the small crofters and cottars to give this labour, would the farmer get the labour?—I don't think so; I cannot get it.

23456. What is it that makes these small people agree to this onerous condition, to give this labour?—The desire to have a holding and some land.

23457. It is not to some extent trading upon the wishes and desires of the people to remain in the place where they have been brought up?—Very likely.

23458. It is something like a case where their poverty but not their will consents?—Very often probably.

23459. Have you ever been able to solve this difficult question of landlord and tenant in a satisfactory manner?—Except for that one thing of asking people to work who don't want to do it, looking to the whole of Orkney, I don't know a time—and I am pretty certain I know about as much about their affairs as most people do—when labouring people in the country were better off than they are at the present moment. A class for whom I feel, and whose case has not been stated before, is the ploughmen.

23460. Will you state briefly what you wish to say about them?—I will tell you what I wish. I wish the proprietors would make it a rule, that whenever there was a croft and house vacant on the estate, the ploughman who had been longest on the property should get the croft. It would be an inducement to the ploughman to take care and lay by something of his wages for an expected croft which he might some time get; whereas now they have no inducement to save, and are apt to be careless in their habits, owing to having no hope of rising.

23461. It is not a common thing for a ploughman to save a little money and take a croft?—In some cases it is.

23462. But no such inducement has been held out by proprietors?—I don't think it has ever been published as a rule on any estate that I am acquainted with, and that is what I should like it to be. I think it would do a great deal of good to that class.

23463. And a ploughman who has been upon a big farm, is a very likely man to improve a small croft if he got it?—I should say so, whereas now he has no inducement and no hope before him of rising out of his own class. He must labour hard ten hours a day, and when he becomes an old man there is very little hope for him.

23464. Except to fall upon the poors-roll?—Yes.

23465. The training and habits of such a man are just such as would be very important upon a croft?—I should say the very best.

23466. Have you heard any of them yourself express an opinion upon the subject?—I dare say in the course of casual conversation I have; but I had no power to do anything.

23467. But your conversation with them led you to believe that they would very much like such a thing?—I have no doubt they would. It might be rarely they would get such a chance, but the hope of it would have a most beneficial effect upon them and their families.

23468. Is the whole of this island, or nearly as much of it as can be reclaimed, already taken in?—I think the greater part of it. There is a large tract of capital land in the south end given to a lot of crofters by Colonel Balfour for nothing, the ostensible reason being for drying kelp; and I don't see why the delegates don't tell the good side as well as the bad side.

23469. Have we had any delegates from that locality?—No.

23470. What is the district?—The south end of the island, on Colonel Balfour's property. His crofters have there, I think, from 15 to 25 acres of land for which they pay no rent at all.

23471. Not even 1s.?—I believe not.

23472. How long have they had it? Did they get it upon an improving lease?—I don't think they have any lease.

23473. Would it not be better to give them an improving lease?—I think so, decidedly. But when Colonel Balfour came to the property in 1840, it was all lying in the old system, cots lying here and there and everywhere, all through the farm, and no enclosures. He wished to improve his property and be squared off the farms and freed the cottars from the old system of working. They talk about hardships now, they little know what their fathers did. I know a farm where they had to rise in the winter mornings and thresh the whole day, and their wages were nothing—all paid in kind. Colonel Balfour did away with all that system, and some of the crofters who are now complaining thought it was the best thing that could be done for them. Some of them I believe were shifted to poorer ground; some of them have capital land. I am acquainted with crofters on Colonel Balfour's estate—whose crofts if they were put into the market, would bring at once a third more than the rent they are paying.

23474. Is not the reason for that, not that the croft really could afford that rent but that there is a demand for a small quantity of ground?—Some of them could afford it, and some of them, where the people have offered so much themselves, are rented at full value, I think.

23475. *The Chairman.*—Reasoning from your own personal observations and your researches into the history of the past, do you think the labouring classes in this island now, are better off all round than they have ever been at any period?—Most assuredly they are; there never was a time when Orcadians were better clad, better fed or better housed. If you were only to go 400 yards with me, I could show you a sample of the old houses; and if you had time to go through the island I could show you an old and a new house in juxtaposition, so that you could compare them. And the people know all that perfectly well. A labouring man formerly had no such thing as a leather boot or shoe, only rivellings, and they walked through wet and dry with these. I have heard them tell their hardships and they were enough to make one sick.

23476. Do you think the working hours of the labonring clases are now shorter and easier than they were in former times?—Yes. Now they

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work the regular ten hours; then they had to rise—I don't say it was universal—but in winter, I know they rose in one place at four o'clock and wrought in a hot barn threshing, and an overseer was present to see that the threshing was well done. They then went home and took breakfast, and when it was light, they had to go back to the farm and work as long as it was daylight, which was a little after three o'clock.

23477. What were a ploughman's wages in 1851?—£3, 10s. and £3, 15s. was what we paid; and we had a barn man—that is a man to superintend in the barn, and he got £4, which was considered the highest wages at the time.

23478. £4 in money?—Yes, in the six months, and 4 stones of meal in the month, and a pint of new milk.

23479. Had he any cow's grass?—No.

23480. But take the case of a married ploughman?—The first man we had, had £8. I cannot tell when that was, but I think it was sometime in 1856.

23481. House rent free?—House rent free, which they count for nothing at all.

23482. How much milk?—A pint of milk *per diem*.

23483. What potatoes?—It was so much setting—60 chains as a rule—and he provided the seed himself.

23484. How many bolls of meal?—Half a boll a month—6 bolls in the year; and two tons of coals a year.

23485. Do you think that is all?—I think so.

23486. What does he get at this moment?—I give you an average; I pay on an average £19, 10s. in money.

23487. And a house rent free?—Yes.

23488. Is it a better house, or the same?—The same. Of course I keep the houses in repair, at least I should do it.

23489. How much milk?—The same—a pint.

23490. How many potatoes?—The same of potatoes.

23491. And the same number of bolls of meal and the same quantity of coals?—Yes.

23492. Then the advantage is that the money wage has been more than doubled?—Yes.

23493. From £8 to £19, 10s.?—With me that is so.

23494. So that he gets £11, 10s. more than he did in money. Are the expenses of a labouring man's life much increased? are the commodities he uses much dearer than they were in 1856?—I don't think so. During the time of the American war cotton was much up in price; but otherwise, I don't think the commodities were dearer. I am not aware of anything that has risen in value.*

23495. Is the daily pint of milk imperial measure or what?—The Scotch pint.

23496. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—It was you who told Mr Brims about 'bowmen'?—That is my idea of the derivation of the word. But I should tell you that a much greater authority, Hill Burton, derived it from the old Scotch word boll. But we had in Orkney, in old times what they called oncalls as well, which was a different kind of service. Bowmen were exactly the same as old ploughmen. In 1706 the bowmen's wages were ten pounds Scots, and half a cow's hide for what we call shodding instead of boots or shoes, and meal and bere. The oncalls were men at the call of the farmer or proprietor. At that time proprietors in Orkney lived very much on their properties, and the system of oncalls was continued till the present century, and the oncalls had to come when there was extra work at the farm, such as taking in a stack. There was no such

* See Appendix A, LIX.

thing then as carting in a stack; they had all to be brought in on people's backs. And if there was any extra push in taking up sea-weed, and additional hands were required, oncalls would be called in.

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23497. *The Chairman.*—If there is any information you would like to give as to the ancient state of the county you would oblige us by giving it us by letter?—If I had had time I would have done it before.

23498. But you might still do it and send it to us?—I am sure I am most anxious for the benefit of my county; I am proud of my county. I don't know any county in Great Britain which has improved so much as Orkney has within the last fifty years. I am proud to see such a church as we are now assembled in, although I do not belong to the denomination.

23499. Was this church built by local subscription?—Mostly; I think so at least. I know four-fifths of the congregation are crofters and farm servants; and it shows that the people are willing to pay for their principles.

23500. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—And pay for the land too if they could get it?—Yes.

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DAVID WALLACE, Bratsfold, Burness (51)—examined.

23501. *The Chairman.*—Whom do you represent? Are you a delegate?—Yes, I just represent the parish of Burness.

23502. Who chose you?—About fourteen or fifteen of my own people.

23503. Here just now?—Yes.

23504. Are you a crofter?—A small farmer.

23505. Have you any connection with the fishing?—No.

23506. What is your rent?—£15.

23507. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What statement have you to make on behalf of your co-parishioners of Burness?—Our grievances are high rent, no security of tenure, and no compensation for anything we do.

23508. Have you any leases at all?—No.

23509. Who is your proprietor?—Captain Horwood.

23510. Is he proprietor of the whole parish?—Of the whole parish.

23511. How many people may be in the parish altogether?—I am not exactly sure; perhaps fifty or fifty-two tenants.

23512. That will be altogether between 200 and 300 people?—There is that at any rate.

23513. Upwards of 300?—There is that at any rate.

23514. How long have you had your own place?—Twelve years I think.

23515. Did you succeed your father?—No.

23516. You came into it yourself?—I succeeded my father-in-law.

23517. Has your rent been raised since you became tenant yourself?—Yes.

23518. What was it when you succeeded twelve years ago?—£11.

23519. And what is now?—£15.

23520. Was it put up to that at once?—Yes.

23521. At one swoop?—Yes.

23522. What advantage did you get when the rent was raised that way?—No advantage.

23523. No increase of your land?—No; none.

23524. Were your houses improved?—No, nothing but what we do ourselves.

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23525. What was the meaning of this jump?—In the old way the property was not squared, one had an acre and another had an acre; and then the property was squared and rents were raised.

23526. Was anybody's rent reduced?—Not that I am aware of.

23527. And are your co-parishioners complaining in the same way, that their rents were raised?—Just the same.

23528. Does the proprietor live upon the estate?—Yes, for most he does now; but he did not do it formerly.

23529. Is this parish the only property he has got?—He has a small farm forbye the parish—about 70 acres or something like that.

23530. Have you ever asked him for a lease?—No.

23531. Do you think he would give you one?—I don't know, I did not ask it.

23532. Is he a kind landlord on the whole?—Yes, he is.

23533. Is there any big farm in the parish?—There is one; there is none very large except one.

23534. What is the size of it?—I don't know.

23535. What rent is it paying?—About £130 I suppose.

23536. Has it always been as big as that?—No.

23537. It has been added to, has it?—Yes.

23538. At the expense of small holdings?—Yes.

23539. Are you complaining of that farm?—Well, no; of course we did complain to our proprietor at the time that some of the best soil was taken from us.

23540. Well?—Well, we did not get it; it is in with his.

23541. Did you get a reduction of rent?—No.

23542. What stock do you keep?—I keep two horses, two cows, two two-year-olds, two calves and four sheep.

23543. Is that about the average of the parish?—No, I think not; I think the average will be above that.

23544. Do you mean that the average rent is above £15 and the average stock greater than you stated?—Yes, I think so.

23545. Do you make your living out of the farm?—Yes.

23546. What are you able to sell in a year of animals off the farm?—Two two-year-olds yearly.

23547. What price do you generally get for them?—Perhaps £29 on an average for the two of them.

23548. Can you sell anything else?—Yes, I sell perhaps, two sheep.

23549. What will they bring you?—About £4.

23550. I suppose corn and other produce of that sort is all consumed on the farm?—Yes.

23551. Are you obliged to buy anything?—No, I don't buy any grain for living on; I can raise as much as does for the family.

23552. You really pay your rent and have something over out of the animals you sell, the two-year-olds and two sheep?—Yes, I pay my rent out of that.

23553. But you find it enough to do to make both ends meet?—More than it can do many times; there are many things besides rent.

23554. Do you do anything besides farm?—No.

23555. Have you any family?—Yes.

23556. Do they help the household?—They go out to service.

23557. Do they help the house? Do they send any money to you?—No.

23558. Do you know how many acres you have got?—18¾.

23559. And have you a share of the grass or commonty?—No, it is all in for arable property as it were.

23560. You have nothing but the 18 acres?—No.

23561. What are the taxes besides the £15 you pay?—I pay 15s. of road money; and the same for school rate and other rates.

23562. Three shillings a pound for these three things?—A shilling a pound for each of these things.

23563. That will bring your rent up to between £17 and £18?—Yes.

23564. If your rent had been left at £11 you would have been satisfied?—Yes.

23565. That is about the fair rent you want?—Yes, £10 or £11; I think so.

23566. When you succeeded twelve years ago to the small farm, were the whole 18 acres taken in, or was some of it waste?—A good deal of it was waste.

23567. And you have taken that in yourself?—Yes.

23568. Is it all in now?—All that is intended to be taken.

23569. You cannot give any reason why the rent was raised from £11 to £15?—No.

23570. Had you improved the croft before the £15 was put on in part?—All that I could do.

23571. And that is all the thanks you got for improving?—Yes.

23572. Putting £4 on you?—Yes.

23573. And you don't like that?—No, I don't.

23574. Is what you have now stated in regard to your own position very much the case with all the other people in the parish?—To a greater or less extent.

23575. Particularly those who are here to-day who delegated you to come—their grievances are the same as you have stated?—Much the same.

23576. Then you are liable to be turned out, are you, at next Whitsunday?—Yes.

23577. You have no lease or writing of any kind?—None.

23578. What length of lease would you like to have?—Perhaps nineteen or twenty-one years, so that a person would have some time for any improvements.

23579. Do you keep your own buildings in order?—Yes, I have done it all along with the exception of last year when I got some slate from the proprietor.

23580. With the exception of that you have done it yourself?—Yes.

23581. And is it the custom over the parish that the people keep up the buildings themselves?—Yes.

23582. Your proprietor is Captain Horwood; has he any factor?—Yes, a manager, Mr John Scott, who is here to-day. The wrong of our island is not soil, but large farms; there is soil enough for us all if it were equally divided.

23583. But you have stated just now that your holding is sufficient to maintain yourself and your family; why do you want more land?—I said as regarded bread. I was asked if ends met and I said no.

23584. Before that you said you were not dependent on other work?—Neither I am.

23585. You seem an intelligent man, have you been reading in the newspapers reports of the proceedings of this commission in other parts of Scotland?—Yes, I have read them.

23586. Has it ever occurred to you that crofters in some other districts are not so well off as you are yourself?—I could not exactly say that.

23587. Do you think we often come upon people who get £29 for two beasts and £4 for two sheep and have crops sufficient for themselves and

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their families without doing any other work; have you ever seen any instance of that in the evidence which you have read of crofters themselves or their delegates?—I could not say that; I could not say that I remember that.

23588. *The Chairman.*—You said the land had been squared. Did you mean there had been a new division—that different crofts had been consolidated?—Yes, a new division.

23589. The land of the different crofters, which had formerly been scattered was all taken, and each crofter got his lot consolidated?—Yes.

23590. How long is it since that was done?—Four years ago.

23591. Since your croft was consolidated or put into one piece is it more valuable and convenient than it was before?—Yes, it is more convenient.

23592. And because it is more convenient, it is also in some degree more valuable?—Yes.

23593. The proprietor has done something for you—he has put every man upon his own place?—Yes.

23594. When the rent of the croft was raised was the land valued by a valuator at all?—No.

23595. It was just done by the factor?—Yes, or the proprietor.

23596. How many years have you been there?—Twenty-two years.

23597. Are you getting much higher prices for your cattle now than twenty-two years ago?—Yes.

23598. And for sheep too?—Yes.

23599. Do you sell the sheep for twice as much as twenty-two years ago?—No.

23600. But a good deal more?—Yes, it is more.

23601. And cattle too?—Yes.

23602. During all the years you have been there has the proprietor not executed any repairs or improvements on the buildings at all?—No, with the exception which I mentioned, of giving me slates last summer. But it was not the same proprietor then as now.

23603. Do you think the new proprietor is an improvement?—I have nothing to say against him as a proprietor some ways.

23604. Was it the old proprietor or the new one who raised the rents £4?—The new one.

23605. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You said you wished to get fixity of tenure, is it the case that many people upon the property are removed?—No, he has not removed any except one house.

23606. But still you would like security that you would not be removed?—Yes, when I repaired the house I would like some security.

23607. And compensation for any improvements you might make?—Yes.

23608. Supposing you had the fixity of tenure you ask for, what improvements would you be disposed to make on your own croft just now?—Well I don't know. I would build some more houses.

23609. Could you improve it so as to make it more productive?—No, I think I have done all I could in that direction.

23610. Could you rear more stock upon it?—No, I don't think I could.

23611. So that you could not make more money in a year out of it?—No, I don't expect that.

23612. And you consider, since there is no possibility of improvement in that way, the rent is rather high?—Yes, I do think that.

23613. Do you make butter and cheese or anything of that sort?—No

23614. And you sell no grain?—No.

23615. Just the outcome of the stock?—Just.

23616. The people of the parish are much about the same way. What do the young people do when they leave school?—Go to service chiefly.

23617. In the place?—Some in the place and some out of the place; some in the island and some leave the island.

23618. Do you think it would be difficult if a sufficient wage was given, to get among the people of the island labour enough for the big farms?—I could not say; I think so.

23619. Where do the people come from—the bowmen—do they belong to the place?—Some belong to the place and some to other islands.

23620. Is there always a sufficient supply of them?—There is.

23621. What do their families betake themselves to?—Service.

23622. In the place or out of it wherever they get it best?—Yes.

23623. So that, in such a populous place you don't see any difficulty, if sufficient wages were given by the big farmer, why they should not get the service they want?—Yes.

23624. Do you see any difficulty about it?—I don't complain about the wage so much.

23625. But so far as people are available for service, do you see any reason why there should be forced labour in connection with the farms? If a better wage was given for labour you think there would be enough men and women?—Yes.

23626. What is your objection to having big farms on the property?—Because I think if there were not big farms, we of the poorer class would be more comfortable than we are, and I think we would have no paupers to keep up, for every person could support their own.

23627. Is it off the big farms that pauperism comes?—I think so, because we are not fit to support the poor.

23628. I suppose very few of the substantial crofters of the place become paupers in their old age?—Oh, yes.

23629. Very rarely?—Oh yes, many of them do; those who have not children fit to support them must become paupers.

23630. Those who have occupied a good croft like your own in their lifetime, is it not a thing of rare occurrence to find them falling to be supported by the rates in old age?—No, it is not a rare occurrence; it often happens.*

23631. And do you think that also might be relieved if there were fewer large farms?—Yes.

23632. How would that be brought about?—If I had more property to support my parents or whatever it is.

23633. Or to lay by something for your old age?—Yes, so that I would not become a pauper myself; and I think that is the idea of others besides me.

23634. You would be quite ready to take a larger place if you got it?—A little more, but not very large.

23635. Do you think it is a bad thing altogether to have a big farm now and again in the place?—I don't mean to say every one should be equal in size; but one man to have a 1000 acres and another only two, I don't think it is equal.

23636. You would not like to see crofts all of the same size?—Yes, I would like to see farms about the same size.

23637. But you have about this place too many big farms?—Yes.

23638. They are too many and too big?—Yes.

23639. What other advantage in addition to reduction of the rate would you expect by breaking up the big farms into smaller holdings?—Comfortable living to those who have small ones.

* See Appendix A, LIX.

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23640. By giving them increased holdings?—Yes, and by making them more equalised.

23641. So far as you can go back to the past, do you find the holdings are getting larger or smaller in the district?—In the parish I live in there is not much difference; but I know other places where the holdings are getting larger.

23642. Do you consider that a good thing?—No, I consider it a bad thing; the big farms are getting larger.

23643. But do you consider it a good thing that the crofts should be getting larger?—Yes.

23644. And that the big farm should get less?—Yes, but I don't mean to put every one to a level.

23645. Is it within your own recollection that crofts are getting bigger?—No, I don't think it.

23646. Are they getting fewer?—In some cases they are in my recollection.

23647. I suppose you don't approve of that?—No.

23648. Would you rather that the crofts should get more in number and bigger, and that the farms should get fewer and smaller?—Yes.

23649. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If you add taxes to your rent you are paying not much short of £1 an acre?—Very nigh that, but not altogether.

23650. And you have nothing outside that?—Nothing.

23651. Are you acquainted with the rental in various parts of the Highlands?—No, I am not.

23652. You don't know that £1 an acre is considered there a good rent?—It depends on the soil.

23653. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you think they ever get £29 in the Highlands for two beasts?—Why not? I think so, surely; it depends on the quality.

23654. Two years old?—Yes, it depends on the quality.

23655. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you get as good a price for beasts as the big farmer?—I think so.

23656. And so far as you have got stock, it is as good as that of the big farmer?—Yes, as far as I can make out.

23657. Has the big farmer done anything to improve the breed?—Oh, yes.

Rev. MATTHEW ARMOUR, Free Church, Sanday (63)—examined.

Rev. Matthew Armour.

23658. *The Chairman.*—You are the only Free Church minister in the island?—Yes.

23659. How long have you been here?—About thirty-five years

23660. Do you belong to the county?—No, I do not; I belong to the West of Scotland.

23661. What county?—Renfrewshire; I belong to Paisley.

23662. Looking back on the condition of the people when you first came here, what is your opinion? has their condition been progressive? are they better off physically and morally than they were at that time?—Their circumstances have improved, no doubt, and they are better, I won't say physically—they were a strong people then, and perhaps some of them stronger than any living now—but I think that morally and socially the people are very greatly advanced. I believe the increase of intelligence has caused the present dissatisfaction, and that they want fair play.

23663. Their physical circumstances are better, and their spiritual interests are more cared for?—Doubtless.

23664. With reference to education, do you find it improved?—Yes, quite distinctly advanced as to that.

23665. Since the Education Act of 1872, have the schools been better taught and better attended than before that?—I don't exactly think they are better taught, but they are better attended; they are under compulsion now to be present and they must of course, be more generally elevated than before.

23666. Then, there has been a physical, religious, and intellectual progress among the people during your time?—I believe so.

23667. And that has taught them to compare their condition with what they think it ought to be?—Exactly.

23668. Will you briefly inform us in what respect you think the people don't get fair play?—Yes, I am quite prepared to keep that as a text. The people, of course, have eyes, and they know the parishes and see how the land is laid out, and they cannot, for the life of them, understand how there should be favouritism in the arrangement. You have the whole island as it were divided amongst no more than a dozen people, say, at the head of their families. The population is 2000, and they cannot understand at all the reason why these twelve individuals should monopolise the land of the parishes; they don't see any distinction in the lives of these people that occupy and monopolise the land, to entitle them to such a position and such privileges. There are plenty of plain people, humble men, who are quite able to improve the land, and to exercise their skill and ability on more than they can possibly get to employ them; and I believe that that weighs with those who have not sufficient employment in leading them to desire that they might have more scope, for their abilities, more employment for their precious time. That is one view I take of it; and I have no doubt but that is the view they take of it. I should like it to be well-known that there is an undercurrent throughout society of great dissatisfaction, and nothing but some effectual remedy will bring peace and contentment to the community in this matter.

23669. You used the expression that 'as it were the whole island.' I presume you mean the greater part of the island had been appropriated as a matter of favouritism to about twelve families. We are in possession of an analysis of occupiers in the island—a short statement—which, I think hardly bears out that view of the subject. I don't think the monopoly of the land has been quite so great as you imagine?—You will find, perhaps, about twelve large farms over the area of the island.

23670. Professor Mackinnon had the great kindness to prepare a short analysis of the state of the land occupancy in the island which I shall ask him to show.—*Professor Mackinnon.* The total rental as shown by the valuation roll is £6401 and there are 270 occupants. Ten of these 270 occupy farms of about £100 a year; all the other farmers are under £100. The gross rental of the ten is £2642, 15s. leaving £3760 to be distributed amongst 260 holdings each under £100?—Well, that quite concurs with my statement. The twelve represent the larger farms; that was my statement.

23671. *The Chairman.*—Your statement was that the whole island was divided amongst twelve persons?—I was referring to the bulky portions of the island in the hands of no more than about twelve persons—twelve families. I am keeping out these smaller ones, because you observe the grievance arises from those that are holding these large tracts.

23672. Taking off these ten or twelve, how many occupiers are there besides them?—*Professor Mackinnon.* 260.—*Rev. Mr Armour.* I understood that the position of the subject before us was this; that those having less land, the numerous people, were placing themselves before you as

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petitioners for more land, and my statement referred, and was limited, to the holders of the great proportion of land.

23673. *The Chairman.*—The question between us is simply a question of degree; you are speaking here before a large number of persons who may be influenced by your statements, and I understood you to say that the whole of this place was divided between twelve families. I don't suppose you meant really the whole; but the fact is that it is only two-fifths of the rateable value of this island which is divided amongst these twelve persons, three-fifths belonging to the smaller class of occupiers. I don't mean to say it is right or wrong, but we must be very careful of the language we use?—I have explained what I mean, that if you take a walk through the island you will see these large districts in the hands of as many people as I have mentioned, and the other people are distributed over the small portions generally. There are some of the farms under these large ones that are considerable farms, I allow; but I was just pointing more especially to the arrangement which is objected to.

23674. How many farms do you think there are between £30 and £100?—I don't suppose they are very numerous.

23675. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Thirty-five.

23676. *The Chairman.*—How many are there under thirty.

23677. *Professor Mackinnon.*—225—*Rev. Mr Armour.* That is the district where the complaint lies.

23678. *The Chairman.*—The first complaint you make is the consolidation of large areas of the better land in few hands?—Yes, and I would like you to allow me to make a statement. I should not like any person to draw the inference that these holders of land are held by me in anything else than the highest esteem. There is one individual especially who stands very much out in my mind for admiration—a farmer in this island, and a farmer in other places in Orkney. I suppose he will have four large farms under his management. I look upon that man with admiration, because I see he is a man of energy, and a man who is to be imitated so far as people can imitate him. He is a man evidently of ability and energy; I respect him.

23679. Is he an Orkney man?—Yes; I would not like it to be inferred that I held in disesteem those who have that property; that is not my meaning. And in regard to our respected friend who gave evidence to-day—Mr Brims—I wish to say that I heard a person who knows him better than I do say regarding him (his name was mentioned here to-day—Mr Purves—one who is interested in these questions) when discussing his position and that of others in the same class, that he was 'Joseph in Egypt.' Well, there was an Egypt, you observe.

23680. You stated the first particular in which you think that injustice is done to the people. What next, or do you think that is the capital grievance?—I think that those who are managing as things are managed just now, are very much the victims of a system; that they feel as they have told you, that they are in a manner helpless. But while they were giving that evidence it occurred to me, over and over again, that they need not be helpless. The large holders need not want working men; they can restrict the area and get their work accomplished easily by distributing the land amongst those that are willing to work it. If there is a hunger for land on the part of those men who have most it is natural surely that those who have little should have the same if not a greater hunger for a little more land that they might be kept occupied, and advance as others have advanced.

23681. Do you think this obligatory labour is a material grievance and the cause of much discontent?—No doubt of that, if you heard the

people speaking on that subject you would be saddened, they dislike it so. They look upon it as bondage, of course—the bondage of Egypt, you know. They would like to be free to deal with the proprietor—they would like to have more material on which to operate—and they would like their families to be kept at home; they would like to do justice to them in every possible way; and that, I believe, is the real remedy for all that is wrong in this place.

23682. Do you think there is legitimate ground for complaint with reference to the state of the houses; that the proprietors don't spend sufficient money upon repairs and amelioration of the houses?—Generally the building of houses is left to the people just to do their best. Mr Brimm's has told you about his proprietor's way of doing, which is so far well, and is appreciated very highly, but, generally speaking, the people have to do the whole thing, and when they are going out of it, they have no hold upon the proprietor to get one penny.

23683. Do the public officers—officers of health for instance—perform their duties properly?—I would rather not say anything of that, because I have not had it very particularly before me.

23684. And the inspectors of poor?—I would not like to touch on that; I would not like to say anything of that.

23685. Have you no positive good to say?—Well, you see they are not a very popular class of people in any community.

23686. With reference to the action of the School Boards, is it effectual in obliging children to go to school?—It is pretty effectual; it is not perfect. I would be very willing to answer any questions in regard to the evidence that has been placed before you, as a witness, as to whether the evidence was capable of being corroborated by any independent observer.

23687. You have heard the evidence during the course of the day, do you think that given on the side of the small tenants is generally correct?—I have reason to believe it is; and I should have liked if we had more evidence of that description because it comes from the fountain-head; they know the thing from their own bitter experience, many of them. They know the grievances they have groaned under and wish to have removed.

23688. Do you think there are any grievances affecting that class which have not been alluded to?—That grievance in regard to the small farmers confined to sand has not been emphasised. I have been grieved to see sometimes, the animals and property of that description mere skeletons, with no means of recovering their health. They have to sell as often as possible so as to have living creatures, the sand seems so deleterious to their health. Now the remedy for that is to give these people a mixture of land—what we call land is just a cure apparently for the disease. They have to shift them about to keep them in life and they have to exchange turnips with those who have land, so as to prevent as far as possible the consumption and death of their animals. Now, I think there should be some arrangement to keep these poor people.

23689. What is the nature of the sand, is it the sand of the shore?—No, the sand of the farm.

23690. Is it not the sand of the sea which is blown upon the soil?—No, it is the nature of the sand, and the cure, I am told, is putting the animal upon the fruits of the soil. I should like very much for these people's sake that they might have some remedy for what they suffer under. As to the kelp, I have never heard people saying anything else than that they would gladly get quit of it altogether. They feel no inclination to

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make the kelp, of course, they may perhaps have a little more light to-day in regard to what it brings in the market than they generally have had, because there has always been a haze and mystery in their minds as to what the proprietor got. Perhaps they have been magnifying what was got for it, and on that account they have thought that the lion's share went to other parties while they had all the trouble and toil of its production. I have no doubt, to-day, some light has been thrown by Mr. Brim's statement on that subject.

23691. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Mr Traill said the cottars were bound to provide him with one ton of kelp, and that some of his tenants made two or three tons. I suppose therefore, everybody does not object to the making of this kelp? The objection is not universal?—If it is in idle time or to keep them busy, it is an advantage, only as it occurs that the making of it is at a time when they are engaged at the finest stage of their own farm work, they dislike it, and often it comes to be a hardship. Sometimes they have to let their land stand for the purpose of making the kelp. The fact is that they don't like kelp at all; give them land to occupy them, and they will never shed a tear about the ceasing of the kelp-making.

23692. *Mr Cameron.*—As I understand from what you said about the occupation of land, you would recommend a redistribution of the land?—I would recommend this, that when a lease came to an end, this rectification having been kept in view, should be made so far as it might be found to be right and proper; keeping in view to supply those who had a little land, with a little additional land. That is the only practical way I can see that it can be done. The truth of the matter is this, that there is too little time, there is too little attention bestowed on arrangements; there is too little time bestowed on the part of those who have the management of these things.

23693. I was pointing more particularly to one question, that you trust entirely to arrangements being made at the conclusion of the leases, and do not wish Parliament to interfere and create a new redistribution of the land from what it is at present?—If they will not do it? They can do a great deal if they only had the will and time.

23694. But you are not prepared to recommend a forcible redistribution of the land?—Far from it; I hold all the proprietors and others in great respect.

23695. I wanted you to be clear upon that point because I was afraid it might be misunderstood?—There is one thing I would like to say. When Mr Muir used the word 'tyranny' in reference to our respected Dr Trail, he did not intend to convey any such impression as you probably drew from it. Dr Traill is a harmless, kindly, excellent man and proprietor, and I have no doubt it is not his inclination to do harm to a fly, so that I believe Mr Muir will look upon that just as a slip.

23696. *The Chairman.*—We don't think he really intended to attribute any cruelty to the proprietor?—I would not like it to go abroad.

23697. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were told, from some statistics, that the rental of the parish among the bigger farms, was two-fifths of the whole; have you any idea about the number of acres that they respectively hold?—The big holders have the land among themselves, and the little holders have far less than they can manage, because there are some very able men in this island among the little ones.

23698. Is it not quite possible that the larger portion of the island is in the hands of the big farmers—in acres?—Well, there is a great part of it, you know, that has not been taken in, in some parts.

23699. Who has got that?—Of course the large farmers.

23700. Is it not possible that more than half the area is occupied by these big farmers?—I think so, but there is a thing which has not been noticed—the land of quality is in the hands of the big farmers, and the poor people have only scrappy bits.

23701. Do you think, upon the whole, taking the whole of the island here, that the small tenants are paying more for the area they hold than the big tenants?—I believe the quality is inferior, and that, of course, makes it wrong to look upon the rental as alike.

23702. *The Chairman.*—Before you came to the chair, you mentioned that there were one or two delegates who you desired, should be examined rather than yourself. We thought it was our duty to take you first, because we desired to have a selection and representation of all classes of the community before us, and we had not had, up to the present time, one of the clergy to-day, but we shall now be happy to examine one of the delegates you mentioned. Are the two delegates from the one place, or from different places?—From different places, one representing the far south and the other the east. I should like both of these to be examined.

JAMES GUTHRIE, Crofter and Joiner, Levasgarth, Lady Parish (53) — examined.

23703. *The Chairman.*—What place are you a delegate for?—For the district here.

23704. What statement have you got to make?—I have chiefly my own statement to make and then that of some of the crofters around me. I am living in a small place of 12 acres, which was put up at my father's expense (the proprietors furnishing some slate, flag, and lime), at a nineteen years' lease. When that lease was up I was raised £2 of rent upon it. I had an agreement to get a valuation for the wood I put upon it, and at the expiry of the lease, when I went to make a new arrangement I was told to sink that valuation and I would get a fourteen years' lease and £2 of a rise, and 12 acres of hill pasture broken in by ourselves out of the heather.

23705. Your holding was a holding of wild ground and heather?—Yes.

23706. And you got a nineteen years' lease and broke up the land and improved it and built houses, for which you had some assistance from your proprietor?—Yes.

23707. Had you the place for the first nineteen years at a very low rent?—Yes.

23708. About how much was it?—2s. 6d. an acre, for the hill is poor in its natural state until we broke it in ourselves.

23709. And when your father got the land for nineteen years at a low rent, was it with the understanding that, at the end of the lease, the rent might be raised?—He did not think that; we did not think that.

23710. You did not think it would ever be raised?—We did not think it would be raised at that time, after breaking it in and building the houses ourselves.

23711. Supposing you had got compensation for the houses that you had built, and for the improvements you had made on the land, would you then think that it was right and natural that the rent should be raised at the end of the nineteen years?—Yes.

23712. What was the nature of the improvements you made on the

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land. Did you put up any stone fences?—No fencing, but merely an enclosure for our crop.

23713. Did you make any tile or stone drains?—Very few; not very many at our own expense.

23714. Did you put on any lime?—None.

23715. Did you trench deeply with the pick or spade?—Very often that, and took a great quantity of stones out with the pick.

23716. If you had had your buildings fairly valued, and the improvements to the ground fairly valued, and had got that money you would not have thought it unreasonable that the rent should have been raised?—Not at all, if I had got compensation for the improvements.

23717. How much was the rent raised?—£2.

23718. And you got a new lease?—I have no lease now; that was the arrangement, but I got no lease.

23719. And do you consider yourself secure to the end of the fourteen years?—No, I do not.

23720. Why don't you get a written agreement?—Because I would not take it on those terms at that rise of rent. I thought it was unfair treatment to get a rise of rent and no compensation. They sink my valuation. I was told by the factor that, if I did not agree he would advertise my place and let it. I told him if that was the case I could not help it, but I would not agree to sink the valuation; but I would pay the rent for a year if I could not better myself.

23721. How long have you had it since then?—I have paid twelve years' rent at the rise.

23722. And have you been making still further improvements?—Well, I have been trying to cultivate the soil to the best of my ability; but it was all broken up before then.

23723. Are you working at your trade?—Yes, to the farmers round about.

23724. Do you get regular employment?—Not very regular. I did proprietor's work for a good while, but it was withdrawn from me.

23725. Do you work by the hour or by the day?—Partly by the hour and partly by the day.

23726. What wages do you receive by the hour?—Generally about 4d. an hour.

23727. What was it when you began life?—I suppose about 3d.

23728. It has only advanced 1d an hour?—Yes.

23729. Are other people in your place in the same situation?—They are; they are bound to the kelp making. I am in no wise bound to that; but, on the same footing, every three parties along the line by me are bound.

23730. Your case is very much the same as that of those around you? Yes.

23731. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Mr Armour said you would speak for the people at the south and east end of the island—what can you say for them?—I don't think I can say anything for them. It is chiefly sandy soil; but it is not sand I think. I am not very much acquainted with soil.

23732. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have not given up your claim for meliorations?—No.

23733. What is the name of your proprietor?—Traill of Ratter.

ADAM HOON, Factor for Mr Hebden of Eday, residing at Carrick—(59) examined.

23734. *The Chairman.*—You are not a farmer?—In a small way for the last two years.

23735. Where is Carrick?—At the north end of Eday.

23736. Were you present when some of the evidence was given about the island of Eday?—I was.

23737. And you wish to make some statement?—Yes, in regard to the peat-cutting by the people. I heard it for the first time that it was a grievance of the tenants to cut peats and dispose of them I have never heard such a statement made by the tenants until this day. We always considered it was a benefit for the tenants, as it brought in a lot of money to the island, and it has been continued for the benefit of the tenants more than that of the proprietor all along. The same remark applies to the kelp. It is not much of that we make, but we consider it is for the benefit of the tenants also, because many young and old people not fit to do much hard work make a little at the kelp-working, and it brings in a little money to enable them to pay their rent. In fact cottars could not pay their rent if it were not for the kelp.

23738. Are the tenants under an obligation to cut peats?—No; they are under an obligation in this way, that they have been in the habit of doing it during, perhaps, a century, and have continued to do so, and we give them an order at the beginning of the season for the quantity and they endeavour to fulfil that. Most of them produce the quantity, and we dispose of them to the distillers; and the tenants undertake to cut a certain quantity, and prepare them and ship them on board ships.

23739. You pay them so much per quantity?—Yes.

23740. What is the quantity, a fathom?—Yes.

23741. How much do you pay per fathom?—19s.

23742. Has that rate been increased of late?—No, not within the last ten years; but before that it was.

23743. How much was it when you remember?—15s.

23744. And it was increased to 19s?—Yes.

23745. When a man is employed in cutting peats for 19s. a fathom, can he make as good wages as he would do if he were working for hire?—It is considered that he does; and there is no other labour for him to do then; and it is at a season of the year when his croft is laid down and he is at liberty to work at this.

23746. How much per day can he make at it?—That is difficult to say, but they have never complained with regard to the wages.

23747. Suppose a man said he would not cut peats, but would rather occupy himself otherwise what would happen to him?—Nothing, because we have never had any difficulty in that way, we could always get another to do it.

23748. Do they sometimes refuse to do it?—They have never absolutely refused to do it. We have always sufficient people without any compulsion being used.

23749. Can you candidly state that if the people preferred not to cut a single peat they would be at liberty to abstain from doing it?—I cannot say that, because I do not see how they could pay their rent if they did not cut peats. We have money to give them by this means at rent time instead of getting money from them.

23750. Generally is there a balance in favour of the tenant?—Very

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23751. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is the rental of Eday?—The gross rental is about £1560.

23752. How much of that comes from tenants paying less than £20 a year?—I should think about two-thirds—most of them are crofters.

23753. What is the amount of sales of peat?—We sell about a 1000 tons to the distillers, and that comes to about 12s. a ton, and leaves 6s. after paying freight. We have always considered it a privilege to the cottars, there being so many upon the island, and their circumstances have been improved by it. I have been astonished by hearing it was a grievance, and that is why I have mentioned it. The people are allowed to cut peat and sell it to whom they like on paying the most money, and they do that to a considerable extent and we always took a larger quantity for shipping purposes. I wish to impress upon the Commission that it is no hardship to cut peats.

23754. *The Chairman.*—Is there a vast quantity of moss unexhausted?—A vast quantity.

23755. Do you find any wood in the moss?—I do, down about 6 or 7 feet, such as birch and hazel.

23756. Are there any indications of these trees which you find in the moss having been cut?—No they have fallen down, and the moss has grown on the top of them. They are lying flat, and the branches entire. The largest one I got was 3 feet in circumference—a Highland birch.

23757. It looks as if these trees had grown there at a period when there were no inhabitants. I mean there are no traces of the felling of the trees?—No, they have not been felled, because the roots and branches are there. They seem to have fallen down, and the moss has grown over them.

23758. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is it on the crofter's ground that the peats are cut?—No, there are hill dykes, and it is outside of these that the peats are cut. There is a large quantity cut upon the large farms, but that is one of the conditions of the lease.

23759. Is there any soil below the peat?—Yes, there is a good sub-soil.

23760. Are you cutting it regularly so as to utilize that?—Yes, we are laying down a surface.

23761. It would be a good thing, in that case if many parts were deprived of the surface, would it not?—It would; and it is with that view that it is cut; the tenants work up behind.

23762. *The Chairman.* You have seen the sub-soil of the peat actually brought under cultivation?—Yes, there are a great number of acres where peats have been cut which are cultivated.

23763. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who has got those acres?—The small crofters, many of them, and the proprietor himself on the home farm; and some of the bigger tenants have it, in fact, all have it more or less, and excellent ground it becomes.

23764. Do you require any lime?—Yes; it does very well indeed; it makes capital soil.

23765. Do you wish to make any other remark?—That was the principal thing.

23766. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it because the wives and children of the crofters take part in the peat industry that you are unable to state the wages that they can make?—No, it is because it furnishes employment for people who are not at the fishing.

23767. But I suppose the women and children are able to do a great deal of the work of spreading and drying the peats?—They do. The men cut them and work them, and drive them down in carts. It is useful

employment for people who are not able to go anywhere else. In fact, we have always considered they could not get on without it.

23768. And it pays?—I think it does.

23769. Is the work at the kelp compulsory as well as that at the peats?—I understand it is.

23770. To what extent?—That we expect they will work it as they have been in the habit of doing before.

23771. Do you consider that also is kept on as much in order to secure payment of rent as to make income?—We do it for both purposes, and we consider it a better thing; it does not exhaust the raw material as the peat does. The proprietor's property is going away with the peat, but not with the kelp-making.

23772. You heard also about the grievance of the hares?—Yes.

23773. Have you any remark to make about that?—The only remark is that they are now strictly preserved; and in regard to the rabbits there is not a tenant injured by them. The rabbit warrens are upon the proprietor's own farms.

23774. Is it the case that the hares came there?—They came there twenty-nine years ago—six hares.

23775. They must have increased immensely?—They were well protected at first and they have gone over the whole island; there is a great crop just now.

23776. The crofters seem to consider them a very bad crop?—But in the district from which the delegates come they are thinning them out very fast.

23777. Are they at perfect liberty to do so?—It was understood they were not to injure them at one time; but for some years back they have not been restricted, and there has been a great deal of poaching. But there is no rabbit damage done because the warrens are on the sheep runs.

23778. The delegate told us he was aware the law allowed him to kill a hare upon his croft?—Yes.

23779. But if the proprietor does not allow him, when he has no lease, the law fails?—They have never got any intimation in any way for years about the hares; the thing was allowed to stand still, and the big tenants always had the right to kill the hares upon their own farms.

23780. And they did it openly?—Yes.

23781. Did the crofters do it openly?—No.

23782. Does not that give an indication of their minds, that they were afraid to do it openly?—Yes; they could not do it openly unless they had a gun.

23783. By snare?—That would not be openly.

23784. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—By poaching you mean killing, not on their own farms, but on other people's?—Yes.

23785. The account we got from the delegate showed that the crofts were pretty small?—Yes.

23786. There is a very considerable number of small ones?—Yes.

23787. A delegate appeared who had a small one?—He has a large piece of hill which is not cultivated.

23788. Are the tenants fairly comfortable?—I consider so; I consider they are very much improved.

23789. How many schools are there on the island?—Two.

23790. Are they convenient for the population? Built for the purpose and efficiently worked?—Yes.

23791. Male or female teachers?—Male.

23792. Are the children pretty well kept to school?—Yes, pretty well.

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23793. I suppose it requires a good deal of attention?—Yes; at certain seasons they attend fairly well.

23794. Has the education certainly impro ed?—We had very good education before the Act.

23795. How were your schools supported before the Act?—The proprietor built the schools and there was a Government inspector of schools, and we were as well situated then as now, only we have larger and more expensive schools.

23796. But still the schools are quite efficient?—Yes.

23797. In that case both the oldest and youngest people are fairly well educated?—Yes, I am sorry the representative to-day was not one of the best in respect of education.

23798. *The Chairman.*—Do you feel yourself enabled to state at this moment, in unambiguous terms that may reach the crofters of Eday, that they are at liberty freely to kill hares upon their own crofts?—I have no authority to make any statement of that kind, because there never has been any conversation between the present proprietor and myself upon it. We have not talked it over yet.

23799. I was anxious to hear that, because I was afraid some erroneous impression might reach the public?—There has been no conversation with regard to that since the Act came into force.

[ADJOURNED.]

ORKNEY.
HARRAY.

HARRAY, ORKNEY, SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

PETER SMITH, Garth (52)—examined.

Peter Smith.

23800. *The Chairman.*—Has your family been long settled here?—Yes.

23801. How long has it been settled here—how old is your family in its present property?—My father lived on the farm which I occupy during his lifetime, and the farm belonged to my predecessors for I cannot tell you how long. They have always lived in this place.

93802. When you speak of occupying, you mean possessing?—Exactly.

23803. Your family have always possessed the land in this place?—I cannot tell you how long ago exactly the farm was purchased, but it has been in the possession of my predecessors for upwards of 100 years.

23804. Do you think there are many of the small proprietors here who have possessed their lands for 300 or 400 years. Have you heard that stated?—I am not aware of having heard that stated.

23805. Have you ever seen any ancient titles—any ancient parchments or deeds—in their possession?—No.

23806. What is the size of your property—how many acres is it?—About thirty-six acres arable.

23807. And how much of pasture?—Of infield there is about four or five acres, exclusive of a lot of commonty outside, of twenty-six acres.

23808. Besides the arable portion you have commonty?—Exactly.

23809. Is that commonty divided among the proprietors?—The commonty of Harray was divided probably twenty years ago. I was not in the country then.

23810. But now it is divided?—Yes.

23811. And are the different portions of the commonty fenced from each other with wire fences?—None at all, so far as I am aware.

23812. They are divided merely by marks—by indications?—Some of the proprietors have run ditches, but not in general.

23813. How do they prevent their stock from mixing with each other? do they tether them?—There are very few stock in the pasture on the commonty; the stock is kept principally now on the farm; the commonty is not used as much as it used to be by cattle pasturing on it.

23814. Do they make no use of the commonty except to cut peats?—They put cattle on it occasionally, but not generally.

23815. When they put cattle on it, do they tether them?—No.

23816. Is the commonty very wild ground—heathery?—There is some of it bad ground that is not fit for cultivation in its present state; other parts, again, are in a state that it can be cultivated, but still it is very poor.

23817. Is it a common thing for the proprietors to enlarge their arable land by taking in a portion of the commonty?—Yes; it is occasionally done when the commonty is contiguous to the farm.

23818. Have you yourself taken in any part of your commonty?—About five acres.

23819. And have you found that that was remunerative—that it was just as good as arable?—No, far from that. When we bring it into cultivation we let it lie for a number of years, and in that time it will probably be beginning to grow heathery again, and then we break it up and sow it down with grass for a number of years. In fact it does not pay us to cultivate it in arable rotation, it is so poor.

23820. How do you manage about your small estates after your death? Are they divided or are they always left to one member of the family?—I do not know exactly; but I suppose the general way is that the property goes to the one individual—the landed property.

23821. Is it the practice of small proprietors generally to devise their property by will; or do they just leave it to the course of the law of the country?—I think the practice varies considerably in that case; there is no general practice so far as I am aware.

23822. But I understand you to say that it is not the practice to divide the land between the sons?—No; not that I am aware of.

23823. Since you remember, has there been any subdivision of these little estates; or do they remain just as they were in the old times?—There has been no subdivision so far as I am aware, of any consequence.

23824. In the case of the large farmers, what becomes of the younger sons?—They find employment elsewhere; a great many of them go to the colonies. Not many of the younger sons remain at home at all.

23825. Are these small properties generally heavily mortgaged, or are they pretty free of debt?—I could not speak positively upon that point, but I don't think there is much debt.

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23826. You don't hear that complained of?—No.

23827. And in your recollection has there been a great improvement in the appearance of the properties and the method of cultivation?—Yes, a very decided improvement.

23828. Do you frequently put up stone walls—fences?—We put up fences occasionally, and some proprietors have used them pretty extensively to enclose almost the whole of their properties.

23829. And is that going on at the present time?—Always a little.

23830. Is the breed of cattle improving?—I expect it is.

23831. What breeds do you use generally?—Shorthorn as pure as we can.

23832. Your land is all ploughed, not worked with the spade?—It is all ploughed.

23833. Do you ever use oxen in ploughing?—Not on our farm, but it is used occasionally in small places.

23834. Not on the larger farms?—No, not generally.

23835. Have you got any crofters living among you—any small tenants?—I don't believe there are more than ten small tenants in the parish, so far as I am aware—ten or twelve.

23836. Are they very small poor tenants, or are they pretty good farmers?—They have just the farms let—according to the size of farms—from two or three acres to forty or fifty acres, according to the size of the property. Some tenants occupy some of the larger farms in the parish.

23837. Have those small tenants any pasture on the hill?—They are at liberty to pasture on the hill allotted to the property.

23838. And that commonty is divided?—Each proprietor knows his own commonty; it was all divided a number of years ago.

23839. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you know which of your predecessors bought the land—was it your grandfather or some one farther back?—It was some predecessor of my mother, but I cannot remember now exactly.

23840. Have you got regular title-deeds to your property?—Yes.

23841. Do you know from whom the property was bought?—From a party who evidently lived in the Island of Sanday, so far as I am aware; the most ancient papers we are holding state to that effect.

23842. Supposing you go back more than 100 years, was most of the property then in the hands of small holders like yourself?—So far as I am able to judge, the present state of things has existed from time immemorial; in fact, I cannot give you any idea how long.

23843. Are the most of the people who hold land like yourself well off in their circumstances?—I should judge so—that they are pretty comfortable generally throughout the parish.

23844. Do you consider it a great privilege to be proprietor of your own land? much more so than to be paying rent to another man?—Certainly, it is an advantage.

23845. You feel it to be an advantage?—Yes; but I have heard it reported that sometimes the tenants of the Earl of Zetland are as well off as our Harray lairds.

23846. What family have you—you are a married man?—No' I am not.

23847. Take the case of a person in your own position who is married, and suppose him to have three sons, what becomes of the two younger sons? He first, no doubt, gives them a good education. Do they leave the place and go out into the world?—That depends on their own free will; they are not compelled to go out, but in general they find occupation elsewhere.

23848. They could not all remain at home upon the one place?—It depends on the arrangement they make together—if they choose to work the farm. There is no general rule adopted so far as I am aware.

23849. And, in point of fact, the land, as you have stated, is not sub-divided?—No, not generally, I think.

23850. Is it always the eldest son, or is it the favourite son of the father, or the man in possession?—I think it is, in general, the eldest son.

23851. Are your titles registered?—All our titles are registered.

23852. As a rule does the property go to the eldest son?—I should say yes, as a rule. Of conrse there may be an exception at a time when the father sees fit to give it to another; but, in geueral, it goes according to law.

23853. Do you require, in working your little property, any outside assistance?—Yes, we always require hired servants.

23854. Do you get them from year to year or do you only call it labour as you need it?—We hire them from year to year, and some of them have been with us a good many years.

23855. Are the poor rates in the parish very low?—This is a united parish; Harray and Birsay are united so far as poor rates are concerued. The poor-rates this year will be about 10d. in the pound.

23856. It is from Birsay that the poor people come?—No, not them all; but I suppose the greater number of them are there.

23857. Is it or is it not the case that there is a comparatively small number of paupers is this parish?—There are very few.

23858. I presume that any near relations—say women who have come to years, connections of small proprietors—these small proprietors would not allow them to go on the poor's roll unless in exceptional circumstances?—I think it is sometimes the case, even in Harray, that poor people are supported by their relatives rather than allow them to go on the poors' roll.

23859. Is it generally the case among the small proprietors that they don't allow their poor relations to go on the roll?—I would not say as a general rule, but it is sometimes done in Harray, that parties in circumstances to require aid are supported by their nearest relatives.

23860. Are you all quite contented in this parish—have you no grievance whatever?—I cannot speak for others, but I suppose there is uo grievance we need care to mention. There is no grievance I am aware of worth meutioning.

23861. Are there sales going on—is the sale of a small property a common thiug; or do the people contrive to stick to the properties?—There are sales of property occasionally.

23862. Who buys? Is it the neighbours, or new people who want to become proprietors?—Generally parties through the country. There have been farms sold in Harray of late years, and they have been bought up by parties living in other parts of the mainland of Orkney.

23863. We have been told that a rumour has got abroad that the Commissioners now sitting have come here for the purpose of raising assessments. Did you here any story to that effect?—No, we did not hear it, and we would not have believed it if we had heard it.

23864. You have been reading the newspapers, and have observed the nature of the inquiries as they have been going along?—Yes, I have been doing so all the time since the Commissioners came through the country.

23865. Do you wish to make any voluntary statement to us?—No, I am not prepared to make any statement. I came here simply from curiosity. We did not hear of your coming until two days ago. We have no

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delegates appointed; we just came from curiosity to hear what was to be said. I did not expect or intend to give evidence or make any statement.

23866. *The Chairman.*—If there was no warning it was because we did not suppose that the people here had any grievance—being proprietors, and independent people. We did not suppose they had the same sort of complaints to make.

23867. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you pay any feu duty?—Our feu duties were purchased upwards of sixty years ago, I think.

23868. And you are perfectly free—there is no feu duty?—No feu duty.

23869. Was that purchased from the Earl of Zetland?—Yes.

23870. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Where do you get your hired servants?—Through the parish generally.

23871. Are they sons and daughters of the lairds in the parish?—They are not always lairds, of course,—working people; their daughters more frequently hire out as servants than the daughters of the lairds.

23872. There are working people living in the parish?—Exactly.

23873. Do they pay rent for their houses these working people?—I think so in general.

23874. What sort of rent do they pay for it—money or service?—I think in general it is money.

23875. Have they land along with their houses?—Generally small portions of land are allotted with their houses. Some labourers have built houses on the commonty belonging to the proprietors, and they get as much of commonty as they like to cultivate.

23876. What sort of rent do they pay for it?—That depends on the kind of commons they cultivate and undertake to cultivate.

23877. Do they build their own houses?—Generally, I think.

23878. And they pay a nominal rent for the land before they take it in?—They pay a nominal rent for a number of years—a mere nominal rent generally.

23879. Are there many persons in that position in the parish?—Not a great many.

23880. You say that a number of the younger members of the families, of the proprietors in the parish go out into the world—go to the colonies and into trade—is it considered an advantage to stick to the land rather than to be sent out into the world?—I suppose it is considered an advantage by the party to whom the land belongs to stick to it.

23881. I mean, a member of a family would prefer to have the land left to him rather than to go out into trade?—It is generally when the proprietor has the land that he sticks to it in preference to employing his time in any other business.

23882. Any of them would prefer to have the land rather than go out into the world?—I think so.

23883. But some of the members of families of proprietors have been very successful, have they not, in other parts of the world?—Yes, perhaps some of the younger members have been fully as successful as those who stick to the land.

23884. Yet the young men would prefer to stick to the land?—Yes, I should think so.

23885. When there is land for sale here is there much demand for it? Yes, there is a very keen competition.

23886. What sort of prices does it fetch—how many years' purchase?—I am scarcely prepared to answer that question; the farms which have been sold of late years have been sold very high.

23887. What in your opinion is a high price? Take a farm worth

£40 a year on the valuation roll, what would you call a high price for that, would you think it dear at £1000?—No, a farm that would fetch £40 of rent would sell at a much higher figure than £1000, according to the prices of the farms that have been sold. There have been farms sold of late years that would not bring £40, which have realised more than £1000.

23888. Would you think £1200 too much for it?—Not according to the rate at which farms have sold.

23889. You would not think that dear as farms have been going?—I think as farms have been going that would not be considered dear.

23890. Do you find agriculture a profitable business here?—Of recent years it has done very well; of course it depends a great deal on the prices we obtain for stock. We depend principally on stock-raising here.

23891. Do you think that if there were land for sale, and the Government were to advance money for the purchase of it in small farms, persons could be found to purchase it and to pay 6½ per cent. of the purchase money—that would redeem the price in twenty-five years?—I can scarcely express an opinion upon that point.

23892. That would be paying nearly double the rent on a £40 farm. If you paid £1200, that would be £80 a year, over the twenty-five years, to make it your own. Would it be possible for a purchaser to make that money out of the farm?—I scarcely think it, after paying the necessary expenses.

23893. Would he be able to pay £60 a year, having this hope of making it his own at the end of the period of years?—I scarcely think he could be able to pay £60.

23894. You think the rent which is valued is as much as a man can make out of a farm, generally speaking?—I think so.

23895. *Professor Mackinnon.*—When you allow a tenant to settle upon the commonty and take in so much land at a small rent, I suppose he never gets any lease of it, or anything of that sort?—There are tenants settled on parts of the commonty belonging to the proprietors in Harray who have leases.

23896. From the proprietor of the commonty upon which they have sat down?—Yes, but we don't have a great extent of commonty, and could not expect to let any part of it.

23897. And it is not very common to grant leases to tenants when making places for themselves on the commonty?—Yes, they get a lease now and again.

23898. You say that subdivision is a comparatively rare thing on these properties. Is it a rare thing also for a neighbour to purchase an adjoining property when it falls vacant, so as to have two instead of one?—When it happens that the property is for sale it sometimes occurs that the adjoining farmer buys it. I know instances of such a thing taking place; but it is not often done.

23899. The wish to become proprietor is very general and very keen, is it?—One would imagine so, from the keen competition that takes place when the farm is for sale.

23900. And when one gets the property and the titles, he has the power to dispose of it to any one of his children?—I think so.

23901. In the case of a large family, where there are no means left except this property, what arrangement is made for the other members of the family by the one who succeeds to the property?—I suppose it depends on the arrangement that is made by the proprietor before his decease.

23902. What would be the common arrangement in the place in the case that I have stated, where there are two or three sons and two or three

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daughters, and the property is left to one—do the rest get anything at all?—I am not prepared to express an opinion on what is generally done in that case.

23903. Is it usual for the one who succeeds to pay the others so much?—It is generally the case that the one who succeeds pays something to the younger members of the family when he succeeds to the property.

23904. You stated that you have heard it said that tenants of Lord Zetland were more comfortable than Harray lairds?—Not more comfortable; but as comfortable. It is generally reckoned that they are as comfortable as some of the Harray lairds.

23905. Suppose they were so, would the people of this place prefer to be tenants of Lord Zetland or Harray lairds?—I don't suppose they would like to change.

23906. Even supposing they would be as comfortable?—I think their impression would be not to leave certainty for hope.

23907. They set value on the feeling of proprietorship?—I think so.

23908. You say that there are about ten tenants in the parish. Their position is just as though you had let your own property to a tenant?—Exactly.

23909. And do they hold it upon lease?—I think they do, generally; but I cannot state positively. It is a private matter between the tenants and the proprietor. I know that some hold upon lease, and some just from year to year.

23910. *The Chairman.*—Does a proprietor ever let his little estate to a tenant and go away and engage in some other industry?—Well, I am not aware.

23911. It would be very uncommon?—It would.

23912. Do the proprietors ever hire land from others and become farmers on other land; or do they restrict themselves to their own property?—In general, in this parish, they restrict themselves to the cultivation of their own property; and some, when they retire from farming, leave the property and let it to a tenant.

23913. You raise a good deal of oats and barley?—Some.

23914. Do you consume the grain which you raise for the food of the family, or do you use it for feeding the stock, and buy grain for the purposes of the household?—We use as much as we require of the grain we raise for the family, and what we don't require we dispose of.

23915. The family generally consumes the grain they actually raise on the ground?—Yes, in part; they buy other things also.

23916. You don't raise any wheat?—No.

23917. And do your families generally purchase wheat flour?—Yes, it is very generally used in this parish along with the grain we raise ourselves.

23918. Do you use your own wool—is there any domestic manufacture of cloth?—Not to any extent; there is some wool manufactured into blankets on a small scale, but not to any extent.

23919. If you pleased you would be quite at liberty to make up your own wool for your own use, but you prefer to buy clothes?—We sometimes send our wool to the south to be manufactured into cloth, as well as plaiding and blankets.

23920. And you get it back again?—Yes.

23921. Are there no local weavers who could weave it on hand looms?—There are only weavers who manufacture plaiding and blankets, but there are no woollen manufactories for the manufacture of tweeds in Orkney.

23922. You could not get your own coat made in a cottage on the hand loom?—No, we don't prefer that.

23923. Perhaps you prefer the manufactures of the south, or would you prefer the cloth made in the country and of your home grown wool?—It is not much that is used of the home wool; it is generally the tweeds and other kinds of material manufactured in the south that are worn.

23924. Do the poor cottars use cloth manufactured from the wool in the place?—I don't think there is much difference in the clothing of any class.

DAVID ISBISTER, Hybrock, Harray (38)—examined.

23925. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the size of your property?—Not very big.

23926. How many acres?—Twenty or better.

23927. What is its rental on the valuation roll?—£9.

23928. Have your family been established long in the parish of Harray?—My father and grandfather had the land before me.

23929. Are you natives of the island—one of the old families of the island?—Yes, so far as I know.

23930. The property was not acquired by purchase within recent times?—My father bought it from his father.

23931. How came your father to buy it?—He bought it in wadset from other people, and they didn't redeem it, and my grandfather got it.

23932. Was your father the eldest son of your grandfather?—I think so; yes.

23933. How did your father find himself in such circumstances as to enable him to purchase this property?—He was away a while and earned the money; it was in debt until such time as he cleared it.

23934. He bought it with the mortgages over it?—It was bought clear, I think.

23935. He redeemed the mortgages?—Yes, he did.

23936. Do you mind telling us what price was paid for it in your father's time?—I could not really say—£200 or £250—I could not say rightly, without looking over the papers.

23937. Did you hear the evidence Mr Smith gave us?—Yes.

23938. Do you agree generally with his statements?—I think so.

23939. What is the average acreage and rental—does the acreage vary very much among these proprietors?—Yes; some have not a third part of that held by others.

23940. What is the greatest number of acres in the possession of one proprietor?—I could not tell you that.

23941. Are there any as high as a 100 acres?—I don't know if there is or not.

23942. Do you think any of these properties in the neighbourhood have as high as 100 acres?—None that is cultivated, I think.

23943. Would forty or fifty acres be about the highest?—I think about that.

23944. What is the smallest property you know here?—That would be difficult to answer; some have only a house and garden.

23945. But still their own property?—Yes.

23946. A house and a small garden of about half an acre?—Some might have that indeed.

23947. Do you know how these small properties came to be acquired?—I suppose they got them for a bit of digging upon the brakes, and so on.

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23948. But money was paid for it to some person—I mean have these small properties descended from father to son like yours; or have they been purchased recently by somebody who wanted a site to build upon?—Both ways I think.

23949. You think some of these have come from father to son?—I don't know; that is a thing I don't pay any attention to.

23950. Have there been many sales of land lately?—Some sales have taken place.

23951. Can you tell us of your own knowledge how many years' purchase has been given for land which has just been sold?—I could not say.

23952. Have you had any disputes as to the division of land amongst you on the commonty, which, we understand, is not fenced?—No, not that I am aware of.

23953. You never have any trouble about the stock of one owner going on the land which properly belongs to another owner and *vice versa*?—I don't think there is much dispute about that; they don't pay much attention to commonty.

23954. They don't put much stock on the commonty?—No.

23955. It is very bad land?—There is nothing but heather and bracken; sometimes we may put the cattle out, but it does not do them much good.

23956. What amount of land is there on this commonty—how many acres in the commonty you all have together?—I could not say.

23957. Is it two or three miles in length?—The Harray boundaries go to the top of the hills; I could not say how many miles, perhaps two miles or more.

23958. Do you combine altogether to purchase improved stock—to buy bulls, for instance, to improve your stock; or how do you manage?—Any party that inclines to have one generally gets one for himself, and others can go to him.

23959. Have you any local agricultural shows?—Yes, in Kirkwall and Stromness, but none out here.

23960. Do you and your neighbours send any cattle or stock of any kind to these exhibitions?—In some parts they do, but not many of us.

23961. What sort of price do you get for the stock you sell—do you sell cattle at two-year-old?—It is generally two-year-olds we sell.

23962. What prices do you get?—£10 or £20 according as they are fed.

23963. What breed of sheep do you keep?—Generally half-breds; half Leicester, half Cheviot.

23964. Do you sell lambs?—Yes.

23965. What prices do you get for them?—Generally about £1 or a little more.

23966. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you quite happy in your position?—We have to try and make ourselves content with our position while we are in the wilderness.

23967. You would not part with your own land upon any account?—I don't know about that.

23968. You would not exchange your position for that of a tenant?—I don't know; there are some tenants maybe as well off as we are; we are pretty heavily taxed.

23969. *Mr Cameron.*—What is your school rate here?—I could not exactly say.

23970. What do the school rates and the poor rates come to altogether?—£2 or £3, I think.

23971. How much in the pound?—I could not tell unless I had the receipt. For a small place like ours it will cost about £6 for burdens in a year.

23972. And what is your rent in the valuation roll?—£9.—*Rev. Mr Johnston.* The school rate is about 1s. 6d. some years; I think it is a little less this year.

23973. And the poor rate 1s. 2d.?—Yes.

23974. And the road rate?—About 1s. for the proprietor and 1s. for the tenant.

23975. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How many cattle are you able to keep on the land?—*Mr Isbister.* About eight generally, calves and all.

23976. How many sheep?—Two or three.

23977. Have you no pasture for more than that number?—No, it is hard work to get that same.

23978. How many horses do you keep?—Two, for working the place.

23979. What breed—not large horses?—No, but they are getting larger than they used to be.

23980. You plough your land?—Yes.

23981. Is that a general custom, or is there any spade husbandry?—I don't think there is very much done with the spade here.

23982. Your fuel is peats?—Yes.

23983. Do you use any coals?—Some parties may.

23984. Is there plenty peat?—Yes, if you like to be at the trouble of carting them.

23985. Is there any fishery here?—No.

23986. Do any of the lairds engage in fishing?—They have no time to do it.

23987. Are there any of them at the fishing now?—They might go at a rare time, but it is very rarely they fish.

23988. There is no fishing station near this for taking and curing the fish?—No, there is none here.

23989. Any fishing that is done is only for yourselves?—Nothing more—*Rev. Mr Johnston.* Only trout fishing.

23990. There is no sea-fishing?—*Mr Isbister.* No.

23991. Have you all got boats?—No, we are inland.

23992. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Do you follow any other business but that of farming?—No, nothing else.

23993. And you make both ends meet?—Oh, yes, we try to do it, if possible.

23994. Do you owe any man anything?—I could not say I have my family clear, but very near it. We generally take our things on and don't pay for half a year. However, we have got nothing laid by whatever way.

23995. *The Chairman.*—I see there are a great number of the properties very small, according to the valuation roll; for instance, there are fifty-three properties in the parish between £1 and £5 rateable value. Now these very small proprietors cannot live on the produce of their land—how do they make up their living?—Maybe by day's hiring, and by taking any job they can do—masons, perhaps, who get work to do.

23996. Those who have small properties work out like mechanics or labourers?—Yes.

23997. And their daughters take service?—Yes.

23998. And they work to proprietors, who have larger holdings, when they require it?—Just so.

23999. Have the houses of the proprietors or lairds been generally rebuilt of late—are there many new houses?—There are a good many which have been built of late.

24000. Are they much better than the old class of houses used to be?—Yes, the old class of houses had generally a fire in the middle of the floor and a chimney in the centre of the roof.

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24001. The old class of proprietor's houses were just like the houses of the crofters, only a little larger, perhaps, and better?—I suppose so.

24002. And now they are all stone and lime houses?—Yes, very generally that, so far as I know.

25403. And are they generally slated?—If they are able to do it they try to do it; and, if they are not, they try to do without it.

24004. Do you think that the houses of the small proprietors are generally better than the houses of Lord Zetland's tenants; or are they just the same sort of houses?—I suppose they are much the same; I could not say.

24005. You could not say they are generally different one way or another?—No, every one puts up a house to please himself.

24006. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say the two-year-olds sold from £10 to £20—what was the average price of them this year?—I could not say rightly; I think it was something like £12 and £14 I got.

24007. Would your neighbour's cattle be better or worse than yours?—It is according to the age and how they are kept and fed. I believe some of them might get £10 for them, those that are poorly kept.

24008. Did you hear of any being sold for £20 this year?—I did not pay much attention, but I have heard of them getting that for them.

24009. In Harray?—Yes, for ones that are very highly fed.

25410. Are there many who feed their cattle as highly as that?—A few, but not a great many.

24011. The most of them treat their cattle as they treat themselves?—I think so, generally, in small places.

24012. And you get £12 to £14?—I got £12 for one and £14 for another.

Rev. DAVID JOHNSTON, Minister of Harray and Birsay (47)—examined.

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24013. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled here?—Since 1868.

24014. We may say fifteen years?—Yes.

24015. Does your family belong to these islands?—No, I belong to the south.

24016. To Dumfriesshire?—I am a native of Durham, but my father belonged to Fifeshire.

24017. During the period that you have lived here you have had many opportunities of making yourself acquainted with the condition of different classes—you have the great peculiarity here, that you are minister of a parish which is almost entirely composed of small lairds and freeholders?—That is so.

24018. Do you consider that is a happy and favourable condition of life?—Decidedly.

24019. Do you consider that these small proprietors possess a greater share of satisfaction and welfare, in consequence of their being proprietors of their own lands?—I do think so.

24020. You think that has a good effect upon their morals and intelligence?—To a great extent it has.

24021. Does the possession of land, and freedom from the payment of rent, tend to make them careless and indifferent in their cultivation, or does it tend to stimulate their industry?—To stimulate their industry. I saw a different state of matters in Unst. I was minister there for two

or three years before I came here, and I contrasted the state of things in Harray and Unst.

24022. Do you think the superiority of the condition of the people of Harray may be referred in a considerable measure to the fact that the people are proprietors; or does it depend upon the difference of climate and soil—physical circumstances?—To a great extent to their being proprietors, I should say; there is very little poverty. There is no resident pauper in Harray, and there would be no pauper at all, if it were not that one is south, at the asylum.

24023. You think they are proud of being proprietors?—Yes, an honourable pride.

24024. And that they are strongly attached to the soil and their own properties?—Yes.

24025. During the last fifteen years have you seen a great improvement in the condition of the houses and the cultivation of the fields?—A great improvement in the houses, and I believe if we were to go back beyond fifteen years—say thirty years—we would observe a very decided improvement in the cultivation also; and the roads have largely contributed to it.

24026. Does this class of proprietors intermarry with each other, generally, or do they seek their wives outside, from other places and other classes?—They intermarry very much.

24027. So that it constitutes a separate self-contained community?—There are many marriages in neighbouring parishes, because there are small proprietorships there, though not to the same extent—in Sandwick, Birsay, Stennis, and the neighbouring parishes.

24028. But they intermarry in their own order?—Yes.

24029. Have you made any study of the origin of these families—have you any reason to know that some of them are extremely ancient in their holdings?—I believe there are a few udal tenures; but within the memory of the oldest inhabitants there has been a very extensive subdivision of the properties. There are persons living now who can remember when a large part of the parish was held by perhaps two or three, and these properties have been subdivided; perhaps one property may have been divided into six, or one property may have consisted of six or ten different farms, and the tenants bought them when they were for sale, or others bought them.

24030. The subdivision has been caused, not by distribution among children, but by purchase?—Generally by purchase, and a few cases of partitioning, but not many.

24031. But have many proprietors who have had large families been obliged to sell to provide for their children?—No, I don't think so; in general those who sold were not resident in the parish.

24032. You don't think that there is anything to complain of in the way of subdivision by succession?—No, not as a rule. There have been cases of subdivision. I know a comparatively small property in the parish that was subdivided very much; I think as many as six or seven of a family got a portion, but that is an exception.

24033. But, generally speaking, do you think when there are several members of a family, that there is any arrangement between the children on account of the land being all left to one, or going to one; or do they accept it as the natural order of things that they must go out and seek their fortunes?—There is not often any arrangement. It sometimes happens that even a younger member of a family stays at home, and the others, I suppose, acquiesce in it as a reasonable arrangement that the younger member should succeed, when they have been put in

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circumstances for getting well on in life elsewhere. I know of some cases of, perhaps, ill-feeling from the way the land has been left, but not many.

24034. When the several members of a family go abroad to seek their fortunes, leaving one in possession of the soil, do those who go away retain an attachment to their native place, and sometimes come home or correspond with the remaining members?—I could name several cases where a man has gone away for several years—perhaps gone to sea, or Australia, or some other place—and come back and purchased a property in the island.

24035. Do they send money back to their families sometimes?—Yes, they do.

24036. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Comparing this parish with that of Unst, you are decidedly of opinion that the people are very much more comfortable in this place than they were in Unst when you were there?—Decidedly.

24037. And you attribute it in a great measure to the fact that they are in possession of their own land?—In a great measure, but of course, the land in Orkney is superior, and that has something to do with it.

24038. Do you think if the people of Unst had the land in their own hands, as the people of this parish have, they would be more comfortable than they were when you were there?—There were a few, perhaps about twenty, similar to those here, and making allowance for the difference in climate and productiveness, they were about as comfortable as those in Harray.

24039. They were much more comfortable there than their neighbours, the small tenants in Unst?—Of course, owing to the fact that they were proprietors, and not with reference to the way in which they manage.

24040. And had they in Unst the same feeling of honourable pride in being proprietors, which exists here?—Yes, they enjoy the position.

24041. And had they the tendency to restrict themselves in their matrimonial engagements to their own order?—I can scarcely speak to that.

24042. There were too few of them, perhaps?—Yes.

24043. But is there such a tendency perceptible in this parish?—Yes, there is in this parish.

24044. I suppose we understand it is not an absolute rule that they marry in their own order?—No, a tenant may marry the daughter of a proprietor or conversely.

24045. There is a large number of very small properties in the parish of Harray?—I have a list of the proprietors in Harray, and the number given is 102, but in some cases there are two or three the same. I should think, however, the different proprietors must come to somewhere about ninety at any rate, but I cannot, at this moment, tell the exact number.

24046. Do you think that those down on the valuation roll under, say £5, are in a better position than if they were tenants of somewhat larger holdings?—Yes, I should say they are.

24047. What would be the value of the property where the owner of it would be as comfortable and as well off in all his ways as the tenant paying £30?—That is not a very easy thing to give an estimate of, but I could conceive that a proprietor of property worth £15 or £20 a year, would be as well off as a tenant at £30.

24048. The tenant would require to pay about twice as much of rent, as it were, as the rateable value of the proprietor's holding, in order to be equally comfortable?—Well, perhaps, there may be a difference of from a half to a third; but I cannot guarantee that answer on that point.

24049. Are the people better educated than the people in your old parish of Unst?—I am at a loss to say; I think in both parishes they are very well educated; I do not think there is a great difference.

24050. They are well educated in both parishes?—Yes.

24051. Is the education as high under the present arrangement as it was under the old parochial school arrangement?—I preferred the old school arrangement; I was not one of those who thought the Education Act was a decided advantage to the parishes, but I think the education given in the public schools is very good. I have a very decided opinion as to the drawback connected with the system of uniting parishes, where two parishes are tied together as one. I think that has greatly hindered Harray and Birsay. Each should have a School Board of its own.

24052. Is the education given sufficient to enable members of a family to push their way in the world elsewhere?—Many have pushed their way elsewhere from that education. I believe in several instances boys or girls who have got a little advanced may go to Kirkwall or Stromness for the completion of their education. But many have got on, and got on honourably, in the south, with the education which they got in these parishes.

24053. But those who wish to prosecute a higher education can go to Kirkwall or Stromness to finish off?—Yes.

24054. There are very good schools in these places?—Yes.

24055. Especially in Kirkwall?—And I believe in Stromness, too.

24056. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did I understand you to say that there is only one pauper from Harray on the roll?—Only one, and that one is a pauper because he is in the asylum.

24057. From what class does that lunatic pauper come—from that of the proprietors or tenants or cottars?—I think his father was a proprietor, and he has relatives who are proprietors.

24058. He comes from that class?—Yes.

24059. What may be the population of the parish of Harray?—Somewhere between 700 and 800, not including Birsay.

24060. I suppose there is no such thing in Scotland as only one pauper in a parish?—Certainly it is not a very common thing.

24061. I suppose the whole of the people don't belong to the Established Church?—No.

24062. Is there a fair proportion?—There is; I don't know the attendance elsewhere, but I think that other denominations have, on the whole, more than the parish church. But still there is a fair proportion.

24063. Such being the case, do you find much difficulty in the payment of your stipend—in recovering it?—No, I don't at all. I find no difficulty in that respect in Harray. There may be one or two exceptions over the whole of Harray and Birsay, but I don't complain of that.

24064. You find no dissatisfaction or reluctance to pay the proportion of stipend money among those in Harray who are not members of your congregation?—Certainly not—not in Harray.

24065. And you have to collect from nearly one hundred, including Birsay?—I have to collect from about 150; some of them very small sums, if I chose to exact them.

24066. *Mr Cameron.*—Do you know anything about the crofters in the parish of Birsay?—I know some of them.

24067. Have you any information respecting their condition which you wish to give us?—I think, as a general rule, they are very well off.

24068. Do you think their rents are satisfactory? have you heard any complaints about that?—No, I do not hear much complaint.

24069. Are they a small class of crofters, or do they pay, for crofters,

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good rents?—They vary. There are not many large farms in Birsay; Lord Zetland's farms are generally smaller farms.

24070. Are they what may be called medium-sized farms?—I would say they are small farms.

24071. Not small crofts?—No, I would not say they are called crofters; I would not call them crofters, but small farmers.

24072. What is the lowest rent?—£6 to £15 or £20; but of course there are farms above that.

24073. £6 is about the lowest?—There may be some as low as £3.

24074. In point of fact, then, there are all sizes?—Yes.

24075. Are they tolerably comfortable well to-do people?—There is more poverty than in Harray, but on the whole, they are fairly comfortable.

24076. Is the land equally good in Birsay as in Harray?—Yes. Perhaps better in some parts; the crops are sooner ready. I had once the whole of Harray and Birsay—they were united in one parish under one minister.

24077. You have not that now?—Not the whole of Birsay, but I had once.

24078. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You were asked about the character of the agriculture, and you compared it with the character of the agriculture in Unst. But comparing the agriculture of the proprietors here with that of the tenant farmers in Birsay how would you say it stands?—Much the same between here and Birsay, only there are some larger farms in Birsay than in Harray.

24079. On these larger farms is the agriculture of a higher order?—Fully, I should say. There are the farms of Boodhouse and Swanie conducted on a higher scale than the generality of farms.

24080. Is the stock a better kind of stock?—No, I don't think so.

24081. You think the proprietors in this parish have as good stock as the tenants and large farmers in the neighbouring parish?—I think so.

24082. Stock which brings as high prices in the market?—I think so, but I do not know much about that.

24083. Is the cultivation here as good as in the neighbouring parish of Birsay?—Yes, and immensely improved within the memory of the oldest inhabitants; it was very poor before.

24084. *The Chairman.*—Do you desire to make a statement about the evils attached to united parishes?—I should like, if that point is within the competency of the Commission, to call attention to it. So far as I can understand, the parishes were united long ago, simply because there were not enough people in each parish to support a minister. That was a purely ecclesiastical matter, but it has brought very inconvenient civil consequences along with it. I suppose any remarks I make are not to be limited to Harray and Birsay. I could mention islands where one has quite an independent interest from another, and where it is forced into connection with the other, so that it must be under the same School Board and the same Parochial Board. I could name the island of Flotta, which is connected with the island of Walls, and which, at present, has no representative in the School Board. I believe it pays school rates to Walls, and gets no rate back; and I know of other cases in Orkney and in Shetland of the same nature, where island parishes are tied together in a way that is very inconvenient. I see no reason why Harray and Birsay should be tied together in the way they are; and I believe many of the people think the same thing. I have often wished to suggest in the proper quarter that it should, at any rate, be competent in the case of united parishes, where one of the parishes can show reasons for being disunited, that it should be so. For instance, a bill at the door there quotes an Act of Parliament, and the way in which the thing is done is often in

the interpretation clause—in the Education Act of 1872 it is the tenth section which provides for it—which states that the word 'parish' includes united parish; and however strong a reason may be offered why an island such as Flotta or North Ronaldshay should have a separate Parochial Board or School Board, it is still bound to another. In the island of Bressay they are compelled to be in union with a part of the mainland of Shetland and with an island on the other side of the mainland of Shetland, merely because the old arrangement has been adhered to. Now, in almost every other old arrangement, when that arrangement is inconvenient, legislation provides a remedy, but it has not been so in this instance.

24085. There ought to be discretionary power to disunite united parishes, where their civil interests render it desirable?—Yes, perhaps by petition to the sheriff, or some other way.

24086. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I am afraid the sheriff is not strong enough to do it. Is there not a process in the Court of Session for that?—Ecclesiastically, but not civilly.

24087. You don't mean to say that there should be half a dozen separate boards and jurisdictions in one parish. You mean to disunite and reconstitute the parish which once was a parish?—Yes, where there was sufficient reason for it; and that every Act of Parliament referring to Scotland should not tie down all future parishes in that way to be together. I am afraid it would require an Act of Parliament to disunite them—it would need legislation.

[ADJOURNED.]

BIRSAY, ORKNEY, SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1883.

Present:—

Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart., *Chairman.*
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

WILLIAM DAVIDSON, Meadow Bank, Sandwick (61)—examined.

24088. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you a tenant or proprietor?—Both.

24089. What extent of land do you own yourself?—Thirty-five acres.

24090. All your own land?—It is poor land.

24091. Is it all arable land, or is it pasture land?—Most of it is ploughed now.

24092. How much land do you hold as a tenant?—Four acres.

24093. From whom do you hold those four acres?—Mr Irvine of Quoyloo.

24094. How long have you been a proprietor?—Twenty-two years.

24095. And how long have you held the four acres from Mr Irvine?—The same time.

24096. Was your own land not sufficient for you; or what induced you

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to take land from Mr Irvine?—He had common to sell, and he offered me the land on lease to induce me to buy a piece of his common.

24097. What length of lease had you of his four acres?—Nineteen years.

24098. You had that twenty-two years ago?—Yes.

24099. And the lease has now expired?—Yes.

24100. Have you taken a new lease?—The lease is still existing betwixt us.

24101. With no new lease?—Yes.

24102. What rent are you paying for the four acres?—16s. an acre.

24103. Is your house on that land, or upon your own land?—On my own land.

24104. You built it yourself?—Yes.

24105. I suppose it is not impertinent to ask what price you paid for the thirty-five acres?—30s. an acre—£50.

24106. What do you consider the land is worth to-day?—I have never felt it to be worth anything.

24107. You have improved it?—Yes.

24108. And did you make anything of it?—I should not have improved it; I had nine acres under lease, and I managed to improve it in connection with that.

24109. But you said you had four acres under lease?—Five acres were sold. I had a nineteen years' lease, and I continued with the four acres.

24110. But have you made nothing of your land? Is it worth nothing at all?—It is worth nothing at all indeed.

24111. Would you be glad to have £50 for it to-day?—No, because I have laid out more than £100 on it.

24112. Then it is worth something; I asked you what you thought it was worth?—I would say it is worth 6d. an acre.

24113. Of rent?—Yes.

24114. And how many years' rent is generally given in buying property in this country?—It used to be twenty, but now it has risen, I daresay, to between thirty and forty.

24115. Then it is not worth as much as you gave for it to begin with? Well, hardly not, indeed.

24116. Is that because the land is so poor?—Yes; and perhaps, not to take up your time, I may state the grievance which brought me here. The reason which brought me to Orkney was this: I was a servant in Aberdeenshire, and my father was a crofter under the Countess of Leslie, in the parish of Chapel of Garioch; and in connection with the property first there was Mr Bolton, factor there, and in succession to him Mr Blaikie, and in succession to him Adam & Anderson. It was Anderson who was the factor. In the time of the former factor it was the custom on that property to pay dues, road money, school salary, and all dues for the coming year, fore-hand paid, and the rent for the latter year; and this factor wanted everything for one year, and he asked the tenants, and my father among the rest, to pay the dues for the same year as the rent; and my father had no objections, only he paid them for that year. He would not pay more but for the one year, and the factor insisted that he should pay the same as the others. He then said he would ask no more dues from him while he was on the property, and warned him out. They entered the Court, and in course of a five or six years' lawsuit, he and the factor settled his lease, and then he had to leave; and I saw the commons advertised in Orkney, and I came to Orkney and bought these commons. And now I have a grievance respecting them, and I came here to state it. It is in connection with the

Valuation Act. We have a new valuation in Orkney this same season, I think. From the first year I bought the commons I got notice from the assessor to return its value, and of course I had only paid £50, and got nothing back, and I returned it as of no value. I got notice from the assessor that it was entered in the roll as worth 3s. Next year I commenced to build a house upon it, and the assessor valued the place in my absence, and I got notice from him that it would be worth 30s., and I was entered in the valuation roll at £1, 10s. The common before I bought it was not in the valuation roll, and all the common surrounding me is not in the valuation roll yet. I see the representative of the Earl of Zetland here, and I am not aware that his commons are assessed at any value; and it would satisfy me to know how they are valued, for they don't appear in the valuation roll. Another assessor came over the place a few years ago, and raised the valuation to 35s., and still all the commons around me are of no value, apparently, for they don't appear in the valuation roll. In order to make it more provoking, I get a schedule from the assessor every year to fill up, and, as I have told the Commissioners already, I have returned the land as worth 6d. an acre—better things won't let at that—but the assessor won't pay any heed to my statement. And under a penalty of £20 or £50, for returning a false statement, I have every year to fill up that schedule, and call it worth £1, 15s. I want to return it at 17s. 6d. I would admit, although, it is worth nothing, it is reasonable it should be entered at something; but at the same time I cannot consider what way the big proprietors, such as the Earl of Zetland, can hold thousands of acres clear of the valuation roll, whereas small individuals such as I am are entered there. I complain that he gets so much for nothing; he got a free gift of it—national property, I believe; and that a small person like myself, who has had to buy his property, should be assessed for it, while Lord Zetland, who got his property for nothing, pays nothing. The filling up of these schedules must cost something, and I think the Commissioners could not do a better thing than suppress them. They do no good, these schedules; they only irritate one; it is a public thing, and an irritating thing, and I believe the reason of your being here is to remove everything that is irritating.

24117. But you have a house on the land?—Yes.

24118. And that is included in the 35s.?—Yes.

24119. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you ever appealed to the Commissioners sitting in Kirkwall?—I appealed, but did not appear, because they make it so troublesome; one must bring evidence, and that would put me to more expense than it would be worth while to incur—they make it so inconvenient.

24120. And was it something wrong with the lease that brought you to Orkney?—It was just that property being managed by the factors who were not responsible for their actions, or I would have been in my father's place.

24121. Have you any reason to be satisfied with having come to Orkney; has your health not been better?—My reason for being here to-day is in connection with these Valuation Acts. I think I am suffering a great injustice, because it is a public thing, and people are entitled to fair play with the neighbours.

24122. Did a number of other people buy commonty at the same time as you did, from the gentleman selling it?—Yes, others did.

24123. And are they in the same position as yourself? Are they charged for their improvements?—Some of them are that poor that they are not able to pay it, but they are all in the valuation roll who are able to pay; a few are exempted from poverty.

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24124. Have you any other complaint to make?—Not personally.

24125. Let us hear any public grievance you have then?—Any public grievance I would have is in connection with the management of land; that the proprietors are often very unfeeling. For instance, in connection with my own land, and the improvement of the lands which I had under lease, there were three proprietors who had to make a main drain. They failed to make it in a reasonable time, and I complained that my lease was wasting; and the then proprietor submitted to £1 of yearly loss upon his rent; but before the drain was finished he died, and the heir renounced the lease, and that brought me into litigation with him, and I gained the case, but I lost money. That was here, not in Aberdeenshire.

24126. Are you quite sure you are correct in saying that Lord Zetland's common or hill ground is not in the valuation roll at all?—I am not sure, but I cannot find it in any way, nor any other proprietor like him. None was deducted from Mr Irvine's when mine was sold. It was continued at the same valuation.

24127. Do the tenants occupy Lord Zetland's hill land here?—He has about a thousand acres between me and the sea, but I don't know whether it is occupied or not.

24128. What beasts are put upon Lord Zetland's hill?—It is not pasture; it is like mine, it is very poor.

24129. Although it is very poor, you would like to see it on the roll?—Yes, when mine is on it, certainly. Mine is the poorest in Orkney, certainly.

24130. Are there many small proprietors like yourself in Sandwick who hold land?—A good few.

24131. Are they pretty well off?—They are generally pretty well off except those who have got commons without any more, and they are very badly off.

24132. I suppose the acres Mr Irvine left with you were good lands?—It was just a loch and water. These proprietors let the water off, and I had to make land out of it.

24133. But it turned out to be good land?—Yes.

24134. Are some of these small proprietors very ill off?—Yes.

24135. Are they so ill off that they have been excused from paying rates?—Yes, they have been excused from paying assessments.

24136. We have come from another parish—Harray—where there is only one pauper on the roll, is that the case here? How many paupers have you got?—I am not so sure about that; but we are pretty comfortable in Sandwick, for that we are not under legal assessment; we are under voluntary assessment.

24137. How does that work now. Do people like yourself pay anything at all or do you keep your own poor?—We pay, and in the same way the big proprietors pay full assessment for their tenants. For a long time the big farmers refused, but now their masters are paying for them, and we are getting on pretty happily.

24138. Who manages the distribution of the money—is it the minister or the kirk session; or are there some representatives of the heritors?—It is still the old session I think—the Parochial Board they are called; it is just the old Parochial Board. The only new thing is the inspector; it is managed by him instead of in the old fashion.

24139. Are the people of this parish generally pretty well off?—In Birsay parish I believe they have everything that is wanted of new improvements. They have perpetual tenure and are very well off.

24140. Who is proprietor of Birsay?—The big proprietor is the Earl of Zetland.

24141. Who is proprietor about here in Sandwick?—There are a good many proprietors in Sandwick.

24142. Is there any big one?—The biggest one is Mr Watt of Skail; two-thirds of Birsay he holds.

24143. Did the people in this district know that the Commissioners were coming to-day?—I scarcely think they knew; I got an Aberdeen paper and saw it in it. But I would not have noticed it unless I had been told by a neighbour.

24144. Supposing the people had got effective notice, do you think they would have sent delegates to come here to-day?—I am not aware; I don't think many of them would.

24145. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that there were proprietors in the parish of Sandwick so poor that they were not asked to pay assessments; are there many of these proprietors?—No, not many.

24146. How many will there be; how many do you know of?—Only one, but I think there will be more.

24147. What acreage does he hold?—Four acres.

24148. Is that of this common land?—Yes.

24149. Has he a house of his own on it?—Yes.

24150. Is his land arable?—It is ploughed, but, of course, he grows nothing on it.

24151. Does he keep any beasts at all?—Sometimes a ewe.

24152. Does he grow potatoes?—A few; he has a garden.

24153. And does he get anything out of the garden?—He is a blacksmith to trade.

24154. Has he a blacksmith's shop on his property?—Yes.

24155. And does he not pay assessment?—Not for several years.

24156. Because he is so poor?—Yes.

24157. Has a blacksmith no trade in this country?—The iron and coals are done.

24158. What stock do you keep yourself?—I keep pretty fair stock myself, but I don't keep it on these commons; I keep myself on pretty good terms with Mrs Watt of Skail, and keep my stock upon her property.

24159. But I suppose you feed your stock upon your own provender in winter?—Yes.

24160. What stock are you able to winter?—I generally have the matter of half-a-dozen Shetland cattle.

24161. What sort of cattle are they?—Just ordinary cattle.

24162. What price do the two-year-olds fetch?—Sometimes £10.

24163. In a year like this would they not fetch more?—No, that is about the highest; it is rare we manage that.

DONALD STEPHEN, Northtown, Birsay (36)—examined.

24164. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What is your profession?—A farmer's son and small proprietor.

24165. Do you occupy any land besides what you own?—I work on my father's farm.

24166. Is this property your father's or your own?—My father is tenant.

24167. But you are a proprietor besides?—Of a small bit of ground.

24168. Is that yours or your father's?—My own.

24169. And your father is tenant?—Yes.

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24170. What extent of land does your father hold?—Seventy-seven acres.

24171. What extent of property do you possess?—Sixteen acres.

24172. Did you purchase this property?—Yes.

24173. How long have you held it?—Four years.

24174. Was it arable land when you bought it?—No, common.

24175. To whom did it belong?—To a proprietor in Aberdeenshire of the name of Park.

24176. Were there others beside you who bought common land at that time?—No, it was a part of infield property, and this was outfield common. It was for sale by private bargain at the time.

24177. What price did it sell for?—I would not like to mention the price because I am, perhaps, for selling it again.

24178. Is it entered in the valuation roll?—Yes.

24179. For what rent?—£5.

24180. For the sixteen acres?—Yes.

24181. Have you reclaimed it?—Part of it.

24182. Was that £5 put on before you reclaimed it?—No, since there have been improvements on it.

24183. Is there a house on it?—No house at present.

24184. Does your father hold his land upon lease?—Yes.

24185. What length of lease?—I think there are about six years to run.

24186. Was it a fourteen or a nineteen years' lease?—I am not exactly sure; I think it was for thirteen years.

24187. Was his an improving lease?—Yes.

24188. Was the land uncultivated when he entered upon it?—We reclaimed about forty-five acres since we came to the property about eighteen years ago.

24189. Is he to receive compensation for it at the close of the lease?—Unfortunately no.

24190. He thought, when he took the lease, the length of lease would be sufficient compensation for it?—I suppose so.

24191. Has it been profitable?—No, unfortunately it has not. It may be a good illustration of how landlordism has been in this country. During the last eighteen years we have reclaimed about forty-five acres; drained it, and tilled it, and put out more money in the reclamation than the property cost eighteen years ago. Some of the ground was a loch at one time; we have drained it, and in some parts we put down 400 loads of stones to the acre. It is all stone drains. Every dry year we get no crop out of it; and in a wet year we get no crop either. It requires a medium year, or a dropping year. In the field we reclaimed there are no turnips this present year, although it was sown with turnips. We have built a house upon it, and we received no assistance from the proprietor, and I suppose at the end of the lease the proprietor can turn us away without any compensation, and that is where the hardship comes in.

24192. What rent have you been paying?—About £15 a year.

24193. There were about thirty-five acres improved when you entered?—No, there were scarcely that; it was in a very bad state. The proprietor who had it then had two tenants—there was a double building—and the two tenants removed and sold off their crop. The next tenant had it for a year and rouped off the crop. The next tenant was two years in it; he had nothing to put upon it when he came, and the second year he rouped off the produce. We then entered. The first year we came, in the month of April, we had nothing but artificial manure on it, and we have been in it since. The farm was in a very run-out state when we entered, and it took a number of years to put it in proper condition.

Since then we have reclaimed about forty-five acres, or I may say I have ploughed myself about fifty acres of virgin soil, and we have spent more money on improving than the property comes to.

24194. And the land which you have reclaimed is not very good land altogether?—It is second class land.

24195. But the land you found under cultivation is of better quality?—It is very good ground, but there are only about fourteen acres of it.

24196. You have put that into good heart?—Yes, it is in good heart. We used about five cwt. of artificial manure, and twenty or thirty loads of farm-yard manure.

24197. What does a load weigh here?—About half a ton; and it takes usually about fifteen tons to dung an acre.

24198. What class of stock do you keep?—We imported a pure bull from Aberdeenshire the other year.

24199. And you breed a cross stock?—Yes.

24200. What do your two-year-olds fetch?—We sell them when they are about six quarters old and get about £16.

24201. Do your neighbours keep equally good stock?—They have been using the same bull which we keep, and their stock is very good.

24202. Is yours the only bull in the parish of that class?—There are only other two—I suppose Mr Leask of Bordhouse and Mr Bratch of Swanie; but some of the other farmers occasionally take down a pure bull.

24203. Is the land which you have purchased a good quality of land?—No.

24204. Does it adjoin the land you rent?—Yes.

24205. You proposed to work them together?—Yes.

24206. Do you look forward to having to pay higher rent or to being removed?—I could not say; it is a new proprietor who is on just now. He is a relation of my own; he is my uncle.

24207. *Mr Cameron.*—Was any stipulation made in your lease at the commencement about reclaiming the land?—It was understood that we would have to reclaim it.

24208. If it was understood you had to reclaim it, I suppose that was taken into consideration in fixing the rent, was it not?—Most certainly it would require to be taken into consideration, because it is not to be expected that the tenant would sink his capital in another man's land and get no compensation.

24209. And you preferred the compensation in your rent rather than at the end of your lease?—We have paid more than was calculated for at first.

24210. The land you drained has no crop in a dry year and none in a wet year?—It is so, and it can be seen this year.

24211. You could not expect much compensation for improvement of that kind?—The money is sunk upon the property.

24212. But if it is sunk unprofitably it would be rather hard to expect the landlord, whether your uncle or not, to pay for it?—It was loch at one time, and that money was sunk in it; and I made dry land, which is a permanent improvement.

24213. It would be a permanent improvement if you succeeded in growing crops, but if you don't succeed in doing that, it is surely not much of an improvement?—But when one uses the means.

24214. You endeavoured to make an improvement and it did not turn out to be an improvement?—Some years.

24215. Did your father occupy himself in any other way besides farming?—No, he was a farmer before he came to the country.

24216. Did he find the money with which you bought the land?—It was my uncle who bought the land.

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24217. No, but your own land?—No, it was money I saved up myself.

24218. Did you save it up as a farmer, or as a labourer?—As a labourer; I wrought on his farm.

24219. What is the quality of the land which you say is good land—producing good crop—how would you describe the soil of it?—It is one of those black soils full of vegetable matter.

24220. And how would you describe the bad land?—As thin gravelly soil, or perhaps a stiff boulder soil.

24221. With a good deal of clay mixed up in it?—White clay of the burning kind.

24222. What crops do you find succeed best in the land which is good?—Oats.

24223. Does it grow good turnips?—Some years; it depends on whether there is moisture or a good deal of sunshine. When there is a deficiency of sunshine and a prevalence of cold east winds, the crop is usually stunted.

24224. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What part of the country do you come from?—Wick parish, Caithness.

24225. You were brought up to farming all your life?—Yes.

24226. You said that the amount of money you have spent upon this place is more than what purchased it eighteen years ago; would the purchase price of it to-day be double the amount of what it was eighteen years ago?—It would depend upon what the demand for the land was.

24227. But as demand goes in this place?—Yes.

24228. So that to the proprietor, then, your outlay is no loss?—To the landlord it is not possible, when it is 150 per cent. profit.

24229. Then the place would fetch more than double the price it fetched eighteen years ago?—I would think so, when I called it 150 per cent. added to the purchase price.

24230. In order to make things fair for the tenant, for yourself, what change would you propose to make in the term of giving leases or the like of that?—I would propose that all permanent improvements ought to be paid to the man who made them; take the difference of the valuation on entry and raise the rent on the termination of the lease.

24231. How would you estimate the permanent improvements?—Such as the making of roads and building of houses and drainage. Perhaps a piece of ground only worth 1s. per acre, or 6d. an acre, at the termination of a lease may be worth 30s. an acre, and the difference between that and the price when the lease was taken should be paid to the man who made it worth that.

24232. The difference between the letting value of the land just now and its letting value twenty years hence—would you consider that represented the permanent improvement upon the part of the tenant?—We don't know what the letting value might be twenty years to come—what progress the country will make.

24233. Does not that introduce another element—the progress of the country?—Perhaps it may from the landlord's point of view, but when the tenant has made the country—for instance, a landlord lets his land to a tenant, and the tenant puts in drains, and the landlord gives the use of the land and Government money. The tenant does the cartage and gets numbers of horses killed, perhaps, and makes himself an old man before he has come to manhood, and at the end of his lease the landlord gets a property of enhanced value, and Government money expended upon it, while he has expended nothing. Is not the man who has made it, less this money, the man who is entitled to compensation?

24234. But it would be a difficult thing to calculate the amount of the compensation?—A tenant would not have much difficulty in calculating it. Supposing the property was worth 1s. per acre when the tenant entered it, and was at the end worth 20s., less the taxes, should it not then belong to the man who made it worth that.

24235. You stated you expended a large amount of money upon it. Now you would not consider you would require to get the whole of that back at the end of the lease?—I don't expect to get the whole of it back, but only a fair share of it, less the taxes. At the termination of the lease it would appear in the valuation roll at a higher value, and less taxes upon that—that deducted, to whom does the balance belong unless to the man who made it so?

24236. You would ask the difference between the letting value at the beginning and end of the lease, less the taxes?—One would naturally suppose so, to make it fair for both parties if the landlord invested nothing in the property.

24237. And you think that would be fair terms for a lease in the future?—Well, I would not like to say that the landlord should be tied down, or that the tenant ought to be the slave of the landlord; let them make a fair, open, honest bargain, and let both parties stand by that. But there is such keen competition for the land, that farmers are led to give a higher value than the property is worth, and they must do that or emigrate.

24238. What remedy would you provide for that?—That is a very wide question. The usual remedy in some districts you have gone over is to ship them over to America and give them £100 per family to settle them down.

24239. In order to diminish the competition?—It would diminish the competition but not in a country perhaps like this. Perhaps land can scarcely be extended profitably here. And then, there is very heavy taxation in this country.

24240. Do you think it is heavier than it need have been?—That is a question which requires a good deal of consideration. Some parishes are heavier taxed than others. This parish is very heavily taxed with regard to lunatics, and I think that charge should be an imperial one.

24241. Instead of a local rate, you think part of that should be levied upon the imperial taxation?—Yes.

24242. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It is so just now, half of it?—But not a fair share.

24243. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have told us that you bought this land with your own money, although you don't feel disposed to mention the amount. Have you ever been a ploughman in service except with your father?—No.

24244. When did you begin to get money as wages from your father?—I suppose when he found that I was earning more than the cost of the clothes I was getting.

24245. When about sixteen or eighteen years of age would you begin to get some money?—I suppose it was very little I was getting at that time.

24246. Out of the money you got from him you purchased this property?—Certainly.

24247. You did not engage in any other business?—Sometimes I did a little in dealing.

24248. You might buy a beast and sell it?—Yes.

24249. But still the money was all made by yourself?—All.

24250. How many times what you gave for your land would you now

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expect to get for it?—That is a very nice way of putting it, but I don't feel inclined to answer that. But if you are inclined to purchase the land, I will be most happy to show you it.

24251. Is there any reason why other people in your position should not have done as well as you have done?—One thing, I don't drink or smoke the money; perhaps what other people would spend in that I save.

24252. You have thereby been enabled to put by more than you otherwise would have done?—No doubt of it.

24253. But suppose, then, another model young man like yourself who does not drink or smoke, is there any reason to prevent his doing what you have done—putting by money to purchase land?—Perhaps the young men may emigrate to America, and come back and make themselves proprietors.

24254. But at home, could not young men do as you have done?—Well, they would require to be very careful, their wages here are only £10 to £18 or £20 in the year, with, perhaps, six or eight bolls of meal.

24255. Following out what you have said as to yourself; supposing you got the money you want, what would you do with it?—I would just invest it again.

24256. In lands?—In what I might think most profitable.

24257. Would you be disposed to invest it again in land?—Well, at the present time there is a great demand for land, and the lawyers are very ready in offering money that it is perhaps sometimes an inducement for parties to put their money in land, as they consider it safer to have a few acres than to invest otherwise.

24258. Would you really increase your holding in land—was that your intention?—At the present time there is no interest can be attained by putting money in land.

24259. The return is so poor?—It is. I know that I have been considerably out of pocket by investing my money in land.

24260. You have no intention, however, of leaving the country supposing you realise your property. You do not intend to emigrate?—The money I have would not carry me very far, and perhaps it might be as well to stay here as to go away. There is a suggestion I should like to bring under the notice of the Commissioners with regard to the law of hypothec: I think it should be abolished; I think it is very injurious to the farmer.

24261. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are rather outside the class of farmers into whose cases we are sent to inquire; do you think it is injurious to the crofter?—Yes, in many cases. Take, for instance, the case of a young man who has a few pounds and friends to give him money, there is no security for these parties who lend him the money. Perhaps at the end of a few years he may fall into arrears, and the landlord would come down upon him.

ANDREW GOLD, Graham Bank, Kirkwall (62)—examined.

Andrew Gold.

24262. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Are you Lord Zetland's factor?—I am.

24263. Are you a farmer?—I have about seventy acres of ground.

24264. Have you any statement to make?—No, but I shall be happy to answer any questions.

24265. You were present this morning when we had one or two of the proprietors in Birsay and Harray before us?—Yes.

24266. You know the circumstances of the parish of Harray and Birsay?—Yes.

24267. We were told that in the parish of Harray, where there were small proprietors, there was only one pauper; how do you account for that?—Well, there are very few in Birsay too; I cannot say how many there are, but there are very few. The poorrate in these two parishes would be a mere bagatelle if it were not for the lunatics we have.

24268. Do you know what proportion of land is occupied by small heritors in this parish of Birsay, and what by the tenant farmers?—There is not the half of it held by the small heritors.

24269. Do you observe any difference between the condition of small heritors and tenant farmers?—They are very much the same.

24270. Do you observe any difference in the system of cultivation adopted by these two classes?—They are very much the same.

24271. Were they different at one time?—A little; I think, in former times, the tenants cultivated rather better than the small lairds. I think they set the lairds an example. I think the tenants and the large proprietors were the first to commence improvements.

24272. Did the tenants on Lord Zetland's property receive any compensation for their improvements, or had they long leases on which to improve?—There is none of them that live on the estate; I never had a case of compensation to consider.

24273. They feel satisfied that they will be allowed to sit at the same rent?—I don't know what they feel, but they are allowed to sit.

24274. And they do improve and reclaim the land?—There has not been a great deal of land reclaimed except in some portions of the hill; the lands were chiefly cultivated before. They have only improved them in consequence of their being gathered together. Formerly they were all run-rig, and they could not improve it and cultivate to advantage; but about 1845, when I entered office, I squared the lands up and put each tenant's farm round his house or as near as I possibly could, and that enabled them to cultivate the land to better advantage. I have brought with me a plan made in 1764 which shows how the lands lay then, and also how they were occupied up to 1845, and it may be curious for you to see it—it will give you a sort of idea how the lands all over the county of Orkney lay. They were all on the run-rig system.

24275. Do you observe that the small lairds display more energy in reclaiming their land than the tenant farmers who have no security of tenure?—Well, I cannot say that they do; I don't think so.

24276. You heard the witness William Davidson remark on the fact that his land which he bought—a piece of common land, and which he had reclaimed and improved—was taxed at what he thought an exorbitant rate, and that Lord Zetland's common did not appear in the valuation roll. Can you explain what he meant?—No, I cannot; there is a great deal of Lord Zetland's common in the valuation roll.

24277. But the common which is not let is in Lord Zetland's hands? No, the tenants have sheep and cattle on it.

24278. Then it is all let?—It is part and parcel of the farms.

24279. And if it does not appear in the valuation roll separately it appears as part and parcel of the farm?—It is a pertinent of these farms.

24280. And if it were taken away from these farms would it decrease their value?—It might a little, but not much. The commons are not very valuable.

24281. It was stated by William Davidson that Lord Zetland's commons were not pastured?—Well, the tenants all round the hills pasture on them; they have the right to put sheep and cattle on them.

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24282. But the commons are so bad that they don't?—There are a good many sheep and cattle upon them.

24283. You think the abstraction of the common from the farms would not materially reduce their value?—No, I think each farm could get as much common as it required without affecting the general commonty, the commonty is so very extensive—about 7000 acres.

24284. Could these commons not be made of use somehow?—No, we have made several farms on the hill, but they have all been failures. Some Aberdonians came down here a number of years ago and took leases from Lord Zetland for portions of the common, and they have all turned out unsuccessful.

24285. Are the names of those who came and took leases of commons in the valuation roll?—Yes.

24286. Are they taxed?—Yes.

24287. Must it not appear rather hard to those people that they should be taxed when the main common is practically not taxed?—Well, it is a very difficult thing to make up a valuation roll so as to do justice to all parties over the country, for taxation purposes. The same thing would apply to drainage or the reclamation of land anywhere.

24288. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When you mentioned that you did not think the small proprietors were improving more than the tenants of the same class, I presume you referred to Lord Zetland's tenants?—I think the tenants generally cultivate their lands as well as the small proprietors do. I cannot say there is very much distinction.

24289. You would not draw a distinction between other proprietors in that respect?—No.

24290. Are other properties not changing hands now and then?—Small properties, yes; there are frequently properties in the market.

24291. You have been here nearly forty-five years. Is it not the case that there are properties changing hands in Orkney, and which have changed hands during the last forty years, upon which there have been tenants of £80 and upwards?—Oh, yes.

24292. Don't you think, when a man buys a property he is apt to raise the rents when there are no leases? Is not a new comer very apt to raise the rent?—Yes, he is very apt to do so; he would like a fair percentage for his money; it is natural at any rate.

24293. That being the case, explain how it is that the position of a man whose rents are liable to be raised is as good as that of the small heritors whose rents cannot be raised?—I did not say they were in so good a position.

24294. What did you say?—I understood that the Chairman's question was in regard to cultivation. The position is very different; I would rather be a proprietor than a tenant myself any day.

24295. Would you like to see the condition of things in Harray spread over Orkney?—I don't think it would do any harm. I don't think it would do with every class of people. I don't think, for instance, it would do with Irishmen; but they are a different race of people. I think if you made him proprietor of his own lands in Ireland he would do nothing; but if you gave the Orcadian an estate of his own, he would work it up because he is an intelligent industrious man.

24296. Is it not a fact that in almost every place where these small proprietors are, you will find an old house and a new—that they have built new houses?—Yes.

24297. And there is a great change for the better in the buildings?—A very great change during the last forty years, amongst the houses of small proprietors as well as the houses of tenants all over the country.

24298. So far as the land has fallen under your observation, does it

realise very high prices?—Small lots will generally fetch high prices, and it is generally sold in that way for that purpose.

24299. Have you any idea, from your own observation, and as a commissioner of supply, whether or not the rents paid by small tenants—I am speaking of tenants under £30 a year—are in proportion more than those of big farms?—No, I don't think so, generally.

24300. One of the small proprietors mentioned to us at Harray that his predecessor had purchased up the feu duties, and therefore it was free. Explain very briefly what is Lord Zetland's position as a superior in Orkney; when the superiorities have not been bought up, are they all old feus where the entries to lands are not taxed?—Mostly. There are recent feus, of course, too.

24301. And, of course, in that case the entry is taxed?—Yes.

24302. I presume then, in a great part of Orkney, when the superiorities change hands there is a year's rent exigible?—No.

24303. What then?—Nothing.

24304. Are there any casualties?—No. I don't know what they are in the bishopric, but there is none in the earldom. I think in the bishopric they do, but not in the earldom.

24305. What is the nature of the feu duties paid to you—is it a small money tax?—No, it is chiefly paid in butter, malt and oatmeal, and poultry, and other articles.

24306. You know the law of Scotland with regard to untaxed feus—there is no such clause in the charter here?—No, and no such charge, except in some of the recent feus. They are upon the ordinary law of Scotland.

24307. The matter of superiorities cannot be considered a burden of any kind upon the land in Orkney in that way?—No.

24308. With reference to the teinds, is the Earl of Zetland the titular of all the lands?—Yes.

24309. Have the heritors generally bought up their teinds?—No, not that I am aware of.

24310. Are you in the habit of exacting the surplus teinds?—Yes.

24311. Does that form a considerable revenue?—No, not much.

24312. Have the most of them got their teinds valued?—Yes, most of them, except, I think, in this parish here.

24313. I suppose the consequence is that there is not much surplus teinds?—No.

24314. But such as it is the titular has got the right?—Yes.

24315. *Mr Cameron.*—What number of years' purchase is generally obtained for land when it is sold here?—It varies very much; it will range from twenty-five to one hundred years' purchase.

24316. What sort of property fetches one hundred years?—It is generally very good, but very small—very keen competition for it in consequence of its smallness; men very anxious to get a small place to settle down upon, pay three or four times its value.

24317. What size of property would it be?—Twenty acres or less.

24318. You don't include the house?—It has been, of course, very low valued before in that case.

24319. Do you include the house in that case?—Yes.

24320. You mean with the house and property?—Yes.

24321. What would the houses bring on an average, beyond what would otherwise be obtained?—Not very much; probably £40 or £50.

24322. For the whole?—Yes, for the whole. Of course that is a very extreme price. I might explain that from twenty-five to fifty years is something like the range. There may be instances just of £100. I have

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known instances, but it was just property cut up and let out in small lots to induce competition. It brought five times its value.

24323. But where the land is sold at anything above fifty year's purchase, is it not because there is something extra in amenity or the character of the house which induces purchasers to give that?—No, it is just the desire to acquire a small place.

24324. Do you mean to say they give that price to cultivate their own land?—Yes, and to have a small place of their own.

24325. You heard the evidence given by the last witness—Mr Stephen?—Yes.

25726. Do you know of any instances where farmers have been in a position to buy land as he has described he did?—Yes, my next neighbour purchased a place for which he paid £5300, last year.

24327. Was he a farmer?—Yes.

24328. Did he make his money by farming?—Yes, in Sanday.

24329. How long has he had the farm?—He has been a farmer all his days; he is a man of about fifty years of age.

24330. He has been a farmer then for twenty-five or thirty years?—Yes, and his father before him; he did not make all the money himself.

24331. But among people of the class of Mr Stephen, who purchased a farm out of his earnings as a labourer—you don't find many instances of that kind?—No.

24332. Most of those who purchase have been abroad and made some money—natives of Orkney?—Yes.

24333. Is there much desire among the small farmers to become owners of their own land?—I suppose so; it is a very natural desire.

24334. But is the desire expressed in a practical way by their saving money so as to be able to avail themselves of any opportunity when it occurs?—No, the tenants who have been long in a farm never seem to enter the field of competition.

24335. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—When you became factor here, in what state did you find the land on the property of the Earl of Zetland?—It was, of course, very ill cultivated, and could not very well be otherwise owing to the prevalence of the run-rig system.

24336. The tenants of small holdings possessed bits of land scattered at great distances chiefly?—Yes, and the result was that each had to get a road to his small place, and they had to lay it down at the same time, and all to reap at the same time.

24337. And did you make any change upon that system?—I squared them all up, and put each man's farm round his house as far as possible, and when that could not be done I gave him a square field as near as possible with a road down to it.

24338. Did that change create any discontent?—It did, I must confess.

24339. And what has the result been?—Most favourable; I think the tenants have felt the benefit of it.

24340. Has that improvement been made generally through Orkney as well as in the Earl of Zetland's property?—All over Orkney. In districts where there were a number of small proprietors there were often difficulties in the way, and some litigation ensued. They had to raise a process of planking under an old statute, and the lands were surveyed under the direction of the court, and divided amongst the proprietors according to their respective interests and laid altogether, so as to enable them to cultivate to greater advantage. There has been a great improvement in the agriculture of Orkney within the last forty years—may be as much as in any part of Scotland.

24341. In what does the improvement consist?—Improving the lands and the improvement of the breed of cattle. For instance, in South Ronaldshay, I have no doubt there is a greater amount of money realised from that island than from the whole of the county forty years ago.

24342. What was the breed of cattle before that?—The native breed.

24343. None else?—A few on the larger farms.

24344. Both cattle and sheep?—Yes.

24345. What is generally the breed of cattle now?—Shorthorn.

24346. And sheep?—Chiefly, I think, cross.

24347. And that is the kind of stock the crofters have also, as well as the larger farmers?—Yes. Of course, among the smaller tenants they have not such fine bulls as the larger farmers; the larger farmers have sent south and purchased the best animals that could be had in the market.

24348. Has the improvement of the system of agriculture extended to the crofters as well as to the larger farmers?—Yes.

24349. Have you observed in your life here a decided improvement from year to year?—Yes, certainly.

24350. Has there been any improvement in the general condition of the people?—Very great.

24351. Are their houses better?—Very much better.

24352. And do they live better?—Yes.

24353. Do they clothe themselves better?—Much better.

24354. Are there any of your crofters who are unable to make their living out of their land?—Yes, some of them, of course.

24355. Some of them have very small holdings?—Yes, merely a half.

24356. Is there a considerable proportion of them who live upon the produce of their land?—Yes.

24357. Most of the small lairds do so also in this parish?—Yes.

24358. They are not engaged in fishing?—No.

24359. They are farmers and nothing else?—Farmers and nothing else: small lairds. There may be a very few very small proprietors who may be workers or labourers.

24360. There are some whose property is so small as to be valued at only £1 or £2?—Yes, and these cannot live upon their land.

24361. There are no large farms on Lord Zetland's estate?—Not very large.

24362. What is the largest rental?—The largest farm we have is in South Ronaldshay; it is about £170, and he has another farm.

24363. Have you removed any small tenants in order to make use of their farms?—I cannot recollect having done so.

24364. Has there generally been, throughout the county of Orkney, during your experience of it, anything of the depopulation that has been practised more or less in Shetland?—No, there never have been any evictions on any estate in Orkney as far as I can recollect, and I have heard of very few in North Shetland for thirty-eight years.

24365. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are there any leases upon any of the small holdings?—On Lord Zetland's estate there are some. A good many years ago I entered into a lease with a great number of tenants, and when the leases expired they would not renew them.

24366. What is the lowest rent among those who have leases?—I think the lowest is about £6. All the larger tenants have leases, such as the farm I have referred to, and Bordhouse here.

24367. The small tenants don't want leases?—No.

24368. Would they get leases for £6 and £10 crofts?—Yes, if they want them.

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24369. And improving tenants whose places we saw on the hillside as we were coming along?—No, they have no leases

24370. And don't want any?—No.

24371. And they go on with their improvements the same?—Yes.

24372. In perfect security that they will not be disturbed or have their rent raised?—Quite so.

24373. We have been told that the want of leases in various other parts of the country was the chief reason why improvement was not being carried on, but I suppose your experience here is quite different from that—they improve without leases?—They do. I have never had any difficulty with a single tenant; they are always ready to improve.

24374. But no doubt that is due to the character of the people and the character of the administration for a long time?—Well, as long as you have a good tenant, and he cultivates his land well, and pays his rent, the proprietor has no reason to evict him.

24375. There has been no request for a lease, from the fear of a change of proprietorship, or of change in the administration of the estate?—No.

24376. Upon what terms do you give a piece of hillside to a tenant?—There is no special arrangement; a good deal depends on the ground. He gets it at a nominal rent, and may have it for a long period.

24377. And he builds the house himself?—Where a large lump of the hill was taken, there was a special arrangement made between the proprietor and the tenant; but in the small places laid off, they build the houses for their own convenience, and a nominal rent is laid on.

24378. And do you allow them to cultivate as many acres as they can?—Yes.

24379. And the rent is nominal?—Well, it is full value for the ground they get, but it is nominal notwithstanding.

24380. How long would you consider it reasonable, in an ordinary case of that kind, to leave the rent at a nominal rate?—I think at least they should have it for nineteen years at a nominal rent; and, even then, at a very moderate rent under the new arrangement, unless where the ground is very good. There are some places where the hill ground is exceptionally good; but as a rule it is not.

24381. And where the tenant would get no assistance for buildings or fences, you would consider it only fair that he should get it during the first nineteen years, at a nominal rent?—Yes, and at a moderate rent thereafter.

24382. For a further period?—For a further period.

24383. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Can you give us any idea what number of tenants or feuars there are upon the Lord Zetland's property?—I think somewhere about 700 tenants. There are over 200 who pay feu duty.

24384. 500 tenants, and 200 who pay feu duty?—There are somewhere about 700 tenants.

24385. And 200 feuars?—Yes.

24386. In your long experience, have you ever called in any surveyor to come and tell you what you ought to do in the way of fixing the rents?—I had to employ a surveyor to survey the estate.

24387. But since then have you ever called in any surveyor?—Yes, I had to call in a surveyor to square up the estate and get plans.

24388. But about fixing the rents?—We fixed the rents as we went along.

24389. When was that last done?—I don't remember, I'm sure.

24390. A long time?—Yes, a good long while; I am still working at the place at the present moment—the same district. There have been difficulties in getting it done until now.

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24391. Was it in your time that the hill ground was divided amongst the proprietors?—Yes, in regard to Birsay. Of course, all commonties in the country are now divided, but some were divided before I came here. There were very few divided before I came; they were in process of division.

24392. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The tenant whom we saw at the road-side sits practically rent free?—Yes.

24393. His name does not appear in the valuation roll?—He is not paying anything yet; it is not worth anything.

24394. I have alluded to Mr Davidson's grievance?—Yes.

24395. His name would have appeared on the valuation roll if Lord Zetland had sold that land to him?—Yes.

24396. And he improved it himself?—Yes.

24397. So that the people who have purchased land might naturally have a grievance seeing that man sitting rent free?—It is so infinitesimally small that it is not worth noticing.

24398. But it exists?—Yes.

24399. And this is the only grievance?—Well, it is one which would require to be looked at through spectacles. If I were to put a rent upon that man at present he would only have to pay 2s. 6d., and it is not worth any.

24400. Mr Davidson is rented at 35s.?—He has his thirty-six acres.

24401. But this crofter of Lord Zetland's has a lot of ground too?—Not two acres.

24402. But it is going on increasing?—Yes, in twelve years, perhaps, he may have something.

24403. Has that question ever been before the valuation committee here?—No; some of the commissioners themselves have great complaints on the same subject.

[ADJOURNED.]

ORKNEY, KIRKWALL, MONDAY, JULY 23, 1883.

ORKNEY.
KIRKWALL.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Rev. ARCHIBALD MACCALLUM, Rousay (30)—examined.

Rev. Archibald MacCallum.

24404. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been in your present charge?—About 3½ years.

24405. You are minister of the Free Church?—Yes.

24406. Have you been elected a delegate by the people of the place?—I may state that I have nothing to do with the origination of these meetings at all, as I was south when they were begun, but a deputation

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of the crofters waited upon me last week, and requested me to attend their meeting, which was held last Saturday. I did so, and the statement which I now have was read and carefully examined by them and adopted as their own; and they requested me to read it to your Lordship and your fellow Commissioners.

24407. Did they appoint any other delegate of their own class at the same time?—Yes. James Leonard, George Leonard, and Thomas Grieve; and two short written statements were prepared.

24408. But you were their chief representative?—Yes.

24409. Will you have the goodness to read the statement?—[reads]—'We, tenants and crofters of Rousay, desire to represent to the Commissioners, that we are in a condition generally of great and increasing poverty, and that we are convinced that our present condition is owing to the system of land management in Rousay for the last forty years, and especially for the last twenty years. A comparison of the rental, population, and tenures of lands, and other particulars, as these were forty years ago, and as they are now, will show that the rental has been increased on the island of Rousay, according to our best information, not less than threefold, whilst in that same time the population has decreased, and their substance also become less. (*1st*), Thus in 1841, the rental of the whole parish (which includes the islands of Rousay, Egilshay, Veira, and Enhallow) was only £1500; it is now £3876, 19s. 4d. It is necessary to know, in order to see that the great increase has been on the island of Rousay and Veira, and on them only, that the rental of Egilshay (which belongs to another proprietor, namely Dr Baikie) has been very slightly increased, as is well known, and that almost all Egilshay tenants sit under good leases, and that the increase has been therefore almost entirely on the Rousay estate. (*2nd*), The population in 1841 was 1263 souls; it is now 1118;—in the nation at large a like decrease would have caused alarm and indicated our decay as a nation. (*3rd*), This smaller population, which pays at least a triple rental, is relatively much poorer. A proof of this is that in 1841 there were eighteen herring-boats carrying ninety-tons; there are now only four. (*4th*), There were in 1841 thirteen proprietors of land in the place; there is now in Rousay only three; and two of these are but small farmers. The people are in this way bound by the regulations of one proprietor, to which they must submit so long as remaining in their native island. The main cause of our present state is an excessive rack-renting of land. But we have further to complain of the taking away from our use of the hill pasture and commons. In 1841, there were 10,440 acres of land which was uncultivated and in waste, or in use as pasture free to all; as also at that time 7500 acres of undivided common; and the people from time immemorial had the privilege of grazing and pasturing cattle, sheep, horses, and pigs without payment of any kind. All this has been taken away from us, and appropriated by the proprietor for his own use or for letting. We complain that this very large loss was without our consent, and we were never in any way compensated for it by reduction of rent. On the contrary, rents have been raised at the same time; and some rents have been even quadrupled, that is, increased fourfold, in the last forty years. It is an old belief among us, handed down to us from our forefathers, that we have a right to these hill pastures and commons; and we would respectfully ask Her Majesty's Commissioners that they be pleased to make searching inquiry into this matter, that some explanation at least be got of so great an amount of property being taken from the body of the people to the use of one; and we also ask a strict investigation into the way in which the old Orkney tenures and settlements, so much more

'favourable to us than the present feudal tenures and arrangements, were 'lost, and these latter imported from the south by a gradual, and, as we 'think, wrongful process. We have also long believed that a right of 'settlement on the land of our fathers was secured to us by ancient 'custom amounting to law, and that this was reserved to us always, even 'when the Orkney Isles were given over to the Scottish Crown by 'Denmark in the treaty or contract then made between Scotland and 'Denmark. We humbly beg you to investigate that treaty, and any other 'ancient documents or customs that bear on these points, for our satis-'faction and your own assistance in your present task. We complain, 'in any case, of harsh and needless evictions, of which we may give 'examples—evictions of large bodies of people. Whether the landlord 'has this power or no, we complain of the harshness of these evictions, 'and that they were unnecessarily oppressive to the people, while leading 'to no corresponding profit to the proprietor. One case of this was that 'in or about the years 1842–3, a number of families (almost exactly forty 'families), were ejected from the lands of Greendale and Westside in 'Rousay against their wishes and requests to remain, and all their lands 'were joined for sheep pasture. Some went abroad, and some were 'allowed to settle on other parts of Rousay, where the land was much 'poorer in quality, and for the most part uncultivated; and the lots given 'to those who settled there after their eviction from Greendale and West-'side, were not only poorer in soil, but smaller in extent. Those evicted 'then and so settled, especially in Sourin, were most of them just 'permitted to settle on beather land, and to reclaim and bring in this for 'themselves, and also to build houses for themselves on this wild land or 'hill. When they had thus brought waste land into a state of cultiva-'tion, and built houses for themselves and families after their eviction from 'one place, rents were laid upon them for these lands and houses which 'they built and reclaimed entirely by their own industry and labour, 'procuring themselves even the materials of the buildings, such as they 'are. We complain that if rents were to be laid on us in such a case, 'we should at least have been paid for our labours in building and 'reclaiming. But no compensation of any kind, either for eviction from 'the old places or for our improvement of the new, was given; and the 'rents first put on the latter have been frequently raised, and we sit as 'mere tenants-at-will, liable to be again evicted from houses we built 'ourselves, and to be rack-rented even if allowed to occupy them. 'Another case was that of the Nearse eviction, in which three families 'were ejected by force about the same date, and in the depth of winter; 'the people and their household goods being laid out on the open hill, 'and one aged woman fainting after this oppressive act several times, and 'shortly afterwards she died. A very recent case of a similar kind, 'occurring only two years ago, was the eviction from his land of the tenant 'of Hammer, in the district of Washuster—a man of delicate health, and 'reduced by this act now to poverty, whereas formerly he was always 'able to meet his rent. His family still remains in the house, but the 'land being added to another farm, they are left destitute, and are now 'applying for parochial relief, while his own health has been so shattered 'by the loss of the only means of livelihood open to him, that he has now 'become an inmate of the Edinburgh Infirmary.' (I may state that this man returned on Saturday night, after this was written.) 'We complain 'especially that this poor man's wife and family—although they applied 'for parochial relief some time ago—have had no provision made for them 'yet, and would thus have been left in a state of absolute destitution, 'but for their friends and neighbours. Another case is that of the

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'present occupier of East Cray in Sourin, who at an advanced age 'reclaimed land there and built a dwelling for his old age, entirely at his 'own cost; and shortly after his doing this, by the authority of the pro-'prietor a rent was imposed upon him, and that first rent has now been 'increased about fivefold, and a special aggravation of wrong in this case 'is that he had been previously evicted from a house and croft which he 'had built and reclaimed (with the exception of a quarter of an acre), also 'himself at his own cost. Another matter is the lack of compensation 'for improvements, and that we do not possess or get liberty to improve 'or build new buildings necessary for our cattle, even when we are will-'ing and offer to do so at our own cost; but we only get leave to make 'improvements necessary for the safety of our stock on the terms named 'by the proprietor, which involve an intolerable and apparently intermin-'able burden of interest on money borrowed by him, which interest seems 'to form practically a permanent increase of rent. There is no induce-'ment for the sober and industrious man to labour and improve his home 'and farm, but the contrary; for the fruits of his labours and outlay, 'even when allowed, are taken from him without any compensation. 'And the utter insecurity of tenure again acts with this disheartening 'effect on us. We humbly beg therefore that you will do what you can 'to secure the revaluation of land, so that a fair rent may be fixed as 'between proprietor and tenant, and that we shall have security of 'tenure in our holdings; and that these holdings may be increased as 'necessary for the adequate support in comfort of our families, and that 'the question of the hill pasture and undivided common be settled in 'some way—say by restoration or otherwise. We should also like the 'Commissioners to visit our island and inspect our houses, many of which 'are unfit for human habitation; and in the event of disease of an infec-'tious or contagious kind getting into them, it is almost impossible to root 'it out. We specially hope that for all these grievances that so long and 'so hardly oppress us as a community, a speedy and sure remedy will be 'procured, as we cannot much longer meet the overpowering burdens laid 'on us. We desire you to receive this statement, and to receive any 'other testimony that you may wish to hear, from the following, whom we 'have chosen as delegates and witnesses for us, namely,—James Leonard, 'occupier of the croft of Digro, Rousay, chairman of our meetings; 'George Leonard, occupier of the croft of Triblo, Rousay; James Grieve, 'part-occupier of the house of Outerdykes, Rousay; James Mainland, 'occupier of the house of Gorehous, Rousay; William Robertson, occupier 'of the croft of East Cray, Sourin, Rousay. We ask you to hear these 'as our representatives, who know our circumstances well, as they are all 'natives of Rousay, and as they have with one exception been resident in 'our island for almost all their lives. Had your arrangements permitted 'you to come amongst us, we would many of us, especially of the older 'inhabitants, been able and willing to give personally before you, fuller 'details of their own cases than can be given in any other way. We have 'in this statement, and by the appointment of these witnesses, done our 'best to show our position after a long course of impoverishment. Nor 'is it merely in our substance that we feel the burden and evil effects of 'the present land system as it is wrought here. The utterly inconsiderate 'and unrighteous manner in which we are treated tends to produce in our 'once peaceful and happy community those features of disturbance and 'outrage which have made another part of the three kingdoms so much 'an object of remark and attention. This is the case with us in too great 'a proportion, and it must increase unless relief is afforded us. The facts 'we have stated with reference to the eviction of the tenant of Hammer

'alone would account for the disturbance and evil feeling that we are 'sorry to know is arising in our midst. But, it is said, "Oppression will '"make wise men mad." Ever since that eviction, which was accompanied 'by a change of the lands of four farms, against the wishes and interests 'of at least three of them, the district there has been in a state of dis- 'turbance, in which various acts of outrage have been committed. A 'sheep of one farmer has been made away with, no one knows how; 'implements of husbandry, as scythes or ploughs, have been broken at 'night, and violent scenes have taken place between individuals who have 'felt themselves aggrieved and injured in their feelings and interests, 'some even to the loss of all, even health itself, by the needless and 'oppressive changes. There was one of those cases before the Sheriff- 'Court. The Procurator-Fiscal for the county, who is also law-agent for 'General Burroughs, the proprietor, visited the district to obtain evidence 'for a trial in another case, but failed to do so. The proprietor, who 'resides on his property and who takes control of everything on the land, 'visited the district with his factor several times, to endeavour to make 'the parties keep quiet, but without any permanent effect, as no redress 'was offered or provided even for the tenant who was turned out of all 'except a house, and who is confined in the Infirmary, and unable to do 'anything for his wife and their large family, the members of which are 'all young—the youngest being an infant. We feel that all these things 'are not as things ought to be amongst a free and Christian community, 'and we humbly beg that Her Majesty's Commissioners may speedily 'cause a removal of all these evils and hardships that are the source of 'such a state of affairs.—JAMES LEONARD, chairman; GEORGE LEONARD, 'JAMES GRIEVE, JAMES MAINLAND, WILLIAM ROBERTSON, delegates.' If your Lordship would allow me to add, it is the fact that this statement is entirely the crofters' own. And I should also like to say that, so far as I am aware—and I know the land pretty well, as the majority of the people adhere to my congregation—that this movement is not at all concerned with personal feelings against our distinguished proprietor, General Burroughs, or his factor, but entirely against the system and manner in which they use the powers which the law gives them.

24410. The memorial which you have read is written in a style very superior to that in which most of the memorials we have received are composed, and I can hardly imagine that it is entirely the spontaneous natural composition of persons in the position of crofters or small tenants. Can you tell me who actually wrote or composed the document?—*James Leonard.* The facts were furnished by me, and Mr MacCallum assisted in putting them together.

24411. The composition of the paper is in great measure your own, Mr MacCallum?—*Mr MacCallum.* I may mention that the document was dictated almost entirely to me, and all I had to do was to correct the grammar.—*James Leonard.* I had written it before.—*Mr MacCallum.* I had no desire to take any part whatever in the matter. It was owing to my being waited upon by the people that I came to have anything to do with it. The document was gone over sentence by sentence, and there were some words altered even on Saturday night.

24412. I don't wish to attach any blame to you for taking an interest in the matter, but the document apparently having been perused and partly composed with your assistance or entire approval, you substantially agree with the statement throughout?—I do.

24413. I understood the memorial to say that the rental had been increased threefold, and the first rental given to me was £1500 and the last £3876?—Yes.

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24414. But that is not threefold?—I explain that in the document, to the effect that the parish consists of four islands, two of which only belong to General Burroughs, so that the increase of the whole parish has therefore to be debited against Rousay, because it is well known that the island of Eaglisbay is moderately rented.

24415. In fact, the rent of that particular estate of Rousay has been increased threefold?—Yes, that is the meaning. The island of Eynhallow is now uninhabited.

24416. Has this increase of rental been chiefly caused by the consolidation of small holdings in large, and is the increase upon large farms, or has it been equally apparent on the small holdings which have remained?—At least equally. There are statements made from small crofters that their crofts have been raised fivefold—their small holdings. I think the large farms are perhaps moderately rented, so far as I know.

24417. What is the rental of the largest farm or the larger farms—to what rental do they ascend?—There is one farm of Westness which I understand is rented at £500 or £600. That farm consists largely of ground taken through eviction from Queendale. There are very few large farms on the island.

24418. How many holdings are there altogether—occupancies—upon the estate?—From 95 to 100 houses.

24419. But I want to know how many holdings there are?—Almost every house is a small holding.

24420. Have you any idea what area on the estate is occupied by tenants of above £100 a-year, and what area would be in the hands of tenants below £100 a-year? Is the larger part of the area of the estate in the hands of farmers above £100 a-year?—No. There are very few large farms. There are the large farms of Westness and Gaviskail.

24421. The great increase of rental is not to be accounted for by the consolidation of farms, the larger farms bearing proportionally a higher rental than the small?—No. I rather think the larger farms are comparatively moderately rented, so far as my information goes.

24422. Is there any form of industry or any new variety of produce introduced into the estate within the last forty years, which would account for or justify this unusual increase of rental?—Not that I know of; on the contrary, the fishing has decreased.

24423. Has there been a very improved description of stock, bearing much higher prices, introduced?—I suppose so, but I don't profess to be a farmer.

24424. You mention Baikie's estate; is that in Eaglishay?—Yes.

24425. The rental has been very much increased. Is the country very much of the same nature as the country in Rousay, or is it a poorer description of soil?—Much of the same nature, but if anything it is better.

24426. Is there a very great difference in the apparent condition of tenantry in Eaglishay compared with the tenantry in Rousay—physical and material condition?—Very great. I can tell a Eaglishay man by his look of comfort.

24427. By meeting him on the street?—Meeting him in the parish.

24428. Has the population of Eaglishay remained stationary, or has it increased?—I think it will be largely stationary.

24429. Do you think it has decreased slightly?—*James Leonard.* There are three islands combined, and the population is all taken together. We cannot tell the population of Eaglishay alone, but I don't think it has decreased. I think it is about the same as it was.

24430. Then the population of both islands has been nearly stationary,

because Rousay has not decreased very much?—*Mr MacCallum.* I should think a very great portion of the decrease is in Rousay, because there were forty families evicted, and many of them went abroad. I know some went abroad.

24431. But if the population of Eaglishay has not increased much in the last forty years, it proves that there is some natural cause operating to draw off the population from both islands. It looks as if the population in decreasing in Rousay had not been entirely owing to the system of estate management?—I am not aware. I think the Eaglishay people are very fond of remaining on the property.

24432. How do you account for their not largely increasing in forty years?—They may have largely increased in forty years, but I have no people in that island.

24433. What communion do the people in Eaglishay belong to?—The majority of them belong to the United Presbyterian Church.

24434. Is the diminution of the boats engaged in the herring fishery to be accounted for in any degree by the substitution of fewer large boats for a greater number of small ones?—In no degree.

24435. Is it to be accounted for by the desertion of the herring from the coast, or what?—I don't think so.

24436. You think the fishing would be just as accessible as it was?—Yes.

24437. Then how do you account for the reduction of the fishing industry? It would appear that if the people were deprived of their land they would throw themselves with greater avidity upon the resource of fishing?—I suppose the people require money to buy boats and nets, and so forth.

24438. Can you state any actual discouragement given to fishing by the proprietor or his factor?—None whatever. On the contrary, the proprietor encourages many good things on the island, and I am glad to take the opportunity of stating that. He encourages many good things in a moral and social way in the island: his example in many respects is a model to proprietors. We have no complaint against General Burroughs, as I stated; it is against the system, and the law, and the powers in his hands.

24439. The memorial seems to draw a distinction between two kinds of hill pasture: it mentions a large amount which had been withdrawn, and it speaks besides of a commonty. Were there two categories or descriptions of hill pasture?—I presume the commonty you refer to is about the shore and the valley over to the hill country. Rousay is very hilly land—the most hilly place in Orkney except Hoy.

24440. You said after the reduction of proprietors there were still three in the island: has the whole commonty been apportioned and allotted?—Yes.

24441. And fenced?—Yes.

24442. Have the small tenants now no share of the old commonty at all: has it all been taken away, or do they still retain part of it?—Entirely taken away. Those who are near the common may slip across the boundary and feed a sheep or two, but practically it is entirely taken away.

24443. In fact, all the small tenants are within the fences now?—Yes.

24444. At the time the commonty was taken away, do I understand there was no reduction of rent at all?—None: on the contrary, it was increased.

24445. You state that there is an old belief existing in the island, and I have heard of the same belief elsewhere, that the common was in a

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manner inseparable from the holding of arable ground, and that the people had a kind of prescriptive right in it, or a right under some old treaty or charter—have you investigated that point yourself?—No, I have not, but it is a widely spread belief.

24446. Do you think that belief has always existed in the country, or do you think it has been inspired by recent ideas about land tenure?—I think it has always existed; it is stated to have been handed down to us from our forefathers. There is a belief that there is a clause in the treaty which ceded the Orkney Islands to Scotland, reserving a right of settlement in the lands for the people then in the island.

24447. But the people are aware that there are Acts of the Scotch Parliament superseding these alleged diplomatic rights?—Yes; but I understand they hold that the Scotch Parliament had no right to deal with their property in that manner without consulting them. They ask who composed the Parliament. They were never consulted about the disposal of their own property.

24448. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were there no representatives from Orkney in the Scottish Parliament?—They had no great confidence in them even if there were. It has been known that members of Parliament were bought and sold at the time of the Union.

24449. I don't speak of their character?—It is their character as representatives that I speak of. Prices were given to them in connection with the Act of Union.

24450. *The Chairman.*—That is very susceptible of discussion. You mention, in connection with the question of houses, the desire of the people that the Commission should visit the place. It will be impossible for us to visit the place, but I should be happy to hear you make a verbal statement as to the lodgings of the poor. Are the houses of so poor a character that you enter the house through the byre, or is there always a separate entrance?—As a rule, you enter separately to the byre. The byre is usually an outhouse; but the roofs of the dwellings are in some cases, as one of the witnesses may state, letting in water. Where young families are, of course that is very bad, and some of them are in a very undesirable condition. If disease gets in, it just runs through the family.

24451. Are the walls of stone and lime, or open stone?—Open stone, I understand.

24452. You spoke of the danger of fever; that looks as if the houses were contaminated by cattle or something of that kind. Is the byre built against the house?—It is often in the same building.

24453. Has there been any fever?—There was a severe epidemic of diphtheria there some years ago, which caused great havoc.

24454. Has the public health officer ever denounced any building as a nuisance, or dangerous to the health of its inmates?—May I ask who the public health officer is?

24455. Is there no inspector of nuisances appointed in the parish?—No; there is an inspector of poor, in a manner, who holds that office.

24456. But no inspector of nuisances?—No; and he is not a man who has in the slightest degree the confidence of the people.

24457. The inspector of poor?—Yes; but quite the contrary.

24458. What is his condition?—He is a retired teacher.

24459. Appointed by the Parochial Board?—I suppose so; he must be.

24460. There are three proprietors whom you mentioned?—Yes.

24461. Have the two smaller proprietors any tenants, or do they farm their own land?—They farm their own land entirely.

24462. Are they members of the Parochial Board?—Yes; at least

one is; I have heard so from himself; but I don't remember of seeing the name of the other in the list.

24463. Do they show any interest in the welfare of the parish — do they take an active part in the School Board?—One of them is a member of the School Board; but he does not attend the Parochial Board, although he is a member of it.

24464. Are the cases of outrage which you mention peculiar to the island, or are cases of malicious injury not rather common to Orkney generally—I mean, is it not rather a distinctive feature in the limited amount of crime in this country, that of malicious outrage?—I don't quite understand your lordship's question.

24465. You have stated that there are cases of malicious injury done to property or animals, and the memorial seems to attribute that to the peculiar management and condition of this estate?—Entirely.

24466. But I have heard it said that malicious injury to property is rather characteristic of Orkney, in the limited amount of crime which prevails here?—Yes, but you observe the cause that evoked this outrage was the land.

24467. Distinctively?—Distinctively.

24468. And not personal resentment or spite of one tenant towards another?—Of course it was spite, but the cause of the spite was the land arrangement.

24469. You stated that the procurator-fiscal is at the same time the law-agent of the proprietor; what do you understand by law-agent? Has the procurator-fiscal any part in the management of the property, in advising with reference to the management of the land at all?—I understand he has a very influential part.

24470. Do you think, in your own case, that he is in any degree as it were the factor on the estate?—Well, to some extent. The proprietor himself is permanently resident.

24471. Has he any other factor?—He has a resident factor.

24472. Has he a ground officer, or a superior factor?—He has a superior factor. There is also a road contractor, and one or two minor servants.

24473. Is it complained of that the procurator-fiscal should stand in these relations to the proprietor; is it a matter of discontent or suspicion in the place?—I cannot say that I have had much communication with the people on that point; but of course being procurator-fiscal, in any case betwixt tenant and proprietor, being law agent for the proprietor involves——

24474. There is an inconsistency in my mind in the language of the memorial on the one side, and your personal reference to the proprietor on the other. You personally state that it is the system which is complained of, and the law, and not the character of the proprietor; but in the memorial, there is the strongest indication of personal maladminstration, with which the law has nothing whatever to do, because the law does not consolidate land, does not turn out tenants, does not prevent the proprietor giving compensation. The whole memorial seems to be a direct incrimination of the proprietor. On the other hand, you state you do not complain of the proprietor at all; what do you mean by that?—I beg your pardon, I don't think there is anything inconsistent in that. Our complaint is that the laws of the country allow General Burroughs to do such things.

24475. They don't oblige him to do them?—Not oblige, but allow.

24476. But they don't encourage him to do it?—They allow him; and the complaint is that he does it.

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24477. I think there is some inconsistency in it. I don't accuse General Burroughs, but at the same time there is inconsistency in these two statements. But I shall be happy to know, as you indicate, that it is rather the bad system than an oppressive proprietor?—So far as there are any charges against the proprietor, and his character as such, I abide by the terms of the statement I read.

24478. Then I shall be happy now if you would have the goodness to state what you referred to before—the points in which the proprietor is a benevolent and useful proprietor?—I meant to say that he shows a good moral example, and discourages all forms of vice, such as drunkenness, in the parish; and that he takes a great interest in such matters as education. He acts as chairman of our School Board. In his personal dealing with the people he is generally kindly; but that of course does not alter at all the facts of the case.

24479. Is there any medical officer in the parish?—Not resident. There is one appointed for the parish, but he resides in another parish, and there is an arm of the sea, about two miles wide, between us and him which frequently cannot be crossed, and one may take ill and die before the doctor can possibly come to him.

24480. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that this paper was read at a meeting last Saturday?—Yes.

24481. And approved by the crofters? We can see by the alterations made that they had been consulted about it step by step?—Yes, these alterations were made by themselves.

24482. I see this sort of alteration—'wanton and inconsiderate inhumanity,' is altered to 'utterly inconsiderate and unrighteous manner 'in which we are treated by the proprietor.' Was that alteration made at the instance of the tenants?—The original language was 'wanton and inconsiderate inhumanity,' and I suggested that they might say the same thing in milder language, and that was agreed to.

24483. The original sentence was dictated by one of the tenants?—Yes.

24484. Do you abide by the statement in the paper, that General Burroughs is 'utterly inconsiderate and unrighteous' in his treatment of the people?—With great respect, I speak as the mouth-piece of the people, and I really cannot withdraw the language.

24485. I suppose the evictions of 1842 were not the work of General Burroughs?—No, I wished to state this, but I forgot.

24486. The subsequent evictions you referred to are the cases of the tenant of Hammer and the occupiers of East Craye?—Yes.

24487. How many evictions were there?—East Craye was occupied by one crofter. He was evicted from one place which he had built and reclaimed, and then he was allowed to build in East Craye. The rent was then 10s., which has increased until it is now five times that amount.

24488. How long was he in the place before the rent was raised in that way?—We have a statement from him here—[reads]—'*Statement by* '*William Robertson, crofter, of East Craye, Sourin, Rousay,* for Her 'Majesty's Royal Commission on the Highlands and Islands:—My croft 'of East Craye is on the property of General Burroughs of Rousay and 'Viera. I am a native of the parish of Rousay, and am now seventy-two 'years of age. About 1845, I took a small croft at another part of the 'island from that where I now live, and got on that croft about a quarter 'of an acre cultivated when I entered on it. I paid 22s. of rent on that 'holding. As I improved, more rent was put upon me, until at last I 'was obliged to leave it altogether. I then got permission to build a 'dwelling on the hillside where I now live, where there was no cultivation

'of any kind, nor houses. I began to build, and got up with much 'trouble a humble cottage and outhouses suitable. I ditched and drained 'more than I was able, and got a little of the heather surface broken up. 'At this time I paid 12s.; but again, as I improved, more and more rent 'was laid on till I am now rented at a sum which is five times the rent 'I paid at first for a house I built myself. At the same time the common 'was taken away from me, as from all others; so that I am now not able 'to pay such a rent, nor to defend myself in any way, as I am wholly 'under the control and will of the proprietor.—WILLIAM ROBERTSON. 'JAMES LEONARD, witness.'

24489. *The Chairman.*—Whom was the statement drawn up by?—It was taken from his own mouth by James Robertson in his own language, and it is signed by himself.

24490. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—I suppose you don't know the date when he removed from the one croft to the other?—I cannot exactly say.

24491. The paper does not say that?—No.

24492. *The Chairman.*—The statement is written in the same handwriting as the other: whose handwriting is it?—It is mine, but I merely wrote it because there was no other man able to do it. I was asked to do it, and I should consider it unbecoming of my position if I were to refuse such an office for any one.

24493. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Two years ago the tenant of Hammer was evicted?—Yes.

24494. That is the only case of eviction mentioned, is it not, in General Burroughs' time?—Yes.

24495. Do you know from what cause he was evicted?—No cause whatever, except to make a large farm out of four holdings.

24496. There were four tenants removed?—No; other two got some land.

24497. What sort of rent was the tenant paying who was removed?—I think he paid £15 a year.

24498. And the other tenant who was removed, what became of him?—The tenant of Hammer was evicted out of land, but the changes made then involved changes in three or rather four farms, and one of the tenants got the advantage of the other three by having their land given to him. Of the three who were evicted by that change, two got other land, one was allowed to remain in his own land, because the changes were not carried out owing to the ejections, and one got other land to reclaim, partly at least.

24499. Are the tenants of Rousay in the habit of remonstrating with General Burroughs when he behaves in what they consider an unrighteous way to them?—Yes.

24500. Does he pay any attention to that?—No practical attention; no remedy was given.

24501. But you are aware that these grievances which exist have been represented to him as grievances?—Yes. The woman from Hammer is here to-day, and has been applying for parochial relief.

24502. We are talking of the general complaint of inconsiderate conduct; was that represented to him?—Yes.

24503. Have you represented to him that there is this general bad feeling in the parish?—I cannot remember very well. I have spoken to him on behalf of some of the poor, but I have not been long here, and I have no influence of any kind on the estate.

24504. But you represent your own congregation, I suppose?—I have spoken perhaps of that.

24505. And you have not found he has paid any attention?—No; there has been no attention paid, so far as I know.

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24506. There are certain large farms which have been made since 1842: has there been any increase in the size of the smaller holdings?—I may mention before I answer that, that I was written to by the proprietor to visit the district where the disturbance took place, as the people all belonged to my congregation. I had just visited them before I received the letter, and I replied to that effect. He said, unless there was quiet, the sub-tenants would have to go out. In my reply I stated that the same threat ought to be held out to all parties, as it took two to make peace as well as to make a quarrel, and the one could not look for peace unless justice was first given as the seed of peace.

24507. Did you point out the particular case of injustice to which you were referring?—I said he ought not to hold a threat over the head of one and not over the heads of the others, because in that case the threat was not so much in the interest of justice as simply forcing of quiet.

24508. Has there been any increase in the size of the smaller holdings?—There may be some increase, but it is very largely by the people taking in and reclaiming land themselves.

24509. Will that extension of the arable land not account for the desertion of the fishing?—I cannot express an opinion upon the question.

24510. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been minister here?—About three years.

24511. Are you a native of Rousay?—No.

24512. From where do you come?—Glasgow.

24513. You have been careful upon more than one occasion to state that you appear for the people as a delegate?—Entirely.

24514. I wish to ask you this question: So far as you yourself have had opportunities of observing the state of the parish in your intercourse with the people, are you disposed to agree in the correctness of the statements in the memorial?—Yes. I already stated that to his Lordship in the chair, that I entirely concur in the statements.

24515. You individually and personally do concur?—Yes.

24516. With reference to the houses, we have been informed in another part of the country, in one of these islands, that there are families occupying one room: do you refer to anything of this kind when you say the houses are unfit for habitation, or do you merely mean that they are in disrepair?—I have often remarked where all the members of the family could sleep. There are only one or two bedrooms at the most.

24517. You know cases where there is a considerable family and only two bedrooms?—Yes; and as far as I know only one sleeping apartment, but I should not like to state that definitely. I have often wondered where all the family slept.

24518. Are there leases, do you know, on General Burroughs' property?—I understand there are some.

24519. Among the smaller people—those paying under £30?—Very few: I should think none, to people paying under £30.

24520. You stated that the rental of the larger farms may have been increased within the last forty years or so?—It may.

25921. You have also stated that in some cases the rent has been quadrupled?—There is one case, William Robertson's, in which the rent has been increased fivefold.

24522. Are you aware that any of the big farms have been quintupled?—No, nor anything like it.

24523. You have stated that you had no objection either to General Burroughs or his factor, but that you objected to the laws which enable him to cause considerable hardship and injustice to the tenants: is that not what you have stated?—Yes. Of course my objection must apply to

the proprietor and the factor both in their capacities as proprietor and factor; with their private character I have nothing to do.

24524. So I understand you to mean that you don't wish the law to be such as to enable any proprietor, good or bad, to do such things as the memorial complains of?—Yes.

24525. That is really what you are pointing at?—Yes.

24526. Because you must admit what the chairman has stated that there may be very bad laws and the landlord may be very good, so that these bad laws are practically inoperative?—The bad laws may be inoperative under a good proprietor, certainly.

24527. But you don't wish that anybody good or bad should have these powers?—Certainly not.

24528. *Mr Cameron.*—How long has this property been in the Burroughs family?—I understand that the proprietor succeeded to his uncle. I think his uncle bought the estate, but I am not sure.

24529. You stated that within recent periods—that is to say, within the time during which General Burroughs has been proprietor—there has been only one case of eviction?—Yes, only one so far as I know.

24530. Such as people might complain of?—I think there have been more previous cases.

24531. But since General Burroughs has been in possession, there has been only one?—Yes, there have been frequent cases. I heard to-day of one man who had been evicted three times after reclaiming three times.

24532. I understood you to say that this case of Hammer was the only case of eviction by General Burroughs?—No; the language of the memorial is, 'one recent case, which only occurred two years ago.'

24533. Can you state any other recent cases?—There was the case of one of these people who were tenants of Bracken, who first received land some years ago and reclaimed it, partly at least, and after he had made a good farm for himself there, he was evicted at the same time as the Hammer people, and was sent to reclaim other land, or partly at least. He may have retained a part of the good land.

24534. But he is still a tenant on General Burroughs' property?—Yes.

24535. Do you know any other case in recent times where the tenant has been evicted absolutely by General Burroughs—wantonly evicted?—I cannot state any other case of wanton eviction.

24536. You state that the people are in the habit of reclaiming land?—Yes.

24537. Would this fact, coupled with the fact that there have been no wanton evictions, not rather tend to show that there is no great demand, any real demand, by the people for any further security of tenure—the two facts that there have been no evictions, and that the people are satisfied to reclaim land without leases:—does that not indicate that the people themselves have no real cause of alarm lest they should be turned out?—Not in my opinion.

24538. Were you born in Glasgow?—Yes.

24539. Have you ever been in the West Highlands?—Yes; I am connected with the West Highlands.

24540. You stated that the chief complaint about houses consisted in the wet coming through the roofs?—Not entirely; they are in an undesirable condition.

24541. But I think, in answer to the chairman, who requested to know in what respect the houses may be made better, you said that the chief complaint was that the wet came through the roof?—That

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was the complaint that I heard to-day only, and it may be witnessed to by the parties present. But I regard the houses as not in the most cleanly condition, but far from it.

24542. Comparing the houses here with those in the West Highlands, do you consider that the Orkney or West Highland crofters' houses, are in the best condition?—The only part of the West Highlands I have ever been in is Islay, and I consider the houses there are better.

24543. Does wet come more through the houses in the West Highlands, or the houses in Orkney?—In Orkney; the wet will come through the best houses in Orkney.

24544. But it depends on the quantity of the wet, does it not?—Yes.

24545. *The Chairman.*—In the case of small tenants taking up new ground—heather ground—and improving it, and afterwards having their rent, as they think, oppressively raised, are they allowed to sit some years at a nominal rent for the purpose of encouraging them to improve?—Yes, they are; the old rent is not raised, perhaps for a year or two.

24546. A year or two sounds very little; but have they a considerable term of years during which they pay a nominal rent?—No; in some cases, there may be a considerable term, but I have heard great complaints of that,—that they have no inducement to improve, because the rent will be at once put on.

24547. Supposing a more considerable term of years at a low rent was given to them, during which they built their own houses and improved the ground, do you think that if they had compensation for improvements, they would object to a reasonable rise of rent at a period?—Not if they were compensated for labour and material, I suppose. The complaint is that an increase is put upon the rent, which is already excessive.

24548. You were asked about the moral effects of the houses; I should like to hear you state that more exactly. Do you think that overcrowding of the people in one or two rooms exists to such a degree as to be prejudicial to their morality and decency?—I should be sorry to say that.

24549. Do you think, in many cases, there is only one room actually in the dwelling?—If your Lordship visited a house, you would observe, when you go out of the door, there is often a vast erection of beds, and you cannot say what is behind. I suspect the beds frequently form a partition betwixt one end of the house and the other. Of course, if you erected beds here it would practically form two rooms.

24550. The box beds make a partition?—So far as I am aware.

24551. But there is always a partition between the cow-house and the room; or are there cases in which the cow-house is open to the room?—I know of none such.

24552. Are you aware of any cases in which two families—two married couples with children—are living in the same house of two rooms; I mean a father and his wife, and a son and his wife, or a near relative of the family and his wife?—One of the delegates mentions a case, but I may say no to the question.

24553. Have you any statement to make in addition, voluntarily?—None, except that owing to the questions put by your Lordship and the other Commissioners, I desire to emphasise the statement, that I had nothing to do with this movement, but was requested repeatedly to come forward and act as the mouth-piece of the people. I rather avoided taking any part in the matter.

24554. But I think it my duty to reiterate that we don't wish you to regard any questions which have been put to you on this occasion, or our general attitude to you, as the least indicative of any blame that we cast upon you for having assumed these offices.—I did not understand your Lordship to do so; on the contrary, I must thank you for the courteous manner in which you have received me. [*Supplementary evidence.*]—I desire to take this opportunity of supplementing the answer I gave to one of the questions put to me at Kirkwall on the 23rd July. I desire this specially, because the question was put twice—first to myself, and afterwards to General Burroughs of Rousay. It was, I think, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie who put the question on both occasions. The Commissioners will no doubt receive this answer in its ampler form, as the chairman said at the close of the sitting they could not hear any further evidence that day for want of time, although they were anxious to receive all available evidence. This was said in reply to my desire to be allowed to supplement one or two statements; and I therefore trust that this present statement now sent may be received and engrossed. The question I refer to was substantially to this effect—'Did you ever make any remonstrance to the proprietor, or represent to 'him the complaints of the people?' In replying, I was unable at the moment to remember any special instance of my having done so. I had not expected the question. But before the close of the sittings I recollected and stated two separate instances in which I had so acted. I now desire to state that on my settlement in Rousay I heard much complaint of various kinds from the people, all more or less connected with the land, and I entertained the idea of speaking to the proprietor on their behalf. I was, however, advised by the people not to do so, as it would be useless. They told me that my reverend predecessors in this ministerial charge had both of them expostulated in their day, the one (the Rev. George Ritchie) with Mr Traill, the uncle of the present proprietor, and the other (still living, but now in another charge) with the present proprietor himself. I was told that Mr Ritchie had solemnly warned Mr Traill of the results of his conduct, reminding him that 'the earth is the 'Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' This was specially said in view of some evictions intended at the time. Mr Traill, however, persevered in these, or at least in his purpose; but within a twelvemonth, before that purpose was carried out, the cold hand of death laid him in his grave. I was also informed that my immediate predecessor in this place had frequently remonstrated with the present proprietor, but never with any effect. I was generally dissuaded, therefore, from endeavouring a task apparently so fruitless. I resolved, however, after due consideration and experience, shortly after I was settled in Rousay, that it was my duty in the sight of the Most High to speak—my duty both to proprietor and people. I did speak accordingly to him on the subject of the state and complaints of the body of the people. I did so on an occasion when I met him near his own mansion-house, and was with him for some time. The result was anything but satisfactory, he practically declining to hear anything on the subject, and saying, 'They agreed to pay their rents, and must do so,' or words to that precise effect. I objected—'What if they cannot?' and I added, 'They tell me, many of them, they cannot.' His answer was, 'Well, they must just leave and go elsewhere, and I'll get others to do it.' After this, and the manner in which it was said, I felt it worse than fruitless to proceed with the subject. Occasionally, from time to time, I made representations of a like nature. Two instances of this I mentioned in my evidence of 23rd July. On one of these occasions General Burroughs had written me, requesting me to use my influence to get the peace kept

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between parties whom certain changes of his on the land had set at variance. I replied, amongst other things, that I had already visited them in the course of regular visitation only a few days previously, but that it was idle to expect peace till that justice of which peace is but the fruit was observed. I declare all this to be true with regard to my own action and experience as concerning proprietor and people. With regard to that of my predecessors in the ministry I now exercise here, I have every confidence in the testimony universally given to me here by those who ought to know well, and they are many.

GEORGE LEONARD, Crofter, Triblo (67)—examined.

George Leonard.

24555. *Mr Cameron.*—Are you a fisherman as well as a crofter?—Not now.

24556. Were you a delegate freely elected by your neighbours?—Yes.

24557. On what day did the meeting take place?—The last meeting was on Saturday last.

24558. Was that the meeting referred to by the Rev. Mr MacCallum?—Yes.

24559. Was it a pretty fairly attended meeting?—Yes.

24560. How long have you held land under General Burroughs?—I had the first land when I was twenty-six years of age.

24561. Was that the same land as you occupy now?—No; I was one of those who were put out for sheep pasture.

24562. How were you provided for otherwise?—I was in a small bit of house, and then I got liberty to build a house on Sourin.

24563. What happened to you when the land was taken from you to make a sheep farm?—I had to leave the place.

24564. Where did you go to?—To where I am yet.

24565. How far is that from the old place?—Between three and four miles; round about it will be more.

24566. What was the rent you paid for the former place?—When I married, the rent was 10s., and I took off the roof and made some improvement on it, and there was 10s. raised on me.

24567. What land did you occupy for the 10s. without counting the improvements?—I cannot say; about an acre I think.

24568. Which was already improved?—Yes.

24569. And then you improved more?—Yes, and there was 10s. raised on me.

24570. The land that was already cultivated was rented at 10s., but you had the pasture ground?—Yes.

24571. What amount of stock did you keep on the pasture ground?—A cow and some sheep.

24572. How many sheep?—I could not say. They were running at large; they were merely small things.

24573. But you had the whole of that for 10s.?—That is what my wife paid when I came to the house.

24574. And you went on paying the same rent?—There was 10s. raised on me.

24575. But for the land already cultivated, and for the outrun for cattle and sheep, you paid 10s.; what improvements did you make?—I took off the roof and put on a new one, and I improved some of the land, and then there was 10s. raised on me.

24576. How soon was the 10s. put on after you improved the land?—Half a year after, I think.

24577. How do you know that the 10s. was put on for improving the land, and was not a natural rise for the land you before occupied, which was low rented?—It was an old woman and my wife who were in it, and it was low rented. But I improved again, and as soon as I improved the second time, there was 10s. put on again.

24578. How much did you improve the second time?—About two acres, I think, of hill pasture.

24579. You made hill pasture into arable ground, and 10s. was put upon you?—Yes.

24580. How long after this was it that you were removed?—I was in it somewhere between ten and eleven years.

24581. When you were removed, did you get any compensation?—None.

24582. What year was that in?—I could not be sure.

24583. Somebody says 1857; is that so?—I think so.

24584. You were removed to the place you now occupy: what is the rent of it?—It was £2 when I got it. There was about an acre of ground, and I built houses. There were no houses on it then, they were down, and I built houses and occupied the ground for some years, and then I improved it.

24585. How much land did you take in?—I could not say. I think I had about three acres then, and I had a fourteen years' lease.

24586. How many acres of cultivated land were there in this place when you first went there?—I think about an acre.

24587. And what was the rent—£2?—Yes.

24588. Had you a fourteen years' lease then?—Yes.

24589. And during that time did you improve the land?—Yes.

24590. How much land did you improve?—I couldn't just say. I think about two or three acres.

24591. Was the rent raised upon you?—Yes.

24592. At the end of the fourteen years' lease?—Yes.

24593. You came to an agreement with the landlord?—Yes.

24594. But for these fourteen years you had the croft for £2?—Yes.

24595. What stock did you keep in it?—Generally two cattle.

24596. Any sheep?—Two or three sheep too.

24597. You heard the previous witness mention that the rents were very high in this parish: do you consider £2 a high rent for a croft of that size?—I did not consider it was high then.

24598. What is it now?—Six guineas.

24599. Do you keep any more stock upon it?—Not so many, because the pasture was taken from me to a great extent. There is a small portion of the ground yet in peat-moss and bracken, but nothing worth.

24600. Describe exactly what took place after the rent was raised at the end of the fourteen years. When you entered into a new arrangement with the landlord did you get a fresh lease?—Yes, for seven years.

24601. What took place exactly, did you go to the landlord and ask a fresh lease, or did the factor come to you, or how?—When the lease was out and I paid my rent, I asked for a lease again.

24602. What answer did you get?—I got the answer that I would get a lease for seven years.

24603. What answer did you make to that?—I had to take it.

24604. Did you say anything at the time?—I said I had to take it.

24605. But did you make any objection or say that the rent was too high?—No doubt I did that; I did so.

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24606. You said that the rent was too high?—Yes.

24607. Did you take the place all the same?—I had to take it because I had built a house and improved the ground, and what could I do. I had nowhere to go to.

24608. You had no option but to take it?—No.

24609. And you just took the lease?—Just so.

24610. At the end of the seven years what happened?—Another pound was put on.

24611. And did the same conversation take place between you and the factor?—Just the same.

24612. You said that it was too high, and the factor said he thought it was not?—Yes.

24613. And you ended by taking it on another tack?—Yes.

24614. Did you hear the Rev. Mr MacCallum mention that there were outrages committed in the district?—Yes, I heard of that.

24615. Would you describe the nature of those outrages—what were they?—I cannot: it was in a different district from where I stay.

24616. They did not commit the outrages in your district?—No, I just heard of them.

24617. What did they do, did they hough the cattle?—No, but I think they broke some farm utensils: I don't remember of them injuring any cattle.

24618. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is your own statement of complaint much the same as that of the people round about you?—Much the same I think.

24619. You had a place first for fourteen years and then the rent was increased: would you consider it fair that it should be increased a bit at the end of that lease?—I would have allowed a little, but I think it was increased too much.

24620. Your complaint is that it was increased too much?—Yes, I would be willing to give what a conscientious man would say it was worth, but I would not like to give the rent I was giving before. When I was young and fit to work I could give it, but now I am getting old.

24621. Do you think you would have made more of it—that you would have improved it more—if you had what you consider fairer terms?—Yes; and I would have put up better houses too. The houses are generally very little worth now, since I built them thirty years ago, and I have no lease, but hold from year to year.

24622. Do you think your neighbours also would have improved their places more if they had longer leases and lower rents?—I am sure of it. If they had any security of the property there is no doubt of it; and they would have built better houses too. But if you built houses and improved the property, the rent was raised; and if you didn't pay it you were put away.

24623. When you got the seven years' leases did you wish them for a longer term?—I think we did, but I am not perfectly sure. I think we wanted them to be for fourteen years.

24624. When the seven years came to an end, you only held from year to year?—I think I got another seven years' lease.

24625. Did you wish a lease at the end of the second seven years?—Always.

24626. What was the reason you did not get a lease upon the last occasion?—I cannot say. I was told that the whole place was offered to another big farm, to make sheep pasture. I was told by the man who holds the farm that he had an offer of the whole place, to add it on to his farm.

24627. Did you consider the first lease of fourteen years at £2 fair terms?—I did.

24628. What increase do you think would be reasonable to make on the rent since that time?—Well, Mr Balfour, factor in Shapinshay, was there, and I understand he was looking at the place. I spoke to him, as I thought he was a man of conscience—he is dead now—and he asked me what rent I paid. I told him four guineas, and he wanted to know how I could live on the place.

24629. He thought four guineas too high?—He just wanted me to describe how I could hold the place and make a living out of it.

24630. And he was factor in Shapinshay at the time?—Yes, and I think an excellent man.

24631. He was a man of knowledge and experience of the place?—He was that.

24632. What would you consider a fair rent for your place upon a long lease?—£4 or four guineas; I would not wish to ask it for less I would be willing to give what a man of conscience would say it was worth, as long as I could.

24633. You would be willing to give what an outsider with knowledge and experience would say was a fair rent, if he knew the history of your improvements upon it, and your tenure in the past?—I would.

24634. But once having built your houses upon it, and having remained there for years, you would not like to leave it?—Where would I go?

24635. And even supposing a higher rent was charged you would still have remained?—I would remain as long as I could, because when I had nothing to give I would have to be supported some way.

24636. But in fixing the rent you had no voice whatever?—No.

24637. You would be able to make a living out of the croft if the rent was £4?—No, I could not do that.

24638. Supposing you had it at £4?—Well, I only have my wife now—my children are all away—and I might make a bit of endeavour to live in that way too.

24639. Your income would be at least £2, 6s. a year more than it is?—Still, that would be a good deal.

24640. Have you any other means of livelihood beside the croft—work or fishing of any kind?—I used to go to the fishing, and I used to make shoes and carry on any kind of work; but now I am not fit for that, and it takes me my whole time to work on the croft. In that way I ask for nothing.

24641. What kind of stock do you keep?—Cattle.

24642. Are they of the old Orkney breed?—There are not many of them here now.

24643. What is the breed?—Just cross breed.

24644. And what stock of sheep have you?—I have three.

24645. What kind?—Just crosses.

24646. And it is the outcome of that stock that you pay the rent with?—It must be relied on that, indeed. I have four head of cattle at the present time. But I must only keep two for this season, because we have no crop which is worth.

24647. Is the crop very bad this year?—Cruelly bad; I think we have just about half what we had last year.

24648. Are you able to summer more stock than your crop can winter for you?—Yes, owing to this piece of outbreak of hill above us. We drive them to it, but it just keeps them alive, and no more; it is only heather and peat moss. But we buy for them in winter.

24649. Could you pay rent in the old place you were in forty years ago?—Yes.

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24650. And now you are afraid after being forty years in the place, and having built a house and improved the land, that you should be removed again?—Yes. I cannot make any improvement on the place, because I have no security.

24651. *The Chairman.*—Have you any horses?—No.

24652. How many acres of arable land have you?—It was measured to me for ten and a half acres, the whole in a square.

24653. How much of that is in pasture, and how much do you break up in rotation?—There may be about six or seven acres under the plough.

24654. Do you raise potatoes and oats?—We try it as far as possible.

24655. Do you use the grain that you grow for your own family, for their subsistence?—I do, when I can get any of it.

24656. Where do you get it ground?—In the mill a short distance from us; but I have not ground any for some years.

24657. Do you give the oats to the cattle?—No, but I am giving a little to the hens, or anything of that sort.

24658. What is the reason that the number of fishing boats has diminished?—Well, I think it is that a great many of the young men have left the island, because they have no way of stepping into; the old people cannot go.

24659. What sort of fishing did they go to—herring or cod?—Both herring and cod. I remember a great many fishing boats, and I had one of them too.

24660. Did the fishing make it easier for the people to pay their rent?—A great deal: they could have done little with the rents if they had not gone to the fishing.

24661. Do you sell the stirk or the two-year-old?—I would not have had so many this year, only I had an old cow, and I had to keep a young one to fill its place.

24662. But you generally sell them at two years of age?—Yes; I have but a year-old just now.

24663. How much do you get for the two-year-old when you sell it?—The last I sold for £4; but it was a year-old.

24664. But when you sell it at two years old what do you get?—I never sold one at two years old.

24665. Do you have a two-year-old now?—Yes.

24666. What do you intend to do with it?—I intend to work it.

24667. And plough with it?—Yes.

24668. Do you borrow another man's ox to plough alongside of it?—I take another man's and I plough to him again.

24669. Do you like ploughing better with an ox than with a horse?—I could not keep a horse a week.

24670. Do you think oxen are better than horses?—They are better in some cases, but I must do with it as I can.

24671. Do most of the small tenants about you keep oxen for ploughing?—Some do, and some who have pasture get horses as they are required.

24672. They have always been in the habit of using oxen?—Yes.

24673. Can you plough with the old small cattle of the country?—Yes, with the hardiest ones.

24674. Which do you use now?—The cross breed; of course we must use what we have.

24675. Do they plough better?—They may be powerfuller, bigger and stouter, sometimes.

24676. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—What would the old cows fetch if you were to sell them?—It depends on its condition. The flesh on it is not great, and we have no grass to give it.

24677. What do you expect for them?—Maybe about £15 or £16. I have sold one at that, and I have sold one at £10.

24678. How long do you keep them before you sell them?—It is just as we can get another one raised. I have had the one I have just now about nine years.

24679. When do the cows begin to fall in value?—At six or seven years old.

24680. *The Chairman.*—And the one you have is nine or ten years old?—Yes.

24681. But will he still fatten for the market?—Fine that; but it takes more to feed him.

24682. Do you put the ox in the cart?—Yes.

24683. How do you harness it—like a horse?—Just the same.

24684. Was that the way the old people did, or had they another way?—They had another way. They had a yoke on the ox's neck—a piece of iron round its neck, and fastened to the shafts of the cart.

24685. Wasn't that the better way?—I cannot say; but I have seen it that way and worked it too.

24686. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Have you plenty of peats on the island of Rousay?—Yes.

24687. Convenient to you?—Some are convenient, and some are a long way from them.

24688. Do you generally carry them on your backs?—No, we cart them.

24689. Is that the custom among the people?—It is the custom now; carrying on the back used to be the practice.

24690. But none of them do it now?—Some poor people who have not carts and cannot get them home in spring have to carry them in winter.

24691. How are you off for sea-ware?—I get none, because I have no road to the sea-ware.

24692. What manure do you use?—I have none but what I buy, and a little dung from the cattle. I drive a little moss from the hill.

24693. How far are you from the sea?—Not very far.

24694. Why cannot you get seaware?—Because there is not much to get, and the roads are so wet in winter that I cannot travel to the mill without going on my neighbour's land.

24695. Are your people generally well supplied with sea-ware?—Not in my district. In the district I was in before they were, but not in this district.

24696. Is there any kelp made in the island?—None now.

24697. Was there ever?—Yes; I was at that trade too, once on a time.

24698. How long ago?—I think about forty years ago.

24699. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have heard the paper Mr MacCallum read: do you concur in it as correct?—As far as I understand, I do.

24700. Do you believe that it represents the real feelings and sentiments of the tenants on the Burrough's estate—the small people?—I do.

24701. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You spoke about being afraid of being evicted, as you have no lease now?—Yes.

24702. You are not secure in your holding?—No.

24703. Are many of your neighbours in the same position?—Just the same; I think there are about a dozen or more in the same position.

24704. Your land you say was offered to a farmer?—The man told me so.

24705. And some of your neighbours' land also?—The whole square about us.

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24706. Including how many families?—About a dozen, I think.
24707. But he did not take it?—No.
24708. If he had done so, then they would all have had to go?—I think so.

Mrs GEORGINA INKSTER, wife of HUGH INKSTER, Hammer, Rousay (35)—examined.

Mrs Georgina Inkster.

24709. *The Chairman.*—Your husband was formerly tenant or crofter at Hammer?—Yes.
24710. You wish to state a personal grievance before the Commission?—Yes: they have entirely taken our farm away.
24711. Do you come here of your own accord, spontaneously, or have you been asked or prompted to come here by anybody?—I come of my own accord.
24712. Would you now state what your grievance is?—My grievance is that our property is entirely taken away and we are just destitute. I asked parochial relief and there was none granted.
24713. Where is your husband at this moment?—I cannot say. He was not home when I left the house.
24714. He has been in the Infirmary in Edinburgh?—Yes.
24715. Has he come home?—Yes.
24716. But he is not here just now, in Kirkwall?—No.
24717. Your husband was formerly a crofter or tenant on General Burroughs estate?—Yes.
24718. How long was he a crofter?—Three years.
24719. What was he before that?—He kept the house for his mother; she was a widow and he kept the farm for her.
24720. She had the croft?—Yes.
24721. Three years ago he became the tenant, did he not?—Five years ago; it is close on two years now since it was taken away.
24722. Were you married then?—Yes.
24723. And you were living with your husband in the same house with his mother during her time?—In the same house.
24724. When your husband got the croft five years ago was there a new settlement of the rent?—Yes; the rent was £15 for fifteen acres.
24725. It was settled at £15 when he became tenant?—Yes.
24726. How much had it been before, in his mother's time?—It was not the same croft at all.
24727. He got a new croft of fifteen acres at £15 five years ago?—Yes.
24728. Did he get any lease of it?—None.
24729. When he entered the new croft was there a house upon it?—The same house that is on it yet, but it is very bad.
24730. During the three years that he was on the croft did he spend any money on improving the house?—None of any consequence, but he did improve a little on the roof.
24731. Did he make any dykes or enclosures?—None.
24732. Did he improve the land?—The land was improved before
24733. Did he take in any new land?—None. He just had exactly fifteen acres and there was no more to take in.
24734. He took fifteen acres of land for £15 and remained three years: did he pay his rent punctually?—He did that.
24735. And at the end of three years he was not in arrear?—Only a

little for the last year, and he was at the factor and offered to pay that too, but could not get a settlement.

24736. When he took the fifteen acres was there any verbal understanding that he was to go on holding it?—I think so.

24737. Do you know it?—I think so. If we could have kept it, we would have been glad to keep it.

24738. Did your husband ever tell you that the factor had promised him to remain in that holding?—We just had it from year to year.

24739. You had no promise?—None.

24740. He held it for three years and then what happened?—It was in consequence, I suppose, of his health giving way: he has been a man in delicate health for fourteen years.

24741. At the end of the three years did the factor come and tell him he was not to remain there any longer?—Yes.

24742. When did your husband learn that,—when he went to pay his rent?—I cannot remember.

24743. Did the factor give him any reason for that?—None. The land was put on to the next farm.

24744. Did your husband sell his stock?—Yes.

24745. Did the proprietor pay him any compensation or let him off any of his rent?—None.

24746. Did the proprietor buy his stock or take it off his hand?—No. The most of the stock was his mother's, but she gave it to my husband and we were to pay her as we could get it.

24747. His mother was still alive?—Yes, she is alive yet.

24748. Did the factor tell your husband why he took the land away?—No.

24749. Then your husband just lost it?—Yes.

24750. Did he ever pay the factor any more money in order to be allowed to stay?—I don't think it. It was no use, he would not get it.

24751. What became of your husband; was he in good health at the time he left the farm?—No, not very. It is fourteen years since he was in good health—there has not been a year in that time he has been in good health. During the last two years he has been entirely unable to earn a sixpence.

24752. Who does he live with?—We are just destitute.

24753. You still remain in the same house?—Yes, and the land is taken away. We have nothing.

24754. Has he got any means of subsistence at all?—The means were his mother's; if it had not been her we would not have been alive.

24755. Does he help his mother in the management of her croft?—She has no croft. When my husband entered his croft his mother came along with us. The croft at Hammer was stocked by her and she gave up her own croft.

24756. And are you living with the mother now?—Yes, my husband's mother and sister are living in a room in the end of our house.

24757. Are they able to earn anything?—Not the mother, but the sister is.

24758. Are you able to earn anything?—I have a small family and cannot get out to work if I were able; my youngest child is an infant.

24759. What is your particular complaint at this moment?—Is it that you are not allowed to remain in the holding which your husband got?—Yes, and we are entirely destitute and have been applying for relief and none has been granted.

24760. Your complaint just now is that you have applied for parochial relief and none has been granted to you?—Yes.

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24761. Have you appeared before the Parochial Board yourself?—Yes.

24762. How long ago?—I was at the inspector of poor but not before the board.

24763. What reason did the inspector give you for not granting relief?—The General was not at home, and he said he would write the General and give me an answer. The answer did not come and my husband sent a note to the inspector, and the inspector said he called a meeting of the Parochial Board and the case was laid down and that unless he got a certificate from the medical officer of the parish that my husband was quite unable to work there would be no relief granted. He also said that if relief was granted my husband would find it in the poor-house in Kirkwall.

24764. Did your husband get the certificate?—He has not got it yet.

24765. How was your husband able to pay for going to the Infirmary in Edinburgh?—His mother helped him.

24766. Did any one else help him?—No.

24767. Have you applied to the proprietor for assistance in any way?—I went to the inspector of poor.

24768. But have you applied to the proprietor for any other land or any support or assistance at all?—They always promised to give us the first place that was open, but now it is of no use as we have nothing to take any place with.

24769. How long was your husband in the Infirmary?—I cannot exactly say; it is six weeks since he went to Edinburgh and he came back last Saturday night.

24770. Have they done him a great deal of good?—Yes. But I have not seen him yet: he was not arrived when I left home.

24771. *Mr Cameron.*—What age is your husband?—Thirty-eight.

24772. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Was he born on General Burrough's estate?—Yes.

24773. Were his people there before?—Yes, his grandfather and father.

24774. Do you belong to the estate yourself?—Yes.

24775. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Was there any suggestion that your husband was not able to work the croft, or that he was not cultivating it properly?—No, he was cultivating it well.

24776. Was there any complaint against him of any kind?—Not that I heard.

24777. If you were getting land now, how could you work it?—We have nothing to take land with now.

24778. You have no stock to put upon it now?—No.

24779. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Why did your husband not get a medical certificate?—Dr Gibson the medical officer, told him that he could have given him a line that he was unable to work at the present time, but that if he was to go into the poor-house and be examined, the statement by the doctor in the poor-house might not agree with his, and that would hurt him (Dr Gibson) in his situation. Dr Gibson promised before to give my husband a line, and I thought I had nothing to do but go and get it; but when I mentioned about the poor-house, that was his statement, and Dr Stewart of Kirkwall offered my husband a line.

24780. The offer of relief which you got, was to go to the poor-house?—Yes.

24781. Would they take your husband away without you and the children?—I don't know.

24782. You don't know whether you and the children would have

got out-door relief?—I don't know; it was my husband who was mentioned in the line.

Mrs Georgina Inkster.

24783. *The Chairman.*—Would you go to the poor-house?—I am sure I could not say. I would have to go I suppose. I could not live upon nothing.

24784. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is it your mother-in-law's stock that you have been living upon for the last two years?—Yes.

24785. And you say it is now exhausted, and you are destitute?—Yes.

24786. So that if you got another croft, you could not take it?—We could not do anything with it now, unless we got help from some person.

24787. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Suppose you had been left on the croft would you have struggled on?—Yes, cheerfully.

24788. The last thing you would have thought of, would have been to apply to the Parochial Board?—Yes, the last thing.

24789. Have you anything else you want to state?—I don't think it.

JAMES LEONARD, Crofter and Mason, Digro, Rousay (46)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LVII.*)

James Leonard.

24790. *The Chairman.*—Are you a general builder?—I build houses, but I am not a builder, I suppose, in the real sense of the term. Being a delegate from the crofters in Rousay, I have been asked to make a special request for them, and that is, that our proprietor will injure no person for giving their evidence before the Royal Commission.

24791. Is the factor or proprietor present?—I think they are both present.—*General Burroughs.* I am the proprietor, and my factor is also present.

24792. Is General Burroughs prepared to give an assurance to the tenants on his property, that no prejudice will happen to them in consequence of what they state?—*General Burroughs.* I am not prepared to do so. It is contrary to human nature, that I could treat a man who spoke of me so inimically as one or two have done here, in the same way as other men who are friendly disposed. Whatever I might say, my feelings could not be so, after the people have vilified me as they have done to-day.

24793. *The Chairman.*—You are not prepared to give that assurance?—*General Burroughs.* I am not prepared to do so.

24794. *The Chairman.*—You are aware that you will have an opportunity, either in person or through your factor of making any statement you please afterwards?—*General Burroughs.* Yes.

24795. *The Chairman.*—But notwithstanding that, you are not prepared to give any assurance?—*General Burroughs.* I cannot have the same feeling towards them. I have tried to do my duty as honourably and justly as I could all my life, with these tenants as with everybody else, and I cannot have the same feeling towards the men who have come forward and stated the things that have been stated here. It is contrary to human nature to be so friendly disposed to them as to others who do not make these complaints.

24796. *The Chairman.*—But, General Burroughs, if I may take the liberty of saying so, I have not asked you about the state of your feelings towards them; I have asked you in respect to your intentions towards them.—*General Burroughs.* My intentions would be for them to go away simply. They are not slaves; they are free men and need not remain here if they don't like. If they are not satisfied here they can go

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away. I have ninety or a hundred tenants, and there are only those four who are giving evidence, and some of those are not tenants. Grieve, who has been mentioned, is not on the tenant roll. Mr MacCallum is on the roll.—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* We speak on behalf of all the tenants.

24797. *The Chairman.*—Well, but I want to arrive at an understanding with General Burroughs. I would ask you, General Burroughs, to consider this. That we are sitting here as a Royal Commission, and our object and our duty is to elicit the truth; and we have in other parts of the country generally found that the proprietors were willing to assist us to this extent—indeed to every extent, but to this extent particularly—that they have given us a public assurance, that nothing that their tenants will say, whether they consider it true or false, would have any influence on their conduct towards those tenants afterwards. In that way the Commission have had perfect freedom in their inquiry, and the witnesses have had perfect freedom in their statements; and we have experienced much benefit from that. It is true that the examination with reference to your estate, has nearly terminated, but still we might have occasion to ask something else, and the absence of an assurance on your part might have the effect of restraining the people from saying what they really feel. I would ask you to reconsider your statement, and say whether you are not, on recousideration, able to state that nothing that is said here to-day will influenee your action, towards those persons, whatever your feelings may he.—*General Burroughs.* I feel perfectly certain that whatever I do after this, will always he put down to this now. Mr Leonard will think—his father's lease is up—if I were to remove him, that it was owing to what he said. Everything I do will be attributed to this meeting, and my hands will be tied completely. That is my feeling on the subject. Is the property mine, or is it not mine? If it is mine, surely I can do what I consider best for it? If these people are not contented and happy, they can go away.

24798. *Mr Cameron.*—Would you go to this extent, and say that anything you do on the estate will be done in connection with the proper working of the estate, and not in consequence of anything that may be said here? You have said you are afraid that anything you do, will be attributed to the result of this meeting. Will you state that that is not the case, and that you will continue to manage the estate to the best of your ability, independently of anything that is to be said here?—*General Burroughs.* Am I to greet discontented people here?—There is no satisfying some people: you may do what you please and they will never be contented.

24799. *Mr Cameron.*—I was only using your own words. You said everything you do would be attributed to what is said here. Now wont you give us an assurance that nothing you do will be in consequence of any evidence given here, hut in connection with the proper and right management of your estate?—*General Burroughs.* I say I will do my duty honestly and justly as I have hitherto done.

24800. *Mr Cameron.*—And that what you may do will not be done in consequence of the evidence which may be led before us on the present occasion?—*General Burroughs.* But whether my actions may be tinged in that way it is very difficult to say.

24801. *Mr Cameron.*—If you say they will not be influenced, that is all we ask. If the people attribute motives which are not accurate, we have nothiug to do with that. All we want is an assurance that you will conduct the estate as you have hitherto endeavoured to do, and not make any alterations in consequence of the evidence which may be given. —*General Burroughs.* My intention is to try and make the people

labourers, who are not able to work their holdings, and to throw their holdings into larger farms; but not to remove them from the land, and that is what I have done with Mrs Inkster. I left her husband in the house which he had.

24802. *The Chairman.*—I understand that General Burroughs has not given a distinct unambiguous assurance that he will do nothing to any individual in consequence of what is said here to-day. If that is the case, it remains with the delegate to give evidence or not as he pleases. He must do it at his own hazard, as it is impossible for us to interfere between the delegate and his proprietor, or between the delegate and the law. We can give him no security, and no assurance whatever. He may therefore continue to give evidence or not as he likes.—*James Leonard.* I may go on. You see the state of matters, and you see the necessity for a change. I am very happy to see this Commission here to-day.

24803. You are not bound to give any opinion upon the Commission, but you are to state your own case to the extent you wish.—I may state my case. General Borroughs says I am always opposed to him. I daresay he means by that, that I am gifted with a little common sense, and that when I see persons going wrong I am always trying for the right. That is the reason I have been so much persecuted. I challenge anyone to say I have been acting unlawfully in anything; and with regard to the statements made here to-day, why should they be angry at us for making our statement to the Commission sent down by Government? We are telling only the truth, and you are here to receive evidence of the truth; and because we do that we will be evicted from our places and holdings. Certainly there is much need for a change of the law, and security of tenure. I think you have the strongest evidence before you to-day that you have had, perhaps, since you left London; and although I may have to leave the land, I am prepared to speak the truth, and will not be cowed down by landlordism. I consider as Burns says—'A man's a man for a' that.'

24804. I think I must ask you to alter the tone of your evidence a little. This is not a proper place for making a speech or an address, and I must ask you to state your case in temperate language.—I will confine myself then to questions about my croft.

24805. Not only about your croft but about the general case of the people, and your own case as far as it illustrates that; but do it in a quiet manner.—It rouses one's feelings a little at times, my Lord.

24806. You have heard the statement which the Rev. Mr MacCallum has made. Were you acquainted with that statement before?—Partly. Mr MacCallum has had very little acquaintance with the subject, and could not give very good evidence on many points, because he has not been long in the place.

24807. Is there anything now which you wish to add to the statement he presented?—Well just about the little croft I have—if I may speak to it—it may throw a good deal of light on the subject.

24808. Well then let us hear your own case?—I occupied a small croft said to be about eight acres in extent. The house was built by my father on the common, and for a considerable time he paid no rent, because no man claimed it. There were different proprietors then.

24809. About what time was that?—I daresay fifty or sixty years ago, but I could not exactly state the time. Afterwards the lands came into the hands of one proprietor, the present.

24810. On whose ground was the house built fifty or sixty years ago?—No one claimed it to my knowledge; it was common.

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24811. And your father paid no rent?—None.

24812. And then it was transferred to whom?—To General Burroughs. The whole came into his hands, and then rent was laid on amounting to thirty shillings.

24813. When this transfer took place, who had been the proprietor connected with the common? You say it did not belong to anybody, but as there was a transfer, there must have been somebody who pretended to sell it?—I could not say. I daresay the Earl of Zetland; or it would he the Crown.

24814. But the common came into the possession of General Burroughs?—Yes.

24815. How did he become possessed of it?—I cannot answer that question.

24816. Was it divided in consequence of a process before the Court of Session?—Not that I am aware of; I did not know of any adjudication, and the poor crofters did not know anything, but just had to pay the rent.

24817. When was the croft added to these houses, or how did you get tbe croft?—It was a heathery hillside, and by means of manual labour—for there were no ploughs—they turned some of the heather and turf, and broke out some small patches.

24818. How much did your father take in altogether?—It is said now to be eight acres, but I cannot tell you whether that is correct or not, because I have not seen the survey.

24819. Was the whole of this land taken in before General Burronghs became proprietor?—Long before.

24820. When General Burroughs became proprietor, was it his uncle or himself?—I think it was himself. I think it was in General Burroughs' time. I don't think my father paid any rent to the uncle.

24821. Can auybody here state whether it was General Burroughs personally?—*General Burroughs.* This croft was held from year to year till 1856, and after that the rent was £1, 2s. for seven years. Then it was increased to £1, 10s., at which rent he held it for other seven years. At the end of that time another lease was granted at £3; and since the expiry of that lease he has been a tenant-at-will, the rent being £4.

24822. What I want to know is whether this man's father began paying rent to you personally, or to some member of your family?—He was one of the tenants on some land which my uncle Traill purchased from Lord Zetland. Lord Zetland sold to my uncle all he had in various parts of the island. This place Digro was part of it.

24823. Was it in your own time or was it in the time of your uncle?—It was in my time!—about 1853.

24824. What was the first amount of rent paid?—£1, 10s.

24825. How long ago was that?—In 1856.

24826. (*To James Leonard*).—When did your father die?—Only last year.

24827. It is your father's case, in fact. What did your father do, and what rise of rent took place?—At the time that he paid the £1, 10s. he had the use of all the hill pasture round him. We kept sometimes two or three cattle, two or three sheep, and so forth, and that increased until it came to £3. Still he had the use of the hill pasture, although it was increased to £3; but latterly the simple croft itself—eight acres, said to be—was £4. £1 was added to it, and at the same time the common was cut off at the very mark.

24828. And when your father died last year, that was the state of the case—£4 for eight acres?—Yes, and had been for some time before. He had not done anything with it for ten or twelve years before.

24829. You had been acting for him?—Yes, for more than twenty years.

24830. Did your father have a lease of it?—*General Burroughs.* I see that this was part of the land which Lord Zetland sold to me, and it appears in 1853 and 1854 to have been occupied by a tenant at-will, who paid £1, 2s.

24831. When your father died did you remain in possession of the croft?—*James Leonard.* Yes.

24832. Are you in possession now?—Yes.

24833. At what rent?—£4.

24834. You are a mason; have you improved the house?—There was no house there, and I have built a good house on it.

24835. When you built that house did you make any stipulation with the proprietor or factor for compensation?—None whatever.

24836. Then you are at this moment tenant-at-will, and if you leave it, unless the proprietor chooses, you have no claim to compensation?—None whatever.

24837. You say there are about eight acres of it?—It is said so; that is all within the fence.

24838. What stock do you keep?—One cow.

24839. What else?—Nothing; and that is rather too much for it.

24840. How much have you got of it in cultivation?—I could not be accurate, but perhaps three acres; but then we never get our seed out of it. I have had to purchase my seed all round for a number of years back.

24841. Have you got constant employment at your trade?—Not constant. I went to Glasgow one year for the summer.

24842. But do you generally find employment as a mason on the island?—Not generally; many times none.

24843. When you work as a mason, do you work by the hour or by the day?—Both ways.

24844. What do you get an hour?—The highest here is £1 per week. They don't work much by the hour here. I have got twenty-four shillings a week—four shillings a day—but that is not general here.

24845. What is the lowest wage you ever got?—One and sixpence a day.

24846. You mean that when you began working at this trade, the wages were not more than one and sixpence a day?—I only got a shilling a day.

24847. Was that as journeyman?—As journeyman.

24848. You mean since you became a competent mason?—Yes; I have wrought at a shilling a day.

24849. Then your wages as a mason have risen from one shilling to four shillings?—Yes; but very few get four shillings with us.

24850. Were they raised from one shilling to three and sixpence?—No, to three shillings. That is the general thing. I have got four shillings because I was considered perhaps rather superior to some.

24851. Have you anything else to state besides what we have heard on behalf of the people who have sent you here?—I have to state that there is such an amount of landlord-terror hanging on them—I was asked to state that—that they would be pleased if the Commission would do what they could to have the cause of that terror removed. You cannot fail to see that that terror exists. I had a statement from another crofter, but I don't think it necessary to read it.

24852. You can leave it with us.—It just amounts to the same thing. I wish to refer to something that was mentioned in our statement. The

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expression occurred—'wanton and unrighteous conduct.' I may give an example of that—the case of a woman in our island whom the proprietor visited when she was on her death-bed. She had a small croft, and he told her she would have to leave it, because he was going to give it to another person—a stranger. She said she would never leave it until she was put to a house from which no man could remove her. He said—'What house is that?'—and she said—'Where I will be buried;' and he struck his stick on the ground and said, 'Would you like to be buried here on this floor?'

24853. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What is your authority for making that statement: was it the poor woman herself?—More than that; there are witnesses beside me who can speak to it.

24854. People who heard it?—Yes.

24855. Has the proprietor laid out much money in the improvement of the estate for the benefit of the small tenants?—I am not aware of any for the small tenants, but there has been borrowed money laid out—I don't consider it anything but a grievance, because $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. has been charged for it, which is just adding to the rent of the farms.

24856. I need not ask you if you concur in the statement read by Mr MacCallum?—I concur in it fully.

24857. It is not overstated?—It is not, and you can see that.

24858. You declare that upon full consideration?—I do; I am in earnest.

24859. Considering the responsibility you have to the public and everybody, you make that statement?—I do, thoroughly and in earnest. We are in earnest about it. It is a shame the work that was in Rousay.

24860. Are you a native of Rousay?—Yes.

24861. And have your predecessors been upon this place?—Yes; but I believe I belong originally to the Highlands.

24862. Do you concur in the statement by Mr MacCallum that he would know an Egilshay man by his dress and appearance?—I would concur cordially in that, because they are so happy. They are just like living under Queen Victoria, they are so happy. We are under the despotism and terror of the landlord, and we want that removed; and even though I should fail in this battle, I will fight it out.

24863. *Rev. Mr MacCallum.*—May I be allowed to make an observation? The question has been put to every witness if he concurs in the statement read by me. I would like your Lordship to put that question to all the delegates present—there is only one remaining—and it will satisfy your Lordship that the statement is that of the people themselves.

24864. *The Chairman.*—Who are the additional delegates?—The question has been put to James Leonard and George Leonard.

24865. Is William Robertson here?—No.

24866. Who is the other delegate?—James Grieve.

24867. Who else?—They are all present. I think you asked Mrs Inkster.

JAMES GRIEVE, Cottar, Outer Dykes, Rousay (56)—examined.

James Grieve.

24868. *The Chairman.*—You have heard the statement read by the Rev. Mr MacCallum and the verbal statements made by James Leonard and George Leonard: do you concur with them?—I do.

WILLIAM T. NORQUAY, Banker, South Ronaldshay (54)—examined.

24869. *The Chairman.*—We have no delegates from South Ronaldshay and should be obliged if you would tell us anything about the state of the people in the island, that you think right?—I thought you might desire to put some questions to me in a categorical way; but, if not, I may state that I know South Ronaldshay well, having lived there all my life, and being a native. We have no grievance, as a rule; we have no professional grievance-mongers amongst us, and the people are living peaceably. The landlords do their duty; and as you will observe, the island is one of the largest in Orkney, and is one of the most populous, the population being about 2600. We have another small island near, containing a population of 670, and a smaller one still, containing some fifty people. There are also the Pentland Skerries, on which there are some score of people. I am speaking in round numbers. The rental of South Ronaldshay is some £4300; the rental of Burra is about £800, and the rental of Swana is £20; and of the Pentland Skerries, £40. There is one thing that has been a grievance there, with reference to the taxpayers. We have, I may say, there a few grievances in connection with the rent of the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, for a part of the island belonging to the Earl of Zetland, for which they pay £20 a year; and they are tenants of another part, for which also they pay £20 a year. They pay no local taxes, and the people think that is not fair. The lighthouse keepers are natives of our parish, and might ultimately gravitate towards the Parochial Board, and the Commissioners have made no provision by way of paying taxes. Of course, Lord Zetland pays his share of the taxes, but we lose the taxation on £60—£20 as owner and tenant, and £20 as tenant besides.

24870. How many proprietors are there on the island?—They are innumerable. The Earl of Zetland owns about one-half of South Ronaldshay and the whole of Burra and Swana, and Mr Heddle of Melsetter owns another part; and the rest is occupied by a number of small proprietors. There is another small property—the next largest to that of Mr Heddle of Melsetter—belonging to Miss Turnbull, the rental of which is £600 or thereby. The rental has nearly doubled within my recollection.

24871. You say that Lord Zetland owns about one-half of the island?—Yes.

24872. Has there been any consolidation of small holdings and any formation of sheep farms?—None; there are only two farms over £100, and they are occupied by one tenant.

24873. What would be the aggregate value of these two farms—£300 or £400 a year?—Some £300 odds; and there are only nine farms over £50 and under £100.

24874. You say that the rental of the island has in your recollection doubled; you mean the rateable value?—The rateable value.

24875. Can you give me any idea of how much Lord Zetland's rental has increased?—No. Lord Zetland's factor is able to give you that; but I think the increase has mostly been on the larger tenants. That is my opinion. Of course there are small places which pay no rent at all or have paid rent only to a small extent—small places out on the hill which the people hold without paying rent, or only paying a small rent.

24876. As a banker, without betraying your constituents in individual cases, you might perhaps give us a general impression as to whether you find any evidence in your accounts that the people are more prosperous

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than they were in former years?—It rises and falls. Three or four years previous to the last year or two, people were not doing so well owing to the bad crops; and I may state that in these islands we are learning to live more expensively than we used to do—than our great-grandfathers did—and we are getting more into the habits of the people in the southern part of the island; and the consequence is that it takes more to keep us going. Then we are taxed to a pretty large extent. I think the local taxation is 4s. 9½d. in the pound. And then we have not the privileges that the people have on the mainland of Great Britain—for instance, we have no telegraphic communication. I don't know any complaint that is so general as the want of telegraphic communication with the rest of the country. I have for years done what I could to persuade the Government department and our local members of Parliament to interest themselves in the matter, and all that we can get from Government is an offer to send us the telegraph if we pay the piper. They say—'If you give us a guarantee 'of £624 a year for seven years we will send the telegraph to you.' Now here our tenants are paying taxation both national and local, and the consequence is in addition to that we are requested to lay down the telegraph for ourselves. If we lived on the other side of the Pentland Firth the telegraph is ready at our door; and not only that, but tenants and farmers have the advantage of telegraphic and steamboat communication every hour. Now if you rate a tenant at the same ratio in these islands, I think it is nothing more or less than justice that you should afford him all the advantages of the postal and telegraphic communication of the country. I must say I think the Government policy has been rather hard on a loyal people like the Orcadians. I have said in joke, but also a good deal in earnest, to some of my friends down south, that if we had been more of a landlord-shooting and outrageous class in Orkney we would have had telegraphic communication long before now; but as we have lived a peaceable and quiet life in the country we have been left without it.

24877. I would like to hear you retract the expression 'landlord-'shooting.'—I shall do so. I say we don't do that in Orkney, and would never dream of it.

24878. But it is a dangerous expression?—Yes, I believe it is.

24879. Although you say the people are not so prosperous as they have been in previous years, can you say, from your knowledge of their circumstances, that they are rather before the world—that they are not embarrassed or in debt?—As a rule they are not, but of course there are many exceptions in the population we have of over three thousand people, and there are many small crofts on which the people could not exist at all, unless they got their means of existence out of the sea from fishing. There are many people holding small farms who could not exist without the fishing.

24880. Has the operation of banks been very useful to the people?—Very useful; they assist the people in many ways.

24881. And you have found that the people have also been useful to the banks?—That remains to be proved. The tendency of the people is towards honesty on these islands.

24882. Have you any statement to make respecting the fishing industry on these islands?—No, not unless any questions might suggest anything.

24883. Has the class of boats been much improved?—Very much. I heard some remark about the decrease of boats in Orkney. The number, I believe, is now about one-half what it used to be. The officer told me there are about two hundred or two hundred and six boats fishing in

Orkney, and there have been as many as four hundred. But the two hundred boats now represent as large a value, possibly a larger value, than the four hundred previously did. They are a higher class of boats; but I have no doubt the fishing may still be improved, and the number of boats may increase. They may increase this year in Shetland, and decrease in Orkney.

24884. Have the banks, by advances, been instrumental in improving the condition of the fishing industry?—No doubt of it.

24885. In the way of enabling them to get a better class of boats and otherwise?—Yes, and the curers do a good deal in that way as well.

24886. The curers may benefit by advances?—Of course, they expect to do so.

24887. Are there any cases in which advances have been made to fishermen themselves to buy boats, or are they generally made through curers?—Generally through a third party.

24888. Did you ever know a case of fishermen clubbing and coming to the bank, and getting credit to buy a boat?—Oh yes, that depends on the individual.

24889. But with respectable men, have you found that a safe kind of advance?—Oh yes.

24890. They prosecute both kinds of fishing—both deep sea and the herring fishing?—The herring fishing mostly now, but they still do a little in the way of white fishing.

24891. Do they cure in the islands?—Yes. South Ronaldshay used to be the principal curing station of Orkney at one time, and one proof of that is that the only fishery officer in Orkney resides in our parish. He is the fishery officer for the whole county, so that it was at one time the principal station, when there were some four or five fishery officers in the county.

24892. Have you many small proprietors of the class we see in Harray—small lairds?—A few, but not so many comparatively.

24893. But are those you have, in a prosperous condition?—Some of them.

24894. Do they maintain their position and their holdings?—Yes; the holdings are generally small. There are two or three good properties on the island besides those I have mentioned, having a rental of perhaps £100 a year.

24895. Are these small properties liable to sub-division or do they maintain themselves in their size?—They don't become subdivided. They are generally held by the eldest son.

24896. Are these small proprietors a contented class of people?—Yes.

24897. Are they proud of their position as proprietors; do they look upon themselves as a distinct class?—No.

24898. They just mix with the other classes?—Yes.

24899. Are some of them very ancient tenures?—No, not very ancient.

24900. You think these little properties have changed hands a good deal?—A great deal.

24901. Is there evidence of improvement upon them—new houses and new fences?—Yes, a good deal within the last twenty years—new and better houses.

24902. You think they have taken a start?—They took a start some thirty years ago and it has been continued. Slate-roofed cottages and houses were the exception thirty years ago, and now they have increased over the whole islands.

24903. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you observe any difference in the character of the houses owned by those small proprietors, and the

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character of the houses of the crofters, who hold land on lease?—A little. There are very few lease-holders in our district, the bulk of the people are tenants at will.

24904. I should have said tenants.—Well, of course, there is a little improvement, but it depends upon the size of the property. Some of those properties owned by the occupier are only worth £2 or £3 of rental annually. In a case of that sort the proprietor is generally on a level with a tenant paying that amount of rent.

24905. Take a property worth £5 to £20 in the occupation of the owner, and another in the occupation of a tenant paying that rental; is there a difference between the houses?—As a rule the proprietor's house is better, but in other cases, the tenant paying that rental, has as good a house as the owner of a property of that value.

24906. Is it the custom where land is let, for the owner to build the house and to keep it in repair, or is it the tenant who keeps it in repair?—The tenant, I think.

24907. The tenant provides the whole building?—No, in many cases the landlord assists him. He assists the tenant to build, and the tenant then has to keep the house up. I think that is the practice.

24908. Is it a certain proportion of the first cost that the proprietor gives?—A certain proportion of the first cost the landlord bears.

24909. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You spoke of a grievance you had against the Government or the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses, and you also stated that one of the evils that might flow from it, was that the light-keepers might come on the poor's roll; have you ever heard of such a case? does not the Government grant a pension to a light-keeper if he gets old?—I am not aware of it.

24910. I ask you this question—did you ever hear of such a person coming upon the Parochial Board?—I am not aware of the Government giving a pension, but I think there was a case where one of the officials of the Commissioners made application to the Parochial Board. I don't know any provision the Commissioners have for aged or infirm lighthouse keepers.

24911. At all events, whatever it is, you think the Commissioners should pay taxes like everybody else?—I think so. They are paying them now on Government and charitable buildings and I think it but fair that the Commissioners should pay as well. But I know that the farmer's standing grievance is the want of telegraphic communication, and I am certain it would be a great advantage to them. I think it is hard lines for the Government to seek such a large guarantee—£624 a year for seven years.

24912. *Professor Mackinnon.*—You stated that there were very few large farms, are there many people without land at all?—Yes, we have a village of some four hundred people in the island, and there are small places besides that, with very little land. I know places of no rent at all where men are allowed to stay in the hill with a small cot and a little land, and pay no rent or only a few shillings.

24913. Do these people live chiefly by fishing?—Yes, and labouring.

24914. In what direction do they fish?—Chiefly eastward, and sometimes to the west.

24915. Far out?—Oh yes, near to Fair Isle, the fishermen from our place have been fishing to the south of Fair Isle.

24916. Those engaged in the fishing chiefly complain of the want of telegraphic communication?—It is a standing grievance with fishermen and farmers. The farmers suffer on account of it.

24917. How often have you steamers?—Two weekly, one north and

one south, but in the winter season we don't know whether the steamer is coming or not owing to the want of the telegraph. Farmers may come with cattle and find no steamer.

24918. Burra has a population of about six hundred?—Six hundred and seventy.

24919. How many schools are there on the island?—One.

24920. And on the next island, Swana?—There is no school there.

24921. How many children are there?—About twelve or fifteen.

24922. How are they educated?—We educate them from South Ronaldshay. We send a teacher over a certain portion of the year; we would be glad if the Department built a small school for them.

24923. Do they come ashore for examination?—They come ashore to the inspector, and I am glad to say, they make as good an appearance as any children in the kingdom. The inspector's report on the subject is very good. The rental of the island is only £20, so that you can see what the rates would do in the way of providing a school.

24924. How many schools are there in South Ronaldshay?—Three board schools and a charity school.

24925. An endowed school?—Yes.

24926. Is that for girls?—Both girls and boys.

24927. Is there quite efficient education given in that school?—Yes, as good as in any of the others.

24928. Taking farm for farm,—a £15 farm where a proprietor is occupier and another where a tenant is under a proprietor, you said the house of the proprietor was better as a general rule; what about the cultivation of the farm?—It depends vastly upon the individual.

24929. Take them all in all?— We have very few cases of proprietors of £15—very few indeed; but the tenant as a rule is equally as good as the proprietor for cultivating the soil.

24930. Who considers himself the superior man?—That depends upon the man himself.

24931. Take that all round again?—I could not classify them. We always keep that class feeling down as much as possible. We have a sort of healthy public opinion. The people don't believe in small lairds. They don't look up to a man because he owns fifteen acres.

24932. But do the small lairds believe in themselves?—I hope they do. If they don't, so much the worse for them.

24933. When one of these small properties comes into the market, is there any very keen competition for it?—As a rule there is.

24934. What would be about the price that would be paid for it—how many years' purchase?—Thirty.

24935. Of the rateable valuation?—Yes.

24936. That would seem to indicate that it is an object of desire on the part of the people to get these small properties?—Yes, but as a speculation we would not consider it good, but there are many foolish enough to give thirty or forty years' purchase of the rateable value. I have known a case of thirty years' purchase being given.

24937. To what do you attribute that feeling?—Of course from a commercial point of view we consider it foolish, but from a land-owning point of view it is common in all the country. It is common in the south for mercantile men to buy at thirty years' purchase. Many large estates are purchased by moneyed men. I don't know why they do it, but the fact is we know they do it, and small men do the same thing apparently.

24938. They pay a price which if it were otherwise invested on good security, would more than pay the rent?—No doubt of it.

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24939. To what do you attribute that?—Just to the land hunger which exists both among tenants and proprietors. It is a curious fact but it is a fact.

24940. *The Chairman.*—Don't you think there is a natural satisfaction in possessing something of your own?—I quite sympathise with that feeling.

24941. You don't think it is very foolish?—No, it is only from a commercial point of view.

24942. You thiuk it is a legitimate pleasure?—Yes, and I am proud to think there are so many men in our country who will invest in land for that very purpose. But I don't like when a man gives a very big price for land and wishes to take a very big rent out of it. If he wants to pay a fancy price for land let him sit down with a small rent. I have known land bought which could not pay fair interest, and at the same time a tenant live upon it.

24943. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Is the tendency of these small properties to increase or diminish?—They have not much chance in South Ronaldshay.

24944. Have you known of a comparatively small estate being split up? Never.

24945. Have you observed in the case of some coming into the market a neighbouring proprietor taking it up?—Yes, I have known that.

24946. So that the tendency would be to diminish the number of these small estates?—Yes. I have never seen a small piece cut up, but I have known it bought up by a neighbouring small proprietor.

24947. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—At present you cannot know the price at which herring is selling during the season until the end of the week?—Yes, or three or four days after, and by tbat time the herring are all away. The fishing ground of the people of South Ronaldsbay extends from Wick nearly to Auskerry or approaching to Fair Isle. If fish are being caught up to the north, our fishermen don't know for two days that the fish have been there; or if they are being caught at Wick they dont know until some time afterwards; and by the time their boats get there the fish are away.

24948. Of course it is with Kirkwall you would wish the communication to be—what is the nearest point?—Kirkwall.

24949. In fact the want of the telegraph is a great commercial loss to your island?—Yes; and seeing we are taxed the same as the other parts of the conntry, wo consider it is unfair tbat we should have to provide ourselves with the telegraph, wbereas if we had been a richer community, the telegraph would have been sent to us.

24950. Do you get the post only once a week?—Once a day.

24951. But not from the maiuland?—Yes; the boat that comes now to Scapa calls at South Ronaldshay on the way north; but she does not call on the return voyage, so that if we post a letter for the south it goes to Kirkwall and then back again. But we have no complaint about tbe postal communication.

24952. But of course the want of the telegraph is a very great disadvantage to you in respect of every department of life?—Every department, and much more to the farmer than ever it has been calculated. The great agitation has been on behalf of the fisherman, but of course, although the fishing is very important, the farmer is concerned also to a great extent, both in tbe prices of stock, and in order to know when the steamer may be expected.

24953. When did you hear at South Ronaldshay the prices at the Inverness wool market?—The first we heard was through the *Scotsman* or any daily paper.

24954. How soon after the market?—Two days.

FREDERICK WILLIAM TRAILL BURROUGHS, C.B., Lieutenant-General, Proprietor of Rousay (52)—examined.

24955. *The Chairman.*—You inherited your property in this country from a relative?—From a grand-uncle, George William Traill.

24956. Whose family were long connected with this place?—Yes.

24957. And also long connected with the county generally?—He was in India in the Bengal Civil Service, and bought land here.

24958. His father again was a proprietor in the county?—No, his father was not; he went south and married a lady, with whom he got a lot of money.

24959. In what year did you come to settle here?—1873; I was until then in the army.

24960. And you have been almost a constant resident?—I am always here except for two or three months in winter when I go south.

24961. And you are in the active management of your own estate?—I have a factor, but I am answerable for all he does; he consults me about everything he does.

24962. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have been present here all day?—Yes.

24963. You have heard some of the statements made by the delegates and others from Rousay, and it is only fair that you should have an opportunity of making any explanation you think proper. Will you be kind enough to make any statement you wish?—I have heard with the greatest astonishment what has been said. I have seen myself in a light in which I never knew myself before, and I cannot believe that what has been stated is the opinion of the people of Rousay generally. I think the delegates must represent Rousay much as the three tailors of Tooley Street represented Great Britain on a former occasion. I don't think the respectables in Rousay are mixed up with this movement in Rousay at all. It has been said that the rental has been increased three-fold. Now I have made up since I returned home on the 18th—I was abroad in Germany, and hurried back when I heard of the visit of the Commission—I have not had much time, but I have gone through my factory accounts, and I have here a memorandum of the extent of the farms, their rental, and the sums expended upon them, and the estate of Rousay. The memorandum embraces the period from 1840 to 1882, and I find that in that time I have spent in round numbers £37,405, 17s. 9d. in improvements on the estate. But that includes the house I built, and also a sum of £3020 in support of the poor. We have no poor assessment in Rousay. And it also includes what has been spent on the roads, £2768, or £442 more than I receive under the Statute Labour Act. To give you a general idea of the rental of the estate, and what I have spent, I may quote some figures from this memorandum. And first on Viera—the Bu' farm has a rental of £70, and I have expended on improvements £193; Castle-hill has a rental of £50, and I have expended on improvements £93; Cairt has a rental of £35, and I have expended on improvements £87; and so on it goes. And so it is in Rousay. Saviskail has a rental of £120, and there have been expended on improvements £857; Langskail, with a rental of £170, has had expended on it in improvements £510; Brevel, 47 acres, rental £7, spent on improvements £14, 12s. 1d., and so it goes on. I may mention that while Mr Robertson was factor for my estate until his death, and I came to settle here, the arrangement was that the tenants got new land on improving leases to take in common. The first seven

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years they paid 1s. an acre, the second seven 2s., and for the third seven 3s., on the understanding that they were to build the houses, and that at the end of the twenty-one years the place should be valued, and a small rent put on. I don't think a single tenant has been removed, and very few have left.

24964. Before you go farther, what length of lease had these people?—They had twenty-one years' leases, with a break at the end of every seven. The delegates say they are reduced to great poverty in Rousay. I am sorry the Commissioners are not able to visit Rousay, and assure themselves of the state of the island. I have been told there is more than half a million of money lodged in the Kirkwall banks to the credit of Orkney tenants, not proprietors and I know the Rousay people own a good deal of that. One gentleman I was told, had £7000, another £3000; and a great many others more or less. I happened to find this out in Edinburgh, when speaking to a gentleman there. The rentals have been increased three-fold they say. Let us take Triblo (Grunstay), the croft of George Leonard. He was first a tenant at will, and then he got 20 acres at £2 2s., and a fourteen years' lease; then he got a seven years' lease, from 1871 to 1878, for £5, and now he is tenant at will at £6. His land is very good. It has been mentioned that they had the whole of the hill to themselves, while I was in the army, and the intention was that they might cultivate their lands; but I found that instead of that they used to send their beasts to the hill and pay the rent that way, and neglect their crops entirely. I had about 4000 acres I did not get a penny for, and I thought I might try and earn an honest penny on it myself. I have had it enclosed—I have left the people some grazing still, however—and I have been putting sheep on it, and now I have let part of it. I offered it to the people, and none of them would take it. They say the rental of Egilshay has only slightly increased, but no money has been expended on it, and no improvements have been made whatsoever. As to the hill pasture I have spoken about, the rents have been raised and quadrupled, and this is the way that has been done. I *think* they have as much right to my common as I have to their clothes; the land is mine, and their coats and hats are their's, and I cannot see how they can claim the pasture. It never did belong to them; it belonged to the various proprietors in Rousay, and there was a division, and each got his share. With regard to alleged needless evictions, I may refer to Westness and Quendale. I forget how many families there were, but the rental of Quendale was £80 a year. When the families removed, my uncle built other houses for them, and gave them other places; to all those who would take land, he gave land on the easy terms I have mentioned. Some remained and some went away, and now I get for Quendale and Westness £600 a year. Formerly it would not grow turnips, and now it turns out fine crops. I don't know what Westness is compared with Quendale, but the two together are £600. But a great deal of money has been laid out on these places; on Westness there have been a good many thousand pounds laid out. On Westness and Quendale there have been expended £3676 in dyking, building, and draining.

24965. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—On land which was formerly rented at £80?—I cannot say exactly, but I know it was something like that. I have my book here and I daresay I could find out.

24966. The marches are the same of the land you are talking about?—Yes, but I am not quite certain of the amount. Westness and Quendale consisted of various farms in those days, but there has been a wonderful change made now. The rent of Quendale alone was £73, apart from Westness.

24967. What is Quendale alone?—There were eighteen crofts in the year 1841—that was before my time—and the rental was £73. I know there is an extraordinary difference now. Another year Quendale was £76. But as I said before, they were not needless evictions. The people complained that they could not pay their rent, and used to suffer from the blast of the sea. They had a great many complaints, too, about their crops, and to do them good my uncle built cottages for all who would take them, and the cottagers now are about the most comfortable people in all Rousay. There is also an immense increase in the price of cattle. Forty years ago you could buy an animal for £3, and a sheep for 2s. 6d.; and now you will get £3 for a sheep, and £18, £25, and £30 for a beast; and the land has increased likewise. About the Mears evictions I know nothing: it was before my time. With regard to the case of Hammer of which Mrs Inkster spoke, the reason they were put out of the croft was this—her husband would not pay his school rates, and when the schoolmaster went to him he was assaulted. The case came before the Sheriff. Inkster was a man who could not take care of the farm, and I proposed to reduce him to be a labourer. I left him his house, and merely took away his land and put it into another farm which I had built a steading, which had turned out too big for the extent of the land. I did not wish to be hard upon Inkster, and told him to remain in his present house, and as soon as I saw an opening I would put him into it, as I have done with several others on the estate. They talk about things not being as they ought to be in a Christian country. Well, I am afraid they are not; it would be better if they were more Christian. They want fair rent, security of tenure, and hill pasture restored. Well, I know that, and I should very much like to have a fair rent. My wife and I go to Edinburgh every year, and we think we are highly rented. I should like to have a judicial rent fixed, and when we are placed to have fixity of tenure. Why should it not apply to houses if it is to apply to land? and why not have judicial prices for coats, and hats, and trousers, and every other garment—and beef and mutton and everything. Everything has its market price. It is further said in this paper—'oppression will make a wise man mad.' This applies to a case from Hammer too. Two farmers' wives quarrelled, and one threw some dirty water over the other. The case was brought before the Sheriff, and there has been ill-feeling between the parties ever since. Both have partizans, and one of them has been having partizans assisting him, and that is how the charge came about of destroying a plough and robbing him of his sheep. Mr M'Callum says the Egilshay people are a great deal better off than those of Rousay. I should like you to see an Egilshay person, and I think you would say the Rousay people are as good. I can show you a specimen of a Rousay man—will you stand up, Mr Reid?

24968. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Who is he?—The inspector of poor.—*James Grieve.* He is not a Rousay man.—*General Burroughs.* Mr M'Callum said the people are fond of remaining at home. I suppose it is so, but I don't know any family in Great Britain who are all at home. I know my brother is on the northmost frontier of China; I have sisters in England and one in China; indeed I don't know any family who are all together. As to the diminution of boats at the herring fishing, that is because I have been discouraging the men from being both farmers and fisherman, and I think they find farming more profitable. I am glad to think some of them think I am a model to proprietors; yet they have abused me a great deal. With regard to the old belief that the commonty belonged to the people, I have already explained that it no more

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belonged to them, than their coats and hats belong to me. As to the sanitary state of their houses and the proximity of the byres, my wife and I have been doing our very best to get them to make their houses clean and nicer. My wife gives prizes every year for the cleanest and best cottage. We had a drill instructor there, and I put him into one of the worst houses in the place. This man in a short time whitewashed the house and made it a perfect *bijou* cottage, and had creepers up the walls. After he left it the old occupant came back, and it soon got into a slough-of-despond state again. Some people cannot keep their places clean. It is also said the inspector of the poor has not the confidence of the people. I am chairman of the Parochial Board and I think him a hard-working, trustworthy man, and I think the respectables have the same opinion of him. The memorial I consider is a direct indictment against me. It says the law permits me to oppress. I never did so, and I don't know how they are oppressed. They are not slaves; they are not obliged to live here; and if they don't like the place they can go away. Whenever they think they can improve themselves they don't remain in Rousay. When I ask about any young man who has gone away, they say, 'Oh, he has gone away to improve himself.'

24969. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—May there not be a reason why the people go away to better themselves?—To better themselves, no doubt of it, and I am glad to see it.

24970. *Supposing you gave them encouragement at home?*—I do so to the best of my ability. You see what I have expended on public works; they have gone on ever since I have been on the estate. There is not a single man who need have nothing to do. I borrowed £10,000 and spent the half of it, and the rest is my own money. When I was away every man got one-third of his rental back for improvements, and I found that did not answer, for I saw dykes were commenced and never finished, and the money was expended in an unsatisfactory way. I said then, 'all improvements now I will do myself.' I said I would do it myself and make a rent charge. I have always had professional valuators to value every farm before it is let, and I always let under their valuation. They say I don't listen to their complaints; I don't remember a single case in which I did not, and my factor can tell you the same. I always visit their houses myself and act as I think right and proper. The question was asked, 'Does the extension of the arable land account for the desertion of the fishing?' I believe it does. There is a great extent of arable land now, and the farmers farm better than they did. The Rev. Mr M'Callum has only been three years in Rousay. It has been said the houses are over-populated, and are in disrepair; and reference was made to box-bedsteads. Why, in all our castles in former times everybody had box-bedsteads. Every box-bedstead is like a separate apartment; and it is so all over the country. It has also been said that no leases are granted of holdings under £30; if you look at my statement you will find a great many under £30. No, the leases are not stated there, I daresay, but I can tell you what they are.

24971. But you don't state it absolutely?—Well, there are a great many below that rent. To crofters paying under £4 or £5 I don't give leases, because I desired these people to become labourers who did get employment about the estate and on the farms. I may say I don't think there has been a single case of eviction; whenever a man has been moved he has been moved to another place. One gentleman objects to proprietors and factors, and he is down on landlords and the land laws. He says the houses let in water. It is almost impossible in Orkney to keep the water out. My own house was a very expensive one, and it gives me a

great deal of trouble to keep the water out of it, in those terriffic gales of wind we have.

24972. Have you the option of a break in the lease?—No, the tenants always have the option; I have not. I don't think I have the option of a break in any single case. I gave a man a break at five years and built an expensive steading, and now the five years are up and he wants to take advantage of the break, and get a reduction of the rent. They say there is no inducement to improve, but a rise of rent put upon them. I don't think that is so. If you look at my rental and the acreage you will see the rental is very low. It is always about 10s. and under, an acre. Some of the Flotta cottagers pay £1 an acre, but 10s. is the average. Some pay 3s., 4s., and 1s. There is a case mentioned of a man who took the roof off his house and put a new roof on. Well, anybody who knows about these houses, thatched with heather, know it is necessary to do that every year; you always have to do that. My own experience is—and I have been a deal through the world—that I know no poor people so well off as those in Orkney, in any part of the world I have visited. They are as well housed as they have been accustomed to; they are well clad, and they have only to go to the shore and any man in a very few hours can catch as much fish as will keep him and his family a whole week. [To James Grieve, who was making signs of dissent.] Do you think not?—*James Grieve.* It is not true.—*General Burroughs.* Well, I think they are well enough off.—*James Grieve.* I object to that altogether.—*General Burroughs.* I don't know how many fish they will catch in an hour, but I know I have seen men taking them out as fast as they could. With regard to James Leonard, I may say that he has always charged 4s. a day for any mason work he has done for me, but I don't know what he charges others. He is also precentor in a church, and he is very well paid for what he does.—*Mr M'Callum.* He has a large family.—*General Burroughs.* They are growing up, and some are herds and some this and that. The peats it is said are convenient, and with regard to sea-ware, it is there if they only take the trouble to get it.

24973. *The Chairman.*—He said there was no road?—He has to go through a neighbour's land, but he is at liberty to go.

24974. But is there a regular road?—There is a regular road down to a field on the shore, and he would have to skirt the side of this field.—*James Grieve.* There is no made road.—*General Burroughs.* Not over this field, but the rest of the way there is.—*James Grieve.* It is only a bog in winter.—*General Burroughs.* Well, as I said before, if you are not satisfied you had better go away. To return to James Leonard, I observed that he spoke about his croft being very poor. I have hardly ever seen him at work upon his croft, and I drive round that way often. As to the story about Mrs Cooper on her deathbed, I can say nothing, I don't remember any such thing.—*Rev. Mr M'Callum.* I had it from the lips of the woman herself and also from her daughter.—*General Burroughs.* That is possible, but I don't remember it.

24975. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Would you not express an opinion now, that if you said it you regret it?—If I did say it, I am exceedingly sorry for it; but both I and my wife were very kind to the old woman and did everything we could for her. I wanted to give her land to her son and to let her remain. But she and her son quarrelled, and she would not hear of the proposal; and I believe she died on bad terms with him. If it is true that I said any such thing I am sorry for it; but I don't believe I said it. They may have twisted something I said to mean that, but I did not certainly mean that. As to increasing personal expenditure, I see Mr Leonard and his family at church, and they are

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always dressed in the latest fashion, and I daresay that is where some of his funds go. I am told the use of wheaten bread is very much on the increase in Orkney; and a merchant at Kirkwall stated to me that at Lammas fair he turned over in one week £500, for flowers for ladies bonnets only, bought for farmer's daughters and domestic servants.—*James Leonard.* I deny that statement.

24976. *The Chairman.*—There must be no interruption.—*Rev. Mr M'Callum.* General Burroughs was allowed to interrupt.

24977. I think it was only fair that he should be allowed to correct statements.—*Rev. Mr M'Callum.* We were interrupted.—*General Burroughs.* There were no roads in Rousay when I arrived there; there are now roads round the island. And there was no steamer then, and only a post once a week; now we have it daily, and there is a runner round the island. We have done all we could to improve matters. We have a steamer running regularly between Kirkwall and Rousay. Formerly there was only one clipper which used to make the journey between Leith and Orkney once a week, and now we have three or four steamers, which makes a greater demand for produce, and of course, the price of land rises. With regard to the croft of Digro, James Leonard was a tenant-at-will till 1856, and after that he paid £1 2s. of rent for seven years, from 1856, after that it was increased to £1 10s. From 1871 to 1878 he had a lease of it at £3, and then he became a tenant-at-will and pays £4. He has nine acres of ground. I would refer your Lordship and the Commissioners to the exports and imports of Orkney to give you an idea of how the country has improved within the last few years. I have not been able to make a list of them, but if you see it in any almanack you will observe how the traffic has increased, the egg traffic alone is said to equal the rental of Orkney. There is no poor assessment in Rousay, I have always supported the paupers. That is all I have to say.

24978. The Rev. Mr M'Callum expressed a desire to say something. I don't encourage interruption in the middle of a statement, especially when there appears to be a little excitement; but if Mr M'Callum wants to make a short statement or explanation of any sort he may now do it. *Rev. Mr M'Callum.* I don't think I am at all an interrupting party. I was myself interrupted in reading my statement, and General Burroughs was allowed to speak when our witnesses were examined. General Burroughs does not, he says, believe that it is the Rousay people who are complaining. Well, you have all the people of Rousay here, and they can be asked. The only man General Burroughs called, was one who did not belong to Rousay at all, although he was produced as such.

24979. We cannot conduct an examination of this kind in the form of dialogue between witnesses.—Well, notwithstanding what General Burroughs said, I adhere to the statement I made; and as to the statement about Mr Leonard's family being dressed in the highest fashion.

24980. Excuse me, but I will ask Mr Leonard about that.—General Burroughs referred to a phrase I used, that he was a model to proprietors. I did not wish anything to be built upon that contradictory of the statements. When I said that, I referred merely to his private capacity, and with that we have nothing to do in this inquiry. It has been mentioned that there is no poor assessment in Rousay. The reason of that is that the tenants pay all the road money according to bargain, and the proprietor pays the poor assessment.

24981. Now will Mr Leonard be kind enough to say something as briefly as possible?—*James Leonard.* I have little to say, except this, that if my family go in the first fashion, it is not I who provide it, it is their own fees. My young children are not dressed in Paris

fashion; in fact, they are not dressed at all; and I know several in Rousay who cannot go to a place of worship for want of clothes.

24982. You have stated that your grown-up children, if they appear in the fashion, do so by their own industry; you have now made your explanation.—*General Burroughs.* My factor is here if you would like to hear him.

24983. If you will now allow us, we will put a few questions to you.

24984. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You have made your statement, but I wish to ask you two or three questions illustrative of what you have stated. I suppose it is a fact, which does not admit of doubt, that the rental of the estate has risen very considerably?—It is.

24985. And you justify that, if it is necessary to justify it, I presume upon the large expenditure?—I do. It is not all going into my pocket.

24986. You justify it to a great extent by the large expenditure laid out?—Yes, and also by the increase, and the value of everything—more frequent communication with other places, a larger demand for our produce, and the advancing prosperity of the county.

24987. I see that the total expenditure upon your estate is £37,000; but I think a very large proportion of that was laid out upon houses. I think I am safe in striking off £17,000 for things the tenants had no connection with, leaving £20,000?—Yes, which has all been expended upon the estate.

24988. But you may expend money upon an estate without benefiting the people, except so far as labour is concerned?—Yes.

24989. And if I strike off the £17,000, I leave it £20,000, or only £500 a year over forty years?—That is a good deal, I think.

24990. Do you think the rental in these circumstances has not unduly increased?—I am sure of it.

24991. I wish you would explain a little more fully what you mean by the expression that when you miss some smart young man off the island you are generally told he has gone to better himself?—I understand that they have got situations in the south, as they generally do.

24992. But are you not aware that there is a very considerable clinging to their native island on the part of these people?—I dare say; but my own family is, and I don't know any family that is not scattered throughout the world.

24993. Rousay is not such a paradise that people would not like to leave it?—Yes, but it was left to me and I have resided there since.

24994. Do the large farms occupy in arable land and pasture a considerable portion of your estate?—The largest farm, Westness, is about two hundred or three hundred acres arable, and about one thousand five hundred to two thousand pasture.

24995. What is the acreage of the whole estate?—About twelve thousand acres. Rousay and Viera.

24996. And one tenant has two thousand acres in pasture?—Say two thousand in round numbers.

24997. Are the tenants of these large farms natives of Rousay or Orkney, or strangers that have come in?—The only one who is not a native is the tenant of Westness; he was my manager formerly. All the others are natives.

24998. Are they people who at one time had been in a much smaller way?—Yes.

24999. And to that extent there is progress?—There is decided progress being made. The only man who is not progressing much is the tenant of Leviskail; the others have. He has progressed too, but not to any extent.

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25000. Can you give any reason why the delegates have come here to-day?—I think they have got wrong ideas. They want a great deal. They want to go in, I think, like the Irish and get judicial rents and fixity of tenure and all that sort of thing.

25001. But why should they come from Rousay more than from elsewhere. No one came from South Ronaldshay?—That I cannot explain, unless they thought I was away. I have been in Germany and have only suddenly come back.

25002. Are you prepared to say these people have no cause of complaint?—I don't believe they have any cause of complaint; that is my firm conviction.

25003. The clergyman was asked a question about there being no sanitary officer, and he seemed to be unaware?—I am head of the Parochial Board, and Mr Reid, the inspector of poor, is the sanitary officer.

25004. Has he ever made any report to the board?—We try to do what we can about cleaning the houses, but it is uphill work. Some of them wont do it. He has often spoken to some of them, and so have I.

25005. You have stated in regard to the removals which took place in your great-uncle's time that the people were provided for; can you really say it was for their benefit that they were removed?—I think it has decidedly been for their benefit.

25006. And for the benefit of the estate also?—Certainly for the benefit of the estate too.

25007. You seem to have the idea that there is a great deal of money in the banks here; are there many of your smaller tenants who have money in the bank?—I don't know, but I know there are several cases which have been brought incidentally to my notice. I happened to be in Edinburgh, and met a lawyer there, who told me he had a large farm in Sanday to let. I said, 'Yes, it is a very big farm.' He said, 'There is 'a tenant of yours applying for it,' and I said, 'No tenant of mine could 'give £1200 a year of rent.' The man referred to gave me a small rent and had difficulty in paying it. If you had met him on the street you would have offered him a shilling—he was generally out at the elbows; but this lawyer told me he had £7000 in the bank, and he wished to know from me what sort of man he was.

25008. What was his rent?—I cannot tell you what it was then. He paid at one time £36 and then £52, 10s., and he nows pays £73 a year.

25009. Was that in consequence of the knowledge you got of his circumstances?—No, it was just a general rise. It is the third lease. I have spent £225 in improvements upon his farm, and it is only a fair return for the money I have been expending.

25010. You give that as an illustration?—That is one. Another case was that of a man whose son became a minister. I called upon him and congratulated him, and the son said, 'Will you allow my aged parents to 'remain in their house?' I said I never wished to disturb old people, and I did not disturb them. I said they might remain there for the rest of their days. I thought them poor people, and they only paid £1 of rent. But one of them came to me afterwards, and asked me as a J.P. to sign a document transferring £200 or £300 from one speculation to another.

25011. That was a person paying under £30?—He paid only £1; and I suspect there were several others who had money in the same way.

25012. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mentioned that Inkster, who was removed from Hammer, could get on quite well: what means had he of living? Was he fit to labour?—No, he was a very weak man, and I don't think they would ever have made anything of the farm.

25013. How would he have got on without the farm?—He would have come on the poors' roll, and I would have helped him.

25014. But Mrs Inkster's complaint was that she could get no poor relief?—Well, I was not here at the time, the inspector of poor can answer that. It was while I was away in Germany that she applied. But I understand the reason was that her husband required to produce a certificate from the medical officer.

25015. You looked forward to him coming on the board: he was not fit to cultivate a farm?—*I don't think he was.* And he was a troublesome sort of man, and objected to pay his school rates; and when the teacher went to him Inkster assaulted him. George Leonard, Triblo, said he had heard from others that his farm was to be swallowed up in a larger farm. It has long been my wish to have a proper farm there, but I wish to leave the people in their houses and make them labourers.

25016. You did not tell them that?—They knew my plans. I had the land surveyed by professional men, and that is what they recommended as the best thing for the estate and for the people too.

25017. If they knew your wish to dispossess them, that is perhaps what accounts for their dissatisfaction?—Perhaps so. They all want to be masters and not servants, and that is impossible.

25018. Mr MacCallum said you wrote asking him to interfere with some of the tenants at Hammer, and procure a cessation of the outrages, and that he replied that threats should not be applied to one party but to both sides: I did not understand what the sides were?—The case was this: Mrs Inkster, wife of the farmer at Innister, had to pass the door of Hammer to go to the shop, and it appears that one of the young people from Hammer or Breakon threw a pail of dirty water over Mrs Inkster, and it led to a law plea before the Sheriff, and there has been ill-feeling between the parties ever since. Some sided with Mrs Inkster and some with the people of Breakon. Then Inkster's farm was enlarged, and I built him a steading, and some of the people did not seem to approve of it.

25019. Mr MacCallum thought the origin of the dispute was due to the enlargement of the farm?—That may have had something to do with it. I squared the farm and built a steading, and then he found the land he had was not large enough to fill the steading with stock, and as I always intended to throw this bit of Hammer into the farm, I did so then.

25020. Mr MacCallum brought this matter up in answer to a query of mine as to whether he had made a representation to you about that case of oppression, and he mentioned that he had made this representation?—*Perfectly so; I wrote to him about it, and said that as they belonged to* his congregation he might try to make peace between them.

25021. And Mr MacCallum made a representation to you?—Yes, I think he did, and said that it required two to make a quarrel. I thought myself the Hammer people were more to blame than the Inksters.

25022. That is the only case in which Mr MacCallum made a representation to you that there was oppression?—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* I can mention another, and I wish to do so.—*General Burroughs.* I should like to hear it.

25023. *The Chairman.*—I have no objection.—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* There was a case at White Meadows where a father and mother died, leaving their family destitute. The eldest daughter happened to be in my house, and met General Burroughs there; and I think I spoke to him of her case, and he undertook to look into it. She was left alone, a girl of twenty-two, in charge of a young family numbering seven or eight. I

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spoke to General Burroughs in favour of this young person, to make some arrangement with the family, and I heard afterwards that my interfering to that effect had given him considerable offence; and it was really no encouragement to me to make representations when I knew they would not be listened to.—*General Burroughs.* It is quite a mistake.—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* And with regard to the people who made the disturbance at Hammer, I wish to say that the worst of the two did not belong to my congregation. Is this to be the only opportunity I am to have?

25024. I must judge of what opportunity you will have to speak; in the meantime the examination must go on.

25025. *Professor Mackinnon.*—What was the rental of the estate in 1841?—I think about £1000 or £1100, but I am not quite sure.

25026. Has there been a purchase of land since then?—Yes. I purchased about £3000 worth of land from Lord Zetland after that date.

25027. How much would the rental of what you purchased be in 1841?—I cannot say. It was purchased from Lord Zetland in 1854, and in those days the rent was paid in kind, and it is difficult to say what the rent was. In 1853 I think the rental of the estate, before the purchase from Lord Zetland, was £1067; in 1854 the rental was £1269.

25028. The new and old together?—I expect that includes everything.

25029. My reason for asking is to test the accuracy of the people who said the rental had been increased threefold. I find from the valuation roll that the gross rental now is £3256, of Rousay only?—Yes.

25030. Will Viera be under Rousay in the valuation roll?—It is about £300 I think.

25031. So that the statement of the people is not very wide of the truth. George Leonard, Triblo, stated, I think, that about thirty years ago the rent he was charged was either thirty shillings or £2?—£2, 2s.

25032. Upon a fourteen years' lease; and after that he paid £4?—£5 it is in my book.

25033. And then he stated he paid £6?—Yes.

25034. Can you tell what amount of expenditure was made upon that croft?—I don't think anything was spent upon Triblo. He had twenty acres. Yes, I find there has been expended upon Triblo £11, 17s. 4d.

25035. Do you know what it was expended upon—buildings or draining?—Draining, I expect. It may have been buildings, I can hardly say.

25036. He now holds as tenant-at-will, and his complaint is that he has no security against removal?—I find that in 1857 he got in buildings and draining £2, 1s. 3d.; in 1858, £2 (that is his whole rent); 1859, £2, 14s. 9d.; 1860, £1, 13s. 2d.; 1861, 14s. 6d.; 1862, £1, 6s. 8d.; 1863, £1, 6s. 8d.;—altogether, £11, 17s.

25037. And now his rent is £6?—Yes, and he has twenty acres of land.

25038. The expenditure was not two rents altogether?—No.

25039. That is out of all proportion to what has been expended over the rest of the estate?—It is.

25040. And his main complaint is that now, after all he has done for the croft, he has no security whatever that he will not be turned away without compensation?—But there is no word of turning him away; and he has been so long there that I should say he has nearly recouped himself for all he has done.

25041. He says he heard you were to turn him away?—I never heard about it.

25042. This is Triblo?—Well, I was wanting to add his croft to a farm; but he has not spent any money on buildings.

25043. Who spent the money?—I think it is his own house, one

which costs very little to build. It is heather thatched, and the stones are mine. I don't know whether he got the couples. But I have never turned away a man unjustly. I have always, if he had good claims, paid them. I have never had any grumbling; I don't wish to oppress the people.

25044. Do you consider he would have a claim if he were turned away now?—I don't know. I would inquire, and if I found he had just claims I would justly pay them.

25045. Don't you think there must be some mistake—you were talking of what your tenant was to take in Sanday? The highest rent we found in Sanday was £250?—Stronsay not Sanday. The name of the farm was Housebay.

25046. You say that you inquire into every case upon its merits when objection is made that the rent is too dear; but one of the witnesses said that though his place was dearer than it is—and he says it is too dear now—yet he would take it?—That, of course, is his own doing; I cannot make him take it.

25047. Does that not show a state of feeling in the place that the people really will remain in the houses they build themselves at what would be considered a commercial loss?—I don't believe there is any commercial loss about it. After twenty-one years one is supposed to have recouped one's self for what he has done. It was not begun by me; it was commenced by Mr Garth of Brimsgarth. I knew very little about land when I came here; I knew more about soldiering.

25048. You don't think the statement of that man represents the real feeling in the place?—It may be in his place, but I don't think it is general throughout Rousay at all.

25049. Do you think if they had a greater sense of security they would improve more?—What can they have unless they wish to rob us of our land?

25050. But you give leases to large farms?—Always.

25051. And this man has no lease?—He has had leases.

25052. But not now?—No, but he has never done anything during his lease, or very little.

25053. Is not, at all events, the rent increased threefold?—It has, because cattle and everything has risen in price.

25054. Do you think it would be a fair thing to increase the rent in proportion to the increase in the price of cattle?—I am not farmer enough to say, it was an increase in the price of produce generally.

25055. Don't you think the increase in the keep of the beast should come in a little?—Perhaps it should, but that is very little.

25056. Don't you think it takes twice or three times as much to keep one of these big beasts for which they get three times the money, as it did to keep one of the small beasts they used to have before?—I cannot answer that question; there are plenty of farmers here who can tell you.

25057. Is it not the case that there is an increase in the expenditure of the population in the country generally; and should that not be taken into consideration?—Everything must be taken into consideration, of course.

25058. And not merely that if a two-year-old realises three times more, the rent of the croft should be trebled. Surely that would not be the way to make a valuation?—I don't think that 20 acres of land at £6 is an excessive rent.

25059. He keeps one cow, one calf, one stirk, and perhaps, a two-year-old to take the place of an old cow; do you think £6 is not

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sufficient rent to pay for that stock?—I cannot answer these questions; but I am guided by those who do know. My factor will answer that.

25060. Upon an expenditure of £11—that is all the assistance this man got—he has increased the place in value from £2 to £6, and he has now no security that he can keep it in order to get the rest out of it; but he is quite ready to pay even more rent, rather than leave it, and he fears being sent away without compensation?—There is no immediate talk of his being sent away.

25061. It has been talked of?—But it has not been done.

25062. But he might be sent off any day?—And as long as the property is mine I think it right to be. I would be turned out of a house in town in a day if I did not pay the rent.

25063. Don't you think there is a little difference between the town and a country place—that in towns there are thousands of houses to go to, and that the law of supply and demand will operate there?—He can go to a town or to the colonies.

25064. This man shows that the law of supply and demand does not operate, because he prefers to remain even at a higher rent?—He can do as he pleases and it is a free country.

25065. *The Chairman.*—In consolidating land for the purpose of forming larger farms and improving the agriculture of the country you have had occasion to take away land from small tenants?—In some cases.

25066. Has it been your invariable practice, always to endeavour to find some other place on the property in which you could place these tenants?—It has been my invariable practice.

25067. Have you in any case, in conducting that operation, evicted a small tenant altogether without providing for him in any form on the estate?—I cannot remember a case. There was a man had the farm where I built an enlarged steading, and after that was done, I had it valued and asked him to pay the rent. He refused, and another man offered for it, and I gave it to him. The old tenant then told me he was going to the colonies, but he has been living on and on with James Leonard at Digro, always with the intention of going to the colonies.

25068. What was the rental of the holding from which he was removed?—In 1856 it was £45 a year, and it gradually was increased until it came up to £100.

25069. That is not a holding of the description to which my question applied. You don't remember any case in which you evicted a small tenant for the purpose of consolidating his land with a larger holding leaving him on the world?—I cannot remember a case of that sort.

25070. You say that on your estate, a system has prevailed under which small patches of waste land was given to improving tenants on a twenty-one years' lease with three breaks; that was introduced before you became proprietor?—Yes, I believe so.

25071. But you have adhered to that?—I have.

25072. You approve of that?—I do.

25073. Do you find at an earlier period when people entered upon the arrangement with a full knowledge of what they had to stake, that it gave them satisfaction—that they were glad to get the land on these terms?—They seemed to me very glad.

25074. Suppose you made an offer on the same conditions now, do you think you would find people to accept it?—There are not many places I could offer now.

25075. Is there not much of the old common pasture?—I don't think

there is any land I could do it on now; I hardly think it can be done any further.

25076. Do you find in the case of small holdings, accidentally vacant by death or voluntary departure, that there is considerable competition for them?—I have always found it so hitherto.

25077. When you have a small holding available by voluntary or accidental vacation, do you let it to the highest bidder at the market value, or do you select a tenant you wish to oblige?—I always select a man.

25078. Do you offer it to him at a valuation?—When I have any vacancy of that sort, I have a great many applications, and I generally select the man I think best, not always the highest bidder. I look to see who the man is and ascertain all about him, and I take the best man for the place.

25079. Do you believe at this moment, that if all your small tenancies were at your disposal, that you could let them in the market at a much higher rent than you receive?—I am perfectly certain I would get a great deal more for the estate, if it was squared off in larger and better farms.

25080. But supposing your small holdings were now vacant, could you let them as they are at an advanced rent?—I believe I could, but my factor could give a more certain answer to that than I can. I don't think a single farm on my estate is over-rented; it has always been my endeavour that it should not be so.

25081. You have spoken as if the relations between landlords and tenants, and between the landlords and the poor class of labouring tenants were to be, or might be regulated by the ordinary conditions of supply and demand such as exists in town; do you not admit that there are considerations of kindness and liberality and moral duty, on the part of a proprietor towards the small class of tenantry, which may lead him to govern his estate on different principles?—Most certainly, and I think my wife and I have endeavoured to be on the most friendly and kindly terms with all, and I thought until to-day that we were so.

25082. So that you fully admit that you have duties on your estate?—Most certainly, and I have endeavoured to do them.

25083. You state that valuators have been invited from other parts of the country to estimate the value of portions of the estate; were these valuators employed to estimate the small holdings as well as the larger farms?—I think nearly every one of them. I have the valuation here. Everything has been valued.

25084. From what part of the country did these valuators come?—Generally, from some other island in Orkney. In one case, I had as valuator the gentleman who is now factor to Sir William Gordon Cumming of Altyre.

25085. In getting these valuations, what class of persons have you engaged? Have they been persons in the position of factors?—Factors as a rule, sometimes lawyers.

25086. Don't you think that factors and lawyers are sometimes more identified with the feelings and interests of the proprietors than the tenants?—I find in most cases they generally have a leaning towards the tenant. I have always found it so. Judging by the value I put on myself, I generally find there is a leaning towards the tenant.

25087. You find that although your valuators belong to the class of factors, their leaning has been towards the tenants?—Yes.

25088. And when you have seen their valuations which you believe to be favourable to the tenant, have you invariably let the holding for

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a lower rental than that put upon it?—I won't say invariably; generally at the valuation, or below it; certainly never above it. I have endeavoured most carefully to do my duty.

25089. You stated that the value of crops had risen very much, and that animals were sold for three times the price at which they were formerly, and that such an increase might alone justify an increase of rental?—I did not quite say that. I say they generally have increased, it is the general prosperity of the country I refer to, all produce has been rising.

25090. And therefore rental should rise too?—It rises of itself, the people give larger offers and so it goes on. It has its money value like everything else, land.

25091. But in the case of the value of general produce rising, do you think it equitable that the whole benefit of the rise should go to the proprietor, or that it should be shared between the proprietor and the tenant in some proportion?—I think in proportion between the proprietor and the tenant. My own experience is, that the tenants can very well take care of themselves; in fact, instead of making Acts of Parliament to protect tenants, it would be much more to the point to make Acts of Parliament to protect landlords.

25092. But the rental of your estate has been very nearly trebled?—Yes, nominally, but it does not go into my pocket. There is a great difference between the gross rental, and what goes into my pocket.

25093. In expending money on buildings and improvements on the larger farms, have you generally employed local labour?—I think almost without exception, except in the case of my own house. In erecting farm steadings and other buildings, I have always employed the local labour of the island.

25094. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—The arrangement between the tenants and you as to poor rates is that you pay the poor rates and they pay the road money?—I pay my share as occupier of the rates, and I have said whatever balance there was. I have paid £400 odds more than I have received. My factor has been road inspector, and the money has all been paid in to him, and I have paid £442, 19s. 10d., more than I have received for the roads. I also built a pier at a cost of £615, entirely out of my own pocket, and the people avail themselves of it.

25095. Is there as much spent upon the poor as upon the roads?—There is about £100 spent upon the poor.

25096. At what rate do you pay paupers per quarter?—The rate varies; but the inspector is here and can say.—*Mr Reid*, inspector of poor. The highest rate is about £4 a year—*General Burroughs.* They get houses, of course.

25097. Is it possible for them to live upon that?—They have always done so; I fancy with the help of the tenants too, there being no assessment.

25098. You are naturally of opinion that there is no good cause for complaint among your people?—I was quite surprised to hear it.

25099. And that only those who have appeared here to-day are the representatives of that feeling?—I believe if you ask anybody, they will have grievances.

25100. Are you aware, that there was a meeting on your property last Saturday which was largely attended?—I heard there was a meeting.

25101. Would you be surprised to hear, that there were people there from the whole district, miles round; that it was a large meeting, and that it is as the representatives of that meeting, these men are here

to-day?—I know some tried to get in, and were turned out.—*Rev. Mr MacCallum.* These were not crofters. *General Burroughs.*—I am told there were others there who were not crofters. I am not aware you are a crofter. *Rev. Mr MacCallum.*—I am a crofter.

25102. You have indicated, that if that spirit is among the people, you would rather be glad to get rid of them?—Decidedly; I want a contented people round me.

25103. Even if the land were to become void of inhabitants, except the farmers and four-footed animals?—I should be sorry if that were so. I thought I was on the best of terms with the people, and I should think the case you state is impossible.

ALEXANDER WILSON, West Puldrite, Rendall (40)—examined.

See Appendix A, LV.)

25104. *The Chairman.*—You have a personal grievance to state?—Yes.

25105. Will you make your statement?—I was born and brought up in the Linehouse in the parish of Walls, and I was there only two years when my house was set to another person and I was turned out after I had put about £200 of improvements on a piece of common on the ground. I asked the laird for compensation, but got no answer.

25106. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who was the laird?—Mr Heddle. I had to leave there and there was nothing done, and I came away to Rendall and got a small place there, and I am staying there now.

25107. Is that the grievance you had?—Yes.

25108. Had you any lease or any promise that you would get value for your buildings?—None. Of course I had a promise from the factor but he was not long there; he was turned out too. I put up a new house and the laird was to spend the one-half and I the other. Of course he charged me interest for his one-half, and I paid the other. He charged five per cent. and he turned me out after I put £30 on the house.

25109. How many years were you paying rent?—I am not rightly sure. First when I commenced to work on the croft I made my living by fishing, and when I was not fishing I worked on land, and as soon as I got a cow's keep there was thirty shillings put upon me. I went to the factor about it and he said he would put no more rent on in his time; but his time, poor man, was not long. The old house was not worth this, and I went to the laird and he consented to do one-half in erecting a new house. I had to go to work as a cottar for little or no wages or to bind myself down as a slave, or else walk.

25110. What was the amount of the last rent you paid?—About fifty shillings.

25111. Do you know what the person who got your place is paying?—I don't know. It was a widow woman who was put into it, with a lot of small children, and of course she was supported off the board.

25112. Has she got the croft you had?—She was not long in it; she died a year after.

25113. What is the present occupant paying?—It is the orphans who are in it just now. I don't know what they pay. I think about fifteen crofts were made into a big farm, and I think my rent was to be £1, and I was to get a shilling a day for working.

25114. What was the name of the place upon Mr Heddle's estate?—Linehouse.

25115. *The Chairman.*—I understand you to say you expended some money on improvements of the ground?—Of course I did.

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25116. How much money?—I think about £200. I think the property is valued at £175, and I took it in from the hill when it was worth nothing.

25117. When you say you expended £175, do you include the value of your own labour?—Yes.

25118. It is a calculation of the day's labour you put upon it?—Yes.

25119. How much do you thiuk you expended in money?—I was always expending; but what I did was value for that money I think.

25120. Did you build the house?—Yes.

25121. What mouey did you spend in wages or in purchases?—The house cost me £50 and I got £20 from the laird. The house was erected at a cost of £30 to me.

25122. You actually paid out £30 in money?—Yes.

25123. For the purchase of what?—For the building of the houses.

25124. The purchase of windows and doors and so on?—Yes.

25125. What did the proprietor do? did he pay for the roof?—He paid for the roof and slate and putting it on.

25126. And you paid for the walls?—Yes and the other work.

25127. And when you left you got no compensation?—None whatever.

25128. You left the £30 there behind you?—Yes; and I put up a new byre two or three years before that, which cost me £10.

25129. How long did you keep the place after this expenditure?—I was only about two years in the new house.

25130. Why did you not ask for some written acknowledgement from the proprietor before you did that?—I did not think it was of much use; I thought he would not give it; there were no leases of small places given.

25131. But you hoped to be allowed to remain?—I did.

25132. Did you give any cause of offence by your conduct in any way?—None that I know of. Of course, there were causes of offence, but I think my case was good. If there was any offence there was a Sheriff Court here which could decide the matter.

25133. What was the nature of the complaint made against you?—It was concerning my neighbours.

25134. Do you wish to state what the nature of the complaint was? I don't want you to incriminate yourself?—I can state plenty of truth, but it would be hard to prove the case.

JOHN BROWN, Farmer, Kelton, St Ola (54)—examined.

John Brown.

25135. *The Chairman.*—What is your rent?—£15, 16s.

25136. Have you a statement to make?—Yes. The first statement I have to make is concerning the sea-weed. We are much aggrieved as to the sea-weed. The second grievance is the mode of out-warning; and the next is the custom of letting farms. We think all houses should be built by the landlord—that is a grievance by some. We also want compensation for drainage and dykes that may be made upon the farm before removal. These are all the grievauces.

25137. What is the nature of the complaint about sea-weed; are you obliged to pay for it?—We cannot get it, and the claims we endeavour to raise about it are that it is a beach where we have a public road leading right down to it; and yet there are proprietors who consider that although

we go down without trespassing to get the sea-weed, we cannot take it. We have more spots than one of that description.

25138. You think you ought to be allowed to take the seaweed from the shore of your farm?—It is where the public road leads us to it without trespassing. That is what we confidently think.

25139. The shore does not border upon your holding?—Not by any means.

25140. You think that because there is a public road which leads to the shore you should be allowed to lift the sea-weed?—Yes.

25141. But suppose all the people in the island wanted to lift it at the same place, there would not be enough for everybody?—But they are not that whatever.

25142. But does anybody want to get it besides yourself?—Everybody wants to get it and we want everybody to get a chance if he has got the ability. On a public beach such as we think it is—where our public road which we are paying for leads down without trespassing.

25143. But would you propose to divide it so that everybody might have a fair chance?—Just let him who is most active take what he can get with peace.

25144. First come first served?—Yes.

25145. But the strongest man and the richest man might get it, and the poorest man and the weakest man might never get any?—It would be better if that were the case than that these small crofters who are much the better of it should want it, and it should lie on the beach for no use; we must buy it before we can get any.

25146. Whom do you pay to?—I have never paid any, but I might pay to the proprietor above who seems to claim the beach.

25147. Does the proprietor sell it?—He will if he can get the chance.

25148. Do you know anybody who has paid for it?—I don't know anybody that ever exactly volunteered to pay much; but I think there have been some items paid too.

25149. What is the mode of out-warning of which you complain? Is it the short notice?—Yes; it is only forty days, which is a great disadvantage to a tenant, and is no very helpful thing at all to any proprietor. It is a very disputable matter I should think.

25150. What is it that you complain of about the custom of letting farms?—I am not very clear about that. I don't find much fault with it myself at all; I was merely asked to make that statement, and I have done it. The only way I think they would like to come to is that they would not like a farm put up to auction.

25151. That there should be a preference given to the sitting tenant?—There might be that in some cases; but I don't think that is what they exactly mean either.

25152. What do they mean?—I think their meaning is that they would have maybe two men to make the proprietor or factor acquainted with the value of the place and then put it into the market, and even although he was to get more than the value, that he would not go so much above it as in some cases he does.

25153. Do you mean that they think the value of the farm ought to be settled by arbitration?—Yes, or something like that, giving the proprietor to know what the value is if he does not know it himself.

25154. They wish to instruct the proprietor?—Yes.

25155. And the houses are to be built by the landlord; you think that would be a good thing?—Where it is necessary that houses are required. It should be, I think, looked into whether they are necessary or not, and if it is arranged that houses are going to be built it should be upon a

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limited scale, and not according as the tenant likes. He might do too much; he might make a house where there was no requirement. But if it is limited, in that case then the tenant should, I think, do all the cartage work and any such thing. But they would wish that the money expenditure on that house was off the proprietor, or that he should assist them in some way or other.

25156. That the proprietor should do the mason work and the skilled labour, and that the tenant should help with carting the raw materials?—They think so; it is maybe something like the general feeling among the poor crofters that they are not able to build many houses themselves.

25157. How ought the compensation for improvements to be ascertained?—There are dykes and drainage. The dyke would be valued if the tenant put it up, but he would not be allowed to get compensation for it unless it was a necessary requirement. But if it was a necessary requirement, both parties should have a little influence in getting it done, and the tenant should get compensation according to the value of the dyke; and drains much upon the same principle I should think.

25158. Do the tenants build many such dykes?—Yes, they do. These last few years I have not known, in the district where I am, much of that; but I have seen a good deal of it.

25159. Do the tenants put up many wire fences now?—Yes.

25160. Is that more the fashion than it was?—Yes.

25161. Which is preferable?—I would prefer the dyke by far.

25162. Is there anything else you wish to state?—There are some few tenants, small crofters out from Scapa, who wish to complain with regard to being too sore rented, and that even that was not done by auction. When a farm is put into the market, we consider it is not put into auction.

25163. Do the poor people sometimes out-bid each other?—That is not so prevalent with the crofters; the large farmers are much that way.

25164. But the crofters don't do each other any harm?—It is not so much the case with them so far as we know.

25165. Are you contented with your own croft and your own position?—Quite so.

25166. I understand everything you have said, except about the sea-weed.—Well, that is the most important thing of the whole lot. If your Lordship would allow me, I would turn out a little brighter on this matter. There is a sort of mystical thing in this matter. We don't know whether the title-deeds carry him clean out in reference to this shore, and he wont tell us, but he will go and threaten us, and so on. He will tell us that he will put us in the hands of so and so, and you will know who that is. Then we come down for a pickle sand and we cannot get it; we must pay so much for it. A man able to go and take ten or a hundred loads will get it as he pays for it, but we cannot get it; and this is on the same public beach, and it is all substances that the sea removes back and forward, and at the public road which we pay for making and keeping up. That road leads right down to the beach, free of all trespass.

25167. Could not you and some of your neighbours agree with each other to go and take some sand and sea-weed, and they would interdict you; and you might raise a suit which you could have decided by a court of law?—Yes, but there are not so many of us as are able to meet these interdicts.

25168. You could not afford it?—Not by any means. It would take fifty or sixty of us to manage that, and it might be ten or a dozen of years before we could gather it up.

25169. Could not you ask some of the friends of the crofters to help you?—I would have some knowledge given us exactly about these title-deeds, or give us the liberty of the free beach that the public road leads us to. I would beg very sincerely that that matter be investigated by the Royal Commission before us. I hope they will make that a matter of investigation.

25170. *Mr Cameron.*—Did you ever take a legal opinion about it?—I don't think I ever did, but I know those who have done it.

25171. That would not cost so much as an interdict?—It costs a shilling.

25172. But amongst all the crofters you could raise a shilling?—Yes, You might pay a shilling about what is your own; and if it is not your own, I would almost say I would find fault with the law on that account, because I don't think it is right to give a man a right in his title-deeds to take anything on which the sea washes. If a large stick comes down upon this man's property, it belongs to the Government, and the Government belongs to the sea-weed as well.

25173. *The Chairman.*—It is not what is attached to the stones, but drift sea-weed to which you refer?—Yes. Before I claim it to be mine, it is dashed about and laid upon the margin of the sea-beach.

25174. But would you gather the drift sea-weed and leave what was growing on the rocks alone?—I would have no wish to touch what is fixed, just what is loose, and the sand is loose as well. It may be here to-day and away to-morrow. We get a certain kind of weather and could take it without harming any other man. I would wish the Commission understood me. There are others as aggrieved at it as I am, and I would wish you to understand it that it is of double value to us crofters two miles from the sea, more than to those living at the face of it, and even there, if it was going to be free to all, they would have a better chance of it, as they are near it.

25175. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Who is the person you are complaining of, who does not allow you to take the sea-weed and sand?—There are several places, and I think it is prevalent through Orkney.

26576. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Are you here to-day representing a number of other crofters, or are you only for yourself?—I am a delegate for St Ola.

25177. You were chosen at a public meeting?—Yes.

25178. Where was the meeting held?—In the Old Court Room down here.

25179. Were there many people at it?—A good many—about a score. I don't think there was much occasion for a great many, because I don't think there are many grievances about here, except what I have stated. It is of very little value at all.

25180. Were there any crofters there?—Yes.

25181. How many?—I could not easily say. I should say maybe nine or ten; but it may be more or less.

25182. The matter of the beach is your principal grievance?—That is my one.

25183. And the forty days out-warning and want of compensation for drains and dykes are the other chief grievances?—Well, they don't affect me much, but still I was asked to mention them. With regard to out-warning, I think I would state that I think it should not be later than the month of March previous; forty days gives the farmer a very bad chance, and it is a thing that is of very little benefit at all to proprietors. It is as easy, when he is to dismiss a man, to tell him in March as forty days before the term; but of course when the law is that way, he is quite right to take advantage of it.

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Benjamin Swanson.

BENJAMIN SWANSON, Factor for Dr Traill, North Ronaldshay, and Ground Officer, Sanday (37).—Examined.

25184. *The Chairman.*— Do you come here spontaneously to make a statement, or are you a delegate?—I am not a delegate. I come here in consequence of some statements made in Sanday by Mr Muir in connection with the property with which I am connected. The statement I would like to make with regard to that, is that Mr Muir was not appointed a delegate, for the North Ronaldshay men never asked him to speak for them. It was spontaneous evidence on his part; and besides he knows nothing about the island and his evidence is worth nothing. I do not believe he ever had his foot upon it. He made some statements about Dr Traill's management. He said that but for the tyranny of the proprietor he believed the people would have been across from North Ronaldshay. Now that is very far from being true. It is well known Dr Traill is a lenient proprietor, the people have made no complaint to Dr Traill or me, and I believe they are living as happily as any people in Orkney or out of it, Mr Muir made a statement about Dr Traill preventing the people starting fishcuring. Now the two lads who tried to start the business had no means of their own, and it is quite true that they did bring a boat's cargo of salt, perhaps six or seven tons; but they did so without asking Dr Traill any liberty for the use of the store or use of the ground to dry fish. Dr Traill did not prevent them; he actually give them the use of the store, but said he did not think it would be a benefit for them or the people to start the business. He asked them a day or two after what they were to do and they said—'Well, Sir, we have given up the idea.' 'We do not think it will do 'us any good;' and they sold the salt in North Ronaldshay. Mr Muir said they sold part of it in Kirkwall, but that is not true, they sold it all on the spot.

25185. Was it bought by a fishcurer in the island?—There is no fishcurer in the island. The people cure their own fish and get a larger price than they would get if there was a curer there. They would only get the price of green fish from a curer, whereas they get the full maker's value as it is.

25186. I understood you to say that these lads did not ask Dr Traill for leave to use the shore; I thought it was in the power of everybody engaged in fishing to use the shore?—It is the store. Neither did they make any provision for making a curing station on the island. They did not ask anything about that.

25187. I understood you also to say they had not asked for leave for the use of the shore for drying the fish?—Well, of course the fish must be dried above high water mark, and they did not ask liberty to dry them there.

25188. I thought the law allowed fishermen to do that?—I do not think so; they must pay rent for it I should think.

25189. But if the shore is not enclosed and cultivated, have not fishermen under an Act of Parliament got a right to dry their fish on the shore?—I do not think so; I am not aware of it. I do not think they have any right to erect a fishcuring station without asking the liberty of the proprietor and paying rent for it.

25190. The procurator fiscal says the fishermen have the right to do it, but not the fishcurers?—Possibly that is it.

25191. But these men might have been fishermen as well as fishcurers?—they were not fishermen, and Dr Traill told them he did not believe it

would do themselves or the people good. He was just afraid they would very likely put up a store along with it—a grocery place—to supply the fishermen. He was afraid the people would not be well served, because the men who proposed to start the thing had no means, and he was afraid the thing might partake a good deal of the truck system if it went on.

25192. Dr Traill wishes everybody to be free to catch and dry fish and not fall into the power of the curers?—That was his wish particularly. He spoke to me afterwards and asked if I thought it would be a good thing to start a fishing station in North Ronaldshay, and I said it might, but only if a good man could be got. But the people have no disadvantage by curing their own fish, but rather an advantage, because they get the prices of dry marketable fish, whereas in selling to the curers, they would only get the price of green fish.

25193. Is there a shopkeeper in the island who is able to sell them all they want?—Yes, and besides they go to Kirkwall regularly in the summer time, and they have communication with Sanday once a week and want for nothing in that way. I saw some of them on Saturday myself and they were astonished atMuir's statement. I believe he tried to create an agitation and got some to come over, and they were astonished that he should talk of Dr Traill being tyrannical, because they said he was always very kind to them. Dr Traill goes about amongst them regularly when he is in the island. It was the statement about Dr Traill particularly that I wished to contradict, because I know it will hurt the people's feelings.

25194. *Mr Cameron.*—Have you any other statement you wish to make about the estate?—I do not think so.

25195. Is the land occupied by large farmers or small farmers?—By small farmers except some land the proprietor holds in his own hands.

25196. Within what range do rents extend?—£2 to £39, 10s., none above that.

25197. Have we had any other witnesses or delegates from North Ronaldshay before us?—None.

25198. Have these tenants got all their land enclosed within fences, or have they any hill pasture or common grazing?—They have some common grazing which is enclosed, but their lands otherwise are pretty open; in fact there is rather too much enclosed. There are some patches which would have been better left open.

25199. Is there none of their land taken away to create sheep farms?—None. There has not been any change on the estate for a long time.

25200. Are there any other proprietors in North Ronaldshay besides Dr Traill?—None.

25201. Are the rates and taxes as high as in some other parts of Orkney?—We have no road tax. The other taxes are the same as in Cross and Burness, Sanday. The poor rate and school rate amount to about 1s. 2d. The tenants' share of the poor rate is about 7½d. and of the school rate about 6½d. These are all the local taxes the tenants pay. Mr Muir also mentioned about the houses being bad. They do not look very well on the outside, bnt they are very comfortable inside.

25202. Who is Mr Muir?—He is a merchant in Sanday who knows nothing, I believe, about North Ronaldshay. He never was in the island to my knowledge.

25203. Has he any dealings with the people specially?—He does deal with the people; in fact he is doing more harm there than any person I know. He sends goods across there, and employs a man who travels over the island selling them.

25204. How does he do harm by that?—He must have that profit and

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the man must have his, and before the goods get to the people they will likely have to pay more for them than if they were to go and buy elsewhere. Besides he is bringing the goods to the people's door, and encouraging them to buy things they could do very well without.

25205. You think he was not only not appointed delegate, but that he has never been in the island?—I don't believe he ever was in the island. He made a statement which was very unwarrantable, and he had no knowledge of the place.

25206. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Were you present at Sanday the other day?—Yes.

25207. Did you hear Mr Muir make this statement?—Yes.

25208. Why did you not contradict him?—I had no opportunity.

25209. You are a volunteer here?—Yes; I spoke on Friday to be allowed to come here to-day.

25210. Why did you not on that day ask to be allowed to contradict the statement?—I asked to be allowed, but I wanted simply to suit the Commissioners' convenience.

25211. *The Chairman.*—Mr Swanson did offer; I remember quite well.

25212. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You were quite prepared to contradict everything which was said?—Yes.

25213. Were you prepared to make the same charges in Mr Muir's presence as you have done in his absence?—Yes, only I went to North Ronaldshay on Saturday, and I am in a better position to-day to speak on some points than I was then.

25214. Where do you live?—Sanday.

25215. How often do you go to North Ronaldshay?—In the summer time perhaps once a month. In winter I am not so often there.

25216. You do not think it would be an advantage to the island or to the people to develop its industries by having a curing establishment?—If we could get a good man; it would depend upon that; Dr Traill has no objections if he got a curer who was a good man. By a good man I mean a judicious man, a man of means who could carry it on and pay the people ready money for their fish. The people who attempted to start business had no means and they told me on Saturday that they were very glad now that Dr Traill spoke to them. Dr Traill did not prevent them doing it, but they were glad that they had not carried it on.

25217. Don't you think they must have thought seriously about the matter when they brought salt all the way from Kirkwall?—They knew the expense was very little, and I have no doubt they made a profit off the salt. The salt was required in the island and they would make the freight out of it. Besides it could not have been more than six or seven tons which they brought.

25218. Are merchants prevented from opening places of business in the island?—No there are plenty of merchants in this island; too many for their own good.

25219. You said you saw some of the people of North Ronaldshay?—I did.

25220. Would it not have been more satisfactory if you had brought some of them here to-day?—It might, but I did not ask them. If they had any grievance they would have spoken to me about it previous to now, or they might have spoken to Dr Traill.

25221. Have you been long a factor?—Since 1876.

25222. I suppose you know the island and all its capacities and capabilities?—Yes.

25223. You are perfectly satisfied with the state of it?—Yes, but I would like if it were improved.

25224. What is wrong with it?—There are a good many things we would like. I would like to see the people all work better; but they devote part of their time to farming, and part to fishing, and do not work both to advantage.

25225. The real state of matters is that the landlord has a grievance rather than the people?—Yes, he is not coming forward with grievances, but he has more occasion to give evidence in that way than the people. The people seem to be very happy indeed, if they were let alone.

25226. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—It was stated that the people in North Ronaldshay had elected the Free Church minister as delegate, but he had gone abroad, and he asked Mr Muir to represent him?—Yes.

25227. Mr Muir said Mr Grant promised to send a written statement, which he did not do.—I do not believe Mr Grant asked Mr Muir. Mr Muir said he was not asked to represent the people, but that Mr Grant said he was to send a written statement which he, Muir, had not got.

25228. Was there a meeting in North Ronaldshay appointing Mr Grant?—No. There was a meeting in Sanday, at which Mr Grant was appointed a delegate, but I never heard that he had accepted the office. I never heard anything more about it until Friday last before the Commissioners in Sanday.

25229. Were the people of North Ronaldshay at that meeting?—None of them.

25230. So Mr Grant had no commission any more than Mr Muir?—No, it was at a meeting of crofters in Sanday, that he was proposed as a delegate.

25231. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Of what place is Mr Grant minister?—He was then minister of North Ronaldshay, but he has now gone to Australia.

25232. Has he left for good?—Yes.

25233. *The Chairman.*—You said it was the landlord rather than the tenants who had cause of complaint in North Ronaldshay, can you tell me when the rental of North Ronaldshay was increased?—Not in my time, nor yet for a good while before, I think.

25234. Taking a period of thirty years?—Well, I am not aware that it has been raised in that time.

25235. Have you any large farms upon the island at all?—There have been none since I remember.

25236. It remains in its old condition?—It remains in the condition in which it was a long time ago.

25237. Have you seen the old rental books and accounts of the property?—No.

25238. But you have heard people speak about the matter; have you ever heard any tradition of rents having been increased?—No, I am not aware of it. Very likely they have been increased, but it must have been a long time ago. I suppose they have increased there as well as elsewhere, but it is a great number of years since there was any rise.

25239. Is it the custom to give any waste land on improving leases to the tenants?—The tenants in North Ronaldshay do not want leases. They have so much faith in the proprietor, that they do not want leases. He is quite willing to give them leases if they want them.

25240. Do they ever build houses themselves?—It is a long time since they built houses, but they keep them in repair.

25241. Does the proprietor ever rebuild houses?—He gives assistance occasionally.

25242. What are the houses like? Have they the fires on the floor?—

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No they have chimneys; if they only had slate roofs they would look very respectable indeed.

25243. Have they two rooms now, generally?—All of them, and some more. They have wooden partitions, and some have wooden floors and a coomceiled place above. They look better inside than out.

25244. Are the small holdings subdivided, or do the young people go away to other places?—The young people stop too much on the land, but we prevent subdividing as much as possible. It is not allowed, but they sometimes stay against the proprietor's wish. If Dr Traill was a tyrant they would not be allowed to stay, but they depend a good deal on the fishing—some of the smaller holdings—and on the kelp-working.

JOHN CAMPBELL MELLIS, Sheriff-Substitute of Orkney (38)—examined.

John Campbell Mellis.

25245. *The Chairman.*—We have asked you to come here for a moment in consequence of the statement made by a delegate named John Brown, crofter, Kelton. He complained that on a certain shore which was accessable by the public road, the people were not allowed to gather drift sea-ware and sand at their own discretion. He thought that a great hardship: what is the law on that subject?—I always understood the law to be that they are not entitled to take sand except by permission of the adjoining proprietor. As to drift sea-ware, I should say what comes on the shore is considered the proprietor's, but whether they ever interfere with it, I do not know, but I should say it belonged to the proprietor in the first instance—either the Crown or the propietor of the adjoining land.

25246. Sea-ware, drift and fixed, belongs to the proprietor of the shore?—I understood so.

25247. And has the Crown no claim? I mean does the proprietor have the right in common law, or is it in virtue of a charter from the Crown?—Sea-ware I should say is usually included in the titles of the riparian proprietor, but apart from that, I should fancy the right would remain with the Crown.

25248. Is that growing sea-ware or the drift?—I am not aware of any distinction as to the right of parties.

25249. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Mr Brown compared it to jetsom?—Lots of wood are regulated by statute—by the shipping statutes—and wood is to be taken possession of by the receiver of wreck, for behalf of whomsoever it belongs to, if the owners are known, or if it is not known who the owners are it belongs to the Crown, and it is sold for its behalf.

25250. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You would draw a distinction between some timber driven ashore and a tree in its native state?—Yes.

25251. Receivers of wreck have nothing to do with tree timber blown ashore—a tree with its roots attached?—I never turned my attention to that point, as to who would have the property in a tree.

25252. *Mr Cameron.*—With reference to the remarks about the rights of the Crown, you are aware, I presume that the right of the Crown to the foreshore in Scotland has always been disputed by riparian owners, and whenever a strong case has been taken to the law courts, the Crown have always been worsted and the riparian proprietor has succeeded?—I understood the law to be thus, that when it belongs to either the Crown or the proprietor if his titles include it, and whichever it belongs to, it is

held for the benefit of the public for public uses, such as passage and traffic and white fishing, and general uses that could be made of it by the public. But I quite understand that the foreshore belongs, subject to these public nses, as a rule to the riparian proprietor.

25253. But what is meant was that you are aware that the claim of the Crown to the foreshore has been disputed by riparian owners and carried to the highest courts of law, and that where such claims had a good title the question between the Crown and the riparian owners has been invariably decided in favour of the riparian owners and against the Crown?—The onus lies I should say with the proprietor to prove that he has a title wherever it is disputed, but at common law I should say originally it belonged to the Crown.

25254. Are you aware that it has always been held by riparian owners in Scotland, that there is a difference between Crown rights to the foreshore in England and in Scotland?—I cannot say I am aware particularly of the distinction between the two countries.

25255. *The Chairman.*—The witness seemed to be under a sort of impression that the fact that roads running along the shore and separating it from the proprietor's land would deprive the proprietor of a right to the shore and make the shore as it were more public property than it would otherwise be?—Well, I should say the law does not recognise any such thing whatever, not in the very slightest, although it might seem a natural thing enough to an ordinarily intelligent, but not educated man. I think I must guard myself against giving legal opinions in the county, without having some case before me, because it might commit me afterwards. Might I be allowed to say that one thing has impressed me in comparing Orkney with the Western Islands. There is a strong desire in the Western Islands to stay at home in the land of their fathers which may be laudable or not; but in Orkney, I have been impressed by the enterprise of the young fellows in going off and making their way in the world. There is no feeling amongst the present generation of sticking to the place, they stick to it and keep to their traditions when abroad, and look forward to coming back; but they show not the smallest instinct to stick to it because they were born there. They began many years ago to go abroad, going to Hudson's Bay, and I have no doubt most of the people there in the fur trade would be Orcadians, and from that time I suppose there is hardly a part of the globe where you will not find numbers of Orcadians. I have the honour to be captain of a battery of volunteers in Kirkwall, and I find it is almost hopeless trying to keep up instruction in drill, just because nearly one-half of the battery are new men every year. You can quite see the difference of that from a steady lot of men every year. Half the men are new every year, and while you may trust to the older men knowing their duties, the younger men are not familiar with them, and that is what has drawn my attention to the matter.

[ADJOURNED.]

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BETTYHILL, SUTHERLAND, TUESDAY, JULY 24, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXIV. and LXX.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq. M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

Rev. JAMES CUMMING, Free Church Minister, Melness (62)—examined.

Rev. James Cumming.

25256. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate by the people of Melness?—I have.

25257. Have you a statement to make on behalf of the people?—Not any written statement.

25258. Would you be so good as to make a verbal statement to begin with?—I have to state on behalf of the people that they complain of the smallness of their lots, the uncertainty of tenure, and that they are subject to annoyances if they happen to offend any official.

25259. Smallness of lots, uncertainty of tenure, and petty molestation, do you mean?—Yes. They also complain of lack of harbour accommodation, which shuts up the district from intercourse with other parts of the empire. That is true of the whole coast as well as to the district of Melness. The people are so located that in the greater number of cases their lots cannot be extended unless two-thirds, or at least one-third of them were removed so as to make room for the remainder to be somewhat comfortable. They are also subject to fines, not by the Sheriff or according to the laws of the empire, but according to estate laws. If a man receives a lodger into his house—his son-in-law or his daughter-in-law—he is subject to a fine, and that fine in some instances, if not in-all, gradually finds its way into his rent, and becomes an increase of rent.* May I mention a case in illustration? There was an elderly man, a retired shepherd, many years ago, who built a cottage on one of six or seven lots that were laid out for cottars or crofters—somewhere about two or three acres of surface. This old man reclaimed about two acres of ground, and built a cottage on it. He lived for some years in that way until at last his wife died. He had no family, and he could not manage to cultivate the lot himself. But he was permitted by the local agent of his Grace to take in a young couple to live with him in one end of his house, on condition that they would be kind to the old man. After living for some few years in this way, the old man wished to resign his lot and to become a pauper. I told him we had too many of these already, and that he had better keep on the lot nominally—he paid only a nominal rent—and that the people with whom he lived were very kind and dutiful to him, and that I would see him clothed myself. By-and-by he became blind, enfeebled, and lay in his bed. The people with whom he lived were very kind to him continually, and one day happening to call to see the old man, I noticed that he was not well provided for the winter, and I told my wife to send some cast-off clothes that I had, in order to make the old man comfortable. On further inquiry, I found that the person in charge of him could not put the clothing on, for reasons so delicate that I can scarcely mention them. She said she could not keep him clean, and on inquiring the reason she said she had no change of linen for him. I said the least thing the Parochial Board could do would be to supplement her

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

when she attended to the old man, and boarded him, and did everything for him, and that I thought they should supplement her with a change of linen. I wrote to the inspector of poor, informing him how the matter stood. He promptly attended to the matter. Thomas Morrison, the husband of the woman who had charge of the old man, not long after that, happened to meet his Grace's representative at Tongue, who said to him, 'Why aren't you good to Angus Rankin, the old man?' Morrison replied, 'I am as good to him as I can. "How is it that there is a demand made on the Parochial Board for relief?' Morrison answered, 'Well, I did not make that demand; probably it was some people who saw it was fit and proper,' for Morrison's family had increased, and he had enough to do to struggle through and make a livelihood for himself and his family. Meantime there was no more about it, but in the course of the month of March this old man, blind, bed-ridden, and I suppose about ninety years of age, was duly and formally summoned by a message from Dornoch out of the house.* I made a statement, which I addressed to his Grace the Duke of Sutherland on the subject. The reply I got was, that this old man had occupied three acres of arable land for a number of years—for a long time—and that he was under the charge of the inspector of poor, and that his Grace saw no reason to interfere in the matter. I rejoined, that should the ground be measured by any competent surveyor, they would find there were not two acres of land arable, and that if there were, they were the product of the man's own industry or capital; that he was not under the charge of the inspector of poor, but was merely getting a supplement in order to enable the poor people who were in charge of him to get a cup of tea for the old man, and provide a change of bedding. I also stated that whoever represented to his Grace that the matter was otherwise had made what was an unmitigated misrepresentation. To this rejoinder I had no reply; but Thomas Morrison, who was one of many who were working at some improvements which were going on in the district, was boycotted. He was discharged from the work, and matters stood in that way until the term day, when some person told me that the ground officer was on his way to turn Thomas Morrison and his wife and five children out. I repaired to the place, and happened to meet two or three men whom I took to be officers. I told the ground officer to 'go and tell 'those who sent you here, that the time has gone by when the inhabitants 'of Sutherland can be turned out of house and home as vermin, and that 'when Thomas Morrison goes out all his belongings go with him, and they 'leave nothing to this blind bed-ridden man but the stocks of the bed on 'which he is lying; and before Morrison goes out he must be provided with 'a qualified nurse, cooking utensils, fuel, food, and bedding, for Angus 'Rankin has nothing in this world he can call his own.' The ground officer retired. I don't know whether he delivered my message or not, but in the course of that day, or next day, Morrison went to the office at Tongue, and he was charged £4—£1 for what we call legal expenses, and £3 for getting the lot, although the nominal rent for it had been paid the previous Martinmas. There were two rents demanded and paid the same year, and for the same crop. Before I for one would submit to such treatment, I would go to the ends of the earth. Thomas Morrison is there still. He still pays £3 for rent—that is 30s. an acre for that poor land which is not worth the half. The old man died in the course of a few months afterwards. After the term at which this took place he was recorded as a regular pauper. I should have stated, that in my second letter to his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, I demanded or challenged proof. I asked my statement to be put to the test, but, whether that was done, or whether any attempt was made to do it, I never heard. There are

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

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other cases of a similar kind. There was an old man who got one of those lots when they were first laid out—pure hill ground at the time. He is now in about his seventieth year, and the rent was raised on him from the nominal sum he had been previously paying a year before the general rise was contemplated on this coast. His Grace, upon reflection, or from what motive I know not, ordered this general rise to be remitted, and after the rise was taken it was paid back again, but in the case of the old man to whom I refer, George M'Kay,* More, and James Munro—old men between seventy and eighty years of age—interest on the capital, labour, and money which they had laid out upon the ground had to be paid. These are only specimens of what has created a feeling of insecurity, which prevents the people from exerting themselves in any case when it is possible to do so. It prevents them from making an effort to improve their condition and make themselves more comfortable. The fact is, that there is such a spirit of dissatisfaction, and such a sense of insecurity gone abroad, that it may become dangerous on the part of the Government, if they don't do something to ameliorate the condition of the people. The people feel that they have no country; that they have no right. If they are known to have a gun, or if they are known to transgress any of what are called the byelaws of the estate, there are a dozen ways which cannot be formulated, in which their condition is made intolerable, and it is tantamount to punishment to them. There is not a bit of ground which a countryman can call his own, or build a bothy on, from the top of Kilbreck down to the sands of Naver. And that is a very unhappy condition for the whole of the people to be in. There are, so far as I can make out, between 7000 and 8000 people in the Reay country—that is the country of Lord Reay or the Mackay country—and all that population—I had not an opportunity of very accurately making it out—have only somewhere about one-thirteenth part of the Reay country allowed to them—7000 or 8000 people—and the rest is under sheep, under deer, under hares, under rabbits, and under grouse, and other unprofitable occupants of the soil. I think it is time, on account of all these things, for some higher power to interfere. We are, in fact, under an absolute despotism. It is quite true that the House of Dunrobin, in intention at least, is a benevolent house. As a rule, their crofters are not rack-rented; but then the agents of his Grace are his hands, his eyes, his ears, and his feet, and in their dealings with people they are constantly like a wall of ice between his Grace and his Grace's people. And this is not the case in a single instance, or with respect to one individual, but it has been the case for the last fifty or sixty years. There may be in a locality here and there, and in the case of one individual now and again, an exception, but what I have said describes the district as a whole. Now our Government is a constitutional one. Her Majesty cannot fix a single farthing of rent upon a proprietor of the soil, without the consent of the House of Commons; it must be done by Act of Parliament. She cannot advertise any of the estates.

25260. *The Chairman.*—Would you allow me to observe, with great respect, that if it is possible I would prefer that you should limit your observations to practical matters, rather than go into a general address upon the subject?—Well the practical matter is this, that we should have some security analagous to occupiers of the soil and subjects—that we should have some security analagous to that which proprietors have from the Crown, that is the sum and substance of what we want.

25261. The first complaint you have mentioned is with regard to the small lots. Would you have the goodness to state how, and at what time these small lots were formed; were the tenants, as a body, moved from

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

some other quarter, and placed in their present holdings which were mapped out for them?—They were.

25262. At what period was that?—I am not very sure, but it occurred generally speaking, between the years 1811 and 1824.

25263. Was that previous to the purchase of this Reay country by the Sutherland family, or was it after the purchase?—I cannot answer that question, but I think it was much about the same time; the same spirit prevailed upon the two sides of the country.

25264. You don't know whether this population was settled upon these lots by the Reay family or the Sutherland family?—No, I cannot answer that question.

25265. But the ground was systematically mapped out for them?—Yes.

25266. Are you able to state from tradition or knowledge whether the lots then given to the people were better or worse than the lots taken from them?—The people were infinitely worse off on account of the smallness of the lots.

25267. From what part of the country were the people removed?—From the district called Strathmore, I believe; and most of these families found a location at Melness.

25268. Can you say whether those lots which were originally small have been since subdivided either by the people themselves or by other parties being brought in upon them?—At a remote day before my day, they were divided, but not during the last forty or fifty years.

25269. Was the subdivision or diminution of which you speak in consequence of the multiplication of the people, and by their own will, or were other parties brought in and settled amongst them?—The latter principally.

25270. What becomes of the natural increase of the population?—They emigrate; there is a constant stream of emigration from the locality.

25271. Do you mean that they go to other parts of the estate or other parts of the country, or to the colonies?—All of them. They go south, to America, to New Zealand, and to Australia.

25272. Leaving the lots practically much as they were?—Very much.

25273. Is there any manifest improvements going on on the surface of the lots; are the houses improved, and the field cultivation and fences improved?—The lots are so small they are scarcely worth fencing in; but the houses have made a great advance in the direction of being improved, especially since this Commission was appointed.*

25274. There has not been much time to do that?—It strikes me to see so many cottages covered with slate, and wood given, and a great variety of privileges freely bestowed, compared with the grudging manner in which such things were granted before.

25275. In the case of the improvement of houses, has the improvement been made by the landlord or the tenant, or by co-operation between the two?—The latter.

25276. On what system is the co-operation conducted?—I am told his Grace gives timber for the roof, and allows the tenant two or three years to pay the slates. They pay the slates in instalments; that is the ordinary way.

25277. Are there any leases ever given?—No, nor asked nor expected.

25278. What is the form of tenure which the people desire to have; what is the form of security which they desire?—That an independent party or parties, such as a land court, or by whatever name it may be called, should be intrusted with authority to say whether or not a change was desirable—whether it be called an eviction or dividing of one lot into two, or whether it be any other change contemplated; that so long as the

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

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occupant is a loyal subject, and pays his rent, he should not be disturbed without some good moral or social cause; and that another than the factor should be the judge as to whether the change was desirable or not.

25279. You have not mentioned the sort of petty molestation or interference in connection with the rules of the estate; what are the rules of the estate of which the people complain?—That is a mystery to me. They are called the Loch laws; and who executes them or what the code is, or to what extent they may be strained or extended or contracted, is known only to those who put them in force.

25280. But one principal feature in them is that children are not allowed to settle on the croft or to live in the same house with their parents; that the parent is not allowed to take in another family, however nearly connected with himself?—That is it. That may be graciously allowed if the factor is consulted; if the tenant does it without consulting his superiors, he is liable to be punished by a fine.*

25281. Considering the nature of the dwellings which now exist, and of which you have already spoken, do you think it would be desirable that the members of a family in unrestricted numbers should be allowed to settle in the same house as their parents?—I think the very reverse; and it is rarely or never done with the view of its being the permanent order of things.

25282. You say that the want of a harbour is felt, not only in your own district but all along the coast?—All along the coast.

25283. Has any particular spot been designated which might be judiciously selected as a harbour?—I have heard sea-going people point out Talmin, at Meluess, as the best and fittest place.

25284. Has that been brought under the consideration of the Duke?—It has, but the factor put his finger on it, and spoiled the whole affair. His Grace expended between £4000 and £7000 on a harbour on the Tongue side of the Kyle, at a place called Scullomie. The reason the pier was put there is popularly believed to have been the following:—Mr Bremner, the engineer at Wick, had finished building the harbour there, and had a great deal of plant on hand, and the factor that was, wished to have the harbour on the Tongue side, and tampered with the engineer so to appoint it. The engineer declined, and pointed out Talmin as the best place, but the factor told him, 'Well, if you do so, I will not advise Mr 'Loch to purchase your plant for the building of the harbour.' This would have been a loss of several hundreds of pounds to the engineer; and between that and voting—(Mr Bremner had considerable influence in procuring votes at Wick for the member for the Northern Burghs of the day)—they agreed to put the harbour at Scullomie, and it has been of no service to the world.

25285. Has it succeeded?—No. It is described in what a Scullomie man said to his Grace on one occasion shortly after it was built. His Grace remarked, 'I hope you will find this harbour of great use to you and to the whole locality;' and the man, not willing to be too rude, said, 'Oh yes, my Lord; it's very good for catching sillocks.'

25286. You said a fine is sometimes levied for alleged misconduct on the estate, and that it is levied for a series of years, and at last becomes grafted on to the rent, and becomes an increase of rent; can you mention any instance?—There is the case of Hugh Maclean, Dalnafie, West Melness.

25287. What was the nature of his supposed offence?—His daughter married a neighbour's son who was a militiaman, and he lived with his father-in-law. He has since then got a lot which became vacant for himself, but the increase of rent which was put on, on account of his

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

staying with his father-in-law has been continued down to the present date.

25288. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You said there was no room to extend the lots without removing the people?—That is my opinion.

25289. Is there land adjoining them to which they could be removed —Yes, an indefinite amount; but it is under a large farm.

25290. I mean land suitable for arable purposes?—Yes, thousands of acres.

25291. Quite as good as they have got?—If they would labour it for a generation, it would.

25292. As good as the land they have was, when they entered upon it? —Yes. There is this difference, that the further one resides from the sea-coast the snow is apt to lie longer, and to be heavier on the inland portions of the county; but a very large part of the ground, with that abatement, is superior to the fringe of the country occupied by the people.

25293. The centre of the country is occupied now principally by sheep farms?—Almost wholly.

25294. Could a part of these farms be given to crofters, and the remainder be suitable for being worked as a sheep farm?—I am not sure that I see the drift of the question. If you mean that a slice should be taken off one of these large farms, and that the remainder would be still fitted for breeding sheep, I most certainly think that could be done in most cases. A sheep farm requires a certain amount of low ground along with the high ground.

25295. Could you give sufficient low ground to the crofters and leave sufficient for wintering the stock of the sheep farm?—Yes; for the crofters would need outrun for their stock as surely as the sheep farmers require it.

25296. One saw in the papers lately a good deal about a harbour or pier, which it was resolved to build at Rispond; is that not in your parish?—No, in Durness; you will get information about that at Kinloch Bervie.

25297. There is no harbour along this coast?—No harbour, except the one at Scullomie, which is of no use, until one goes I don't know how far round Cape Wrath. There is a jetty or something at Rispond, but it is not easily taken. A harbour at Talmin would prove a harbour of refuge for any vessel that might be in distress between Cape Wrath and Strathy Point.

25298. Where is Talmin?—On the west side of the Kyle of Tongue.

25299. Is Loch Erriboll not a natural harbour?—It is; but although it is very safe when vessels get in, it is very difficult to sail out.

25300. What would it cost to make a pier or harbour at Talmin?—I cannot give any idea as to that, but it would cost much less to make a secure harbour than it cost to make the one at Scullomie.

25301. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the average rent of crofters in your parish?—I cannot say; they pay up and down between £3 and £4, and some possibly may reach close upon £5.

25302. They range from £3 to £5?—Yes, and some of them may be less than £3.

25303. You say your crofts are small; what amount of arable land do the crofters hold?—Probably about 3½ acres each. I don't suppose it will average 4 acres.

25304. Can you tell me what stock any individual who pays £5 of rent keeps?—A £5 crofter would keep a pony and two or sometimes three poor hill cows, and perhaps a stirk or two; and he might have a score of sheep, or perhaps sometimes as many as thirty. There have been

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instances of persons who were very careful of their flocks, and who have had more sheep than that. We have a very good outrun at Melness—the best outrun on the whole coast.

25305. You mentioned before that the crofts were not highly rented?—That is my opinion.

25306. I did not quite understand an answer you gave to Lord Napier. Where did you say the people came from who were located in your parish subsequent to the general migration that took place?—I am not sure it was subsequent to the general migration.

25307. The Chairman wanted to know how the crofts became subdivided, whether it arose from the natural increase of the people, or whether they were sent from other places, and you replied both?—From other places.

25308. Where were the other places?—On the east side of Loch Hope and in the district called Strathmore—the district of Fresgell up to Inverhope.

25309. After this emigration of the people took place, how was it that they got more numerous? After the general migration from these places, you stated there was still a subdivision of the crofts at a later period?—If I stated that, it is not what I intended to state.

25710. You said that the number of the families at the present moment is the same as it was when the general migration took place?—Very much.

25711. You stated that when the heads of families allowed their relations to remain in the house, it was not intended that that should be permanent?—Certainly not, if there be more than one representative.

25712. You disapprove of that yourself?—Most certainly I do.

25713. Don't you think if it were once allowed that the heads of families might, permit their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law to reside in their houses, that their occupation of the house might, in spite of themselves, become permanent?—I don't think it. The general feeling, so far as I know it, is that one representative of the old people is all that ought to be looked forward to as a permanent successor.

25714. But I mean that the rule of the estate, which you say is a wrong rule, is established, as I understand it, in order to prevent two families occupying one house; if the house is once permitted to be occupied by two families, although only temporarily, might it not become permanent, and therefore the rule is a good one?—It is a harsh rule, and against the laws of nature, and therefore cannot be a good one.

25715. But you said it would not be good to allow it to become permanent; I say if it were allowed temporarily, might it not become permanent?—I think not. Since 1874 the people are better educated, and will emigrate, as they in fact do.

25316. Do you think it would be easy for the head of a family, after he had allowed his son-in-law or daughter-in-law to reside a short period, to get rid of them afterwards?—Sometimes it is.

25317. Easy or difficult?—Easy.

25318. And sometimes it is more difficult?—I don't remember of any case within my knowledge. The people themselves instinctively shrink from more than one family settling down upon one lot.

23519. If the rule is one which is for their benefit, and carries out what they think right why do they object to it?—Because it takes them at a disadvantage.

25320. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been minister at Melness?—For the last twenty-two years.

25321. What is your parish called?—Melness and Erriboll. It is partly

in the parish of Tongue and partly in the parish of Durness *quoad civilia.*

25322. You represent then the whole of your parish?—No, the Erriboll district.

25323. Was there a large attendance of the people to send delegates here?—Every one that could come out was present, so as to deliberate on what was to be done.

25324. You have made a statement this afternoon; I presume that statement represents the real feeling of the people of your parish, and the Melness district especially?—So far as known to me.

25325. It represents your own feeling?—It represents my own, certainly.

25326. You have referred to Melness frequently?—I have; it is of it I principally spoke.

25327. Is there a large farm called Melness?—There is.

25328. Have you any idea of the extent of it?—No; my memory is somewhat treacherous, but so far as known to me it is between 70,000 and 80,000 acres.

25329. Is that all in possession of one man?—It is.

25330. How many people do you think are upon that farm?—Eleven shepherds and a ploughman.

25331. You mentioned that in what is called the Reay country, there might be a population of 7000 or 8000?—I did.

25332. Are these all together or separate?—All between Kyle Sku and Holstenhill.

25333. When you spoke about the tenth or thirteenth part of the country being given up to the small farmers and to the population, did you refer to any particular district, or to the connty of Sutherland?—I referred to the Reay country between Kyle Sku and Holstenhill along the course of the coast on the Sutherland property.

25334. Is what is called the Reay forest in yonr district?—It is; it is in the Reay district.

25335. Do you know to what extent it goes?—It is very large; I cannot give any idea of its extent.

25336. Are there any people living upon it except gamekeepers and others?—Not that I am aware of. There are one or two superannuated people—a superannuated shepherd and gamekeeper—living upon it.

25337. Will it amount to 50,000 acres?—I cannot condescend upon its extent.

25338. Is it of vast extent?—It is; it is a day's journey to go through it.

25339. Was the country which is now forest at one time inhabited by people?—Parts of it, but I am not locally acquainted so as to point out the particular districts.

25340. Was it a forest when the Mackays had it?—It was a forest from time immemorial—at least parts of it.

25341. You stated that there bas been considerable emigration in your time from the country?—Yes, there is not a year in which people are not emigrating. All the people of spirit and enterprise leave the country; for everything done in Sutherland must be nnder the eye of the factor and in the interest of Dunrobin. It is the Dnke! the Dnke! the Duke! There is no room for enterprise or any independent spirit; a man cannot trench a rood of ground without asking leave of the ground officer or some such official.

25342. Are the people of Sutherland attached to their country and home?—All Highland people are.

25343. Suppose they got facilities for taking in some of the lands

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now occupied as forest or large sheep farms, would they be disposed to go there instead of emigrating?—No doubt about that.

25344. Do you see any reason why they should not get such opportunities at home?—I see many reasons to the contrary—not to empty our country of its population; it would be suicide.

25345. You made use of the expression 'the Loch laws,' which you said the people don't know much about; are these printed?—I am not aware. I never saw a copy if they are. They are printed on the people's minds, and the people feel them if they cannot understand them.

25346. I suppose you know the expression that 'the evil that a man 'does, lives after him, and the good is oft interred with his bones?'—I don't agree with the last clause.

25347. Does the former apply in connection with the Loch laws?—I cannot say, as I have not perused the laws—I have not seen them. I only know that they produce a feeling of discomfort.

25348. They are not good laws?—They are not reckoned good laws, and in many instances they are made to neutralise imperial laws.

25349. You spoke about the importance of a harbour here; is there any fishing population?—The most of our people are sea-going people.

25350. *And it comes to this, that they are not only scrimped in their* land, but are hindered from developing the resources of the sea?—They have no opportunity at all. They are a most unhappy people in that respect. Everything they export they export at a rate of 5 or 10 or 15 per cent. of loss, and everything they import they import at an equal loss on their side again—that is, it costs that more than in general centres and places where there is access to the markets. I don't know any part of the British coast that is so ill provided with means of communication with the world outside as the district between Cape Wrath and Holstenhill.

25351. Supposing larger crofts were given to the people, whereby they could really make a living out of them, do you suppose that, with the views these people entertain, they would subdivide the crofts?—I don't believe they would. They are quite alive to the pauperising effect of subdividing their crofts.

DONALD MACLEOD, Crofter's son, Achintighalavin, West Strathan (53)—examined.

Donald Macleod.

25352. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Were you elected to come here to-day?—Yes.

25353. Have you a statement to make on the part of the people of West Strathan, Melness?—*Yes. It is a statement that affects Melness* altogether, and it is that our crofts are too limited to support our families.

25354. You heard Mr Cumming make his statement, does that apply to your district?—Yes, so far as our crofts are concerned.

25355. Have you anything else to add to Mr Cumming's statement?—I don't think I have anything to add to what he has said regarding crofts, insecurity of tenure, and want of harbour accommodation. These are the main complaints we have to make.

25356. Have you anything to say upon any other point?—No, these are the points.

25357. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose you quite agree that the complaint here is not that the rents are too high, but that the crofts are too small?—Yes, the rents are too high, in this respect, that the crofts are too small. If the crofts were of proper size, and the rent in proportion

to what it is now, there would not be the same grudge, and there would not be the same cause for complaint.

25358. That is to say, if you had two or three crofts instead of one, you would not think that the rent that is paid just now by these two or three crofts would be too high?—Generally speaking, I would not.

25359. Mr Cumming said some people keep twenty or thirty sheep; is there any rule that settles the number of sheep which each crofter can keep?—I am not aware that there is.

25360. Each man can keep as many sheep as he pleases?—I don't suppose many of them have many sheep.

25361. What will be about the average number now, taking it off and on, that a crofter has of sheep in your place?—Perhaps a dozen.

25362. But he might keep twenty or thirty?—Very few, if any, have that number.

25363. Do these who have a number of sheep pay a higher rent than the others?—No.

25364. Don't you think it would be a fair thing that there should be an estate regulation which should settle the number of sheep that each crofter might keep?—Yes. I would not say anything against that, only onsidering how few they must have, and that the outrun is sufficient for ll the sheep that are on it, no one seems to feel aggrieved.

25365. Because there is plenty of ground?—Yes, the outrun is good.

25366. Why do those who have only nine or ten not have twenty or thirty?—Because they are very poor. Their crofts do not supply their families for six months of the year.

25367. Will that be the reason in all cases?—The poverty of the people certainly is the cause of it.

25368. You don't remember, of course, when the people came from the ins'd · of the country to the sea-shore?—No.

25369. But you know well enough how many years ago it was?—I understand it was from the year 1812 to the year 1820 or 1822.

25370. Do you know the country well enough to travel through the places they came from?—Yes, I have travelled through them.

25371. You have gone over the ground often?—Yes; not often through some of it, but I have been over it all.

25372. Judging from its appearance to-day, do you think it could easily be restored to crofting purposes again?—I believe it would not be very difficult. The present crofts, on account of being cropped every year since that time, say for seventy years or thereabout, fail to yield anything like what they did thirty or forty years ago, and I believe the same may be said of the straths in which the sheep were placed at that time; they have failed on account of never being disturbed.

25373. There is plenty of room in those parts to give large enough crofts to the people of Melness?—Yes.

25374. The population is not getting larger all over the whole country?—No, not over the whole country.

25375. Is it getting larger in your place?—It must be larger than it was a number of years ago, I think. There is a number of cottars in the place, but I don't know exactly how many.

25376. How do they live?—It is hard to say. They are in a great measure supported by the crofters. They go round in the harvest time, and ask for sheaves of those who may have them.

25377. The strong men of course go to the fishing?—Yes.

25378. Is there any work in the place?—No. There are a few working just now at reclaiming land in connection with some of the crofts. His Grace has given them money at a certain rate of interest to reclaim land.

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Donald Macleod.

25379. Is it being taken advantage of to any extent?—Yes, wherever the people have got it, and their crofts are so situated that land which can be reclaimed is contiguous to them.

25380. Do you look for some additional room being got for the crofters by that process?—Yes, for a few.

25381. Do you expect it will succeed, and that the new ground will provide food for the crofters in a few years?—Yes.

25382. The ground is suitable enough if it were reclaimed?—Yes, if those holding it were so situated that they could do well towards it in liming, and such as that.

25383. No doubt, the people of Melness think Talmin the best situation for the desired harbour of which Mr Cumming spoke, but the people of Farr and Strathy think theirs is best?—No doubt; but they cannot deny that Talmin is the best.

25384. Do you know any other place between Scrabster and Talmin where a harbour could be made without any extravagant cost?—No, I don't know the coast between Scrabster and Tongue.

25385. Although Loch Erriboll has good anchorage, there is not a landing place there?—No. At Talmin there was a prosperous herring fishing carried on at one time.

25386. But the herring have forsaken the Loch?—I think the fishers forsook the herring, because there was no landing place at Talmin. The French and Dutch boats and curers from Wick were curing there, but there was no proper way of landing. The boats had to be run on the sand, and the men had to go waist deep into the water to carry off the fish.

25387. How do the people on the sea-coast here get their supplies and send their produce to market?—They get their supplies by a smack that comes occasionally from William Macdonald & Co., merchants, Thurso. The smack comes up and lands her goods at Tongue here—at the east side of the Kyle of Tongue—and the people have to take their goods across the ferry of Tongue, and cart them home.

25388. Is that the only regular communication by sea between Cape Wrath and Thurso?—The only regular communication, and it is very irregular, just when Messrs Macdonald have goods to send.

25389. There is no steamer calling at any time along the whole shore?—No.

25390. On the west, is there any steamer calling north of Lochinver?—No, not unless the steamer from Stornoway, which goes to Badcall. I am not aware of any other.

25391. How do you send away the fish which you catch? You fish lobsters, do you not?—Yes, they are sometimes sent across the country, and at other times they are sent to Thurso by the low road, and sometimes I believe they are sent by boat. There is a boat run occasionally from Melness, and it runs whenever it can make any sort of trade.

25392. How do you send cattle to the market?—We never send them unless cattle dealers come and purchase them.

25393. I suppose cattle dealers do come occasionally?—Yes.

25394. How do you sell the sheep?—We sell lambs, but it is a very rare thing to sell a sheep.

25395. Do cattle dealers come and take the lambs away too, or do you sell them to the big farmers?—To cattle dealers—parties from Caithness; it is they who generally buy the lambs.

25396. You said the people were so poor that they were not able to keep the whole stock they were entitled to on their own crofts; are there several crofters at Melness who, if they got the big crofts you want, would be able to take them up?—Not many now, if any.

25397. But there are some?—Yes, but very few.

25398. How would you propose to deal with them?—Get the Government to assist them at a favourable rate of interest.

25399. Is that the opinion of the people?—Yes.

WILLIAM MACKENZIE, Crofter's Son, Trantlemore, Strath Halladale (37), examined.

(*See Appendix A, LXIV.*)

William Mackenzie.

25400. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Were you freely elected a delegate?—Yes.

25401. Was there a number of people present at your election?—Yes. At a public meeting of crofters and cottars held in Dalhalvag Schoolhouse on Wednesday, 4th July 1883, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted with the view of laying them before the Royal Commission:—'1st, That the people ask enlarged holdings at fair rents, 'and for this purpose pray for the breaking down of large sheep farms. '2nd, That the people ask the Government to give them security in their 'holdings. 3rd, That compensation for improvements be given to any 'tenant removing of his own accord.' (Signed) WILLIAM M'KENZIE, secretary and delegate, and by fifty-three crofters, crofters' sons, and cottars.

25402. What is the number of families living in the district to which you belong?—Sixty-five.

25403. How many of these are crofters?—Fifty-one and fourteen cottars.

25404. Are the crofts much of an average in size?—No, they vary in size.

25405. What do the rents average?—I should say they will average about £5, 10s.

25406. What is the highest rent you know?—About £20, but I am not exactly sure.

25407. And the lowest?—About £2, 10s. or £2, 6s.

25408. What stock will a man keep on a £2, 10s. croft?—A very small stock indeed. He can perhaps keep a cow by buying additional provender, and two or three sheep or even half a dozen.

25409. Are there any of them who live upon the produce of their crofts?—Yes, I believe there are.

25410. Do the majority of them do so?—No, a small minority of them only.

25411. How do those whose land is not sufficient to maintain them, live?—They just struggle through the world some way or another. They go to work in all quarters of the world, and gather money to support their families.

25412. How do the cottars live?—Some of them are paupers; others live by labouring in different places, and at different kinds of work.

25413. Is there any work to be had in the neighbourhood?—No, there is no public work in the meantime.

25414. What kind of houses have the crofters generally?—Some of them have very good cottages and others very miserable, the worst on the estate, I believe.

25415. Are many of them very poor houses?—I should say about half of the houses are very bad. Are they old houses?—Yes, I believe they have been built by the grandfathers of the present crofters, or perhaps at an earlier date.

25416. Do the people get any encouragement to improve their houses?

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—Yes. They get lime from his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, and timber for the roof, but nothing else, so far as I am aware.

25417. Do any of them keep cattle in the same houses with themselves?—Yes, I know instances of cattle going in at the same door, and no partition being between the people and the cattle.

25418. But I suppose there are not many such?—There are two or three so far as I can recollect, but only two or three.

25419. Do you consider the present rents too high?—No, I don't consider the rent per acre too high, but I consider that the holdings are so small, that the rent would be far too high, although the men paid in fact nothing at all.

25420. Can you give an estimate of what it is per acre?—I would say about £1, or perhaps a little more for the arable land, and the hill pasture besides.

25421. Have you plenty of hill pasture?—There is a good deal of hill pasture. The fifty-one crofts, I should say, will have about twelve square miles of hill pasture, but a great deal of that is worse than useless. It would be better under the sea.

25422. All moor?—Yes, it is full of bogs and bad pools for drowning their sheep.

25423. Is there any limit to the number of sheep a man may keep?—No, they are not limited; but they are limited in this respect, that a man can only keep them by being at great expense. The lot I occupy would not keep more than two-thirds of my present stock without outside keep.

25424. Are there any large farms near?—Yes, both ends of Strath Halladale are occupied by one farmer, Mr Paterson, Bighouse.

25425. Is your land fenced from his?—No.

25426. Does that lead to any disadvantage or injury to your crops?—In former times it did, but now the inconvenience is quite inconsiderable.

25427. You don't want a fence?—No, I don't hear any complaint with regard to that.

25428. All the crofters have at least one cow, have they not?—Yes, so far as I know.

25429. Are the cottars able also to keep cows?—I am not aware of any cottar who has a cow in Strath Halladale.

25430. Have the cottars been long there?—Yes, some of them, and others only a short period—three or four years.

25431. Where have they come from?—They are generally natives of the place.

25432. Has the number of crofters in Strath Halladale increased within the last twenty or thirty years?—Very slightly. One or two lots have been subdivided since that period—one that I am aware of.

25433. Is subdivision allowed by the laws of the estate?—No, and it is not practised in our locality.

25434. You are some distance from the sea?—I should say the nearest tenant would be 3½ miles from the sea.

25435. Then I suppose there are no fishermen among you?—No.

25436. Have you plenty of peats?—Yes, but they are very difficult to get.

25437. Do you keep horses?—We keep ponies.

25438. Has every crofter a pony?—No, I believe there is a considerable number without them.

25439. Is your inconvenience with regard to the peats that they are far away?—They are not far away, but Strath Halladale is a deep valley, and there are high hills on each side, and it is very difficult to carry the peats over these high rough hills.

25440. Do you carry them on horses?—In carts.

25441. The women are not obliged to carry them?—A considerable part of the way they are—in the worst parts; they have to carry them on their backs.

25442. Do you use horses in ploughing, or do you dig with a spade?—The horses plough all the crofts, so far as I am aware.

25443. I suppose the use of the crooked spade has gone out long ago?—Yes.

25444. How long ago?—I have never seen it.

25445. And the women are not employed in harrowing, as they are in some of the islands?—Not now.

25446. Did they use to be?—I have seen instances of it, but not many.

25447. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You mention that you want enlarged crofts; the last witness from Melness stated that there would be very few people capable of taking such crofts without help—how would that be in your district?—I know I could take one if I could get it at a reasonable rent.

25448. There are fifty-one crofters—would all those who have small crofts be able to take large ones?—Not all, but I believe a considerable number of them would by getting some assistance in the way of building houses and so forth.

25449. Would they require assistance to stock the croft?—I believe they would manage to buy it by their credit, and some of them have friends who would lend them money and so forth. They would try a great many means to stock the ground.

25450. What do you consider a reasonable-sized croft? What rent would it be as rents go?—The land is very bad in the district; it is generally overflowed by the river.

25451. You said you did not think the land over-rented if you had a sufficient quantity of it; what do you consider would be the rent of a fair sized croft?—I would consider a fair sized croft one of ten acres.

25452. That would be about £10; would you consider that sufficient to keep a man?—It would be rather small in some cases; it would depend on the nature of the land. The land varies a great deal in different parts of the Strath.

25453. How many crofters are there in Strath Halladale paying less than £12 a year?—I should say that all pay less than that with one exeception.

25454. There is only one paying £20 of rent?—Yes.

25455. And you think the half of these would be able to take proper sized crofts?—I should think they would.

25456. Mention was made of the Loch laws, which I presnme means the regulations of the estate; do you know anything about these regulations?—No, but the estate of Strath Halladale belonged to the Mackays of Bighouse down to 1830, and all the evictions in that quarter took place prior to that date. We have nothing bad to say of the house of Sutherland as a community; in fact, the house of Sutherland has benefited us. But this has been a small estate before, and the tenants had been rack-rented prior to the property coming into the hands of the Sutherland family. And besides being rack-rented they had to do a great deal of feudal service which his Grace the Duke of Sutherland did away with.

25457. Are you subject to annoyance from the officials on the estate?—There are cases of that.

25458. Are there any estate regulations of which you have heard, and

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of which you don't really know the meaning?—We are ignorant about the regulations, but some of them are rather sharply exercised amongst us. For instance, a man is banished off the estate for killing grouse.

25459. Are there any printed rules?—We never got our hands upon any printed rules.

25460. But you know if you are found shooting game you have to go?—Yes, it is generally the case.*

25461. Are there any other rules you complain of?—We would desire security against the raising of our rent so that we cannot live.

25462. I mean are there any rules on the estate you complain of, besides that with reference to the shooting of game?—It is a rule of the estate that the officials can fix the rent, and do anything they please, and that is considered a great grievance by many of the crofters.

25463. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Is Strath Halladale a large district?—It is about fifteen miles long.

25464. You say that the crofters are in the middle of the glen, and a tenant above them, and a tenant below them?—The same tenant occupies both ends.

25465. Were there many people removed in the time of the Mackays of Bighouse?—A great many. I cannot specify the number, but it would be considerable.

25466. What became of them?—Some of them were planted amongst those who lived in the place where the crofters are now, and that was the occasion of the overcrowding.

25467. And others had to leave altogether, I presume?—Others left the estate altogether; some went abroad, and others went to Caithness.

25468. Do the people you represent, represent the whole of Strath Halladale?—Yes; I was elected at a public meeting.

25469. Do you know the rental of the parish of Reay in this county?—I should say it was something about £3000, or perhaps a little over it.

25470. How much of that does Mr Paterson the large tenant pay?—Well nigh on £2000, I understand, including shooting.

25471. I suppose the people don't consider that a very fair division, do they?—Far from it.

25472. Have your people been in the place where you are for a long time?—My father and grandfather were evicted from Strathnaver about seventy years ago, and planted in Strathhalladalemore, and the lot they then got was divided between other two tenants, and my grandfather had to labour for a time.

25473. You have sometimes heard it alleged, have you not, that it was for the benefit of the people that all these great clearances took place seventy years ago?—Yes, but it is a great mistake.

25474. Are the crofters generally now upon the Sutherland estates rather poor?—They are very poor in general.

25475. And after seventy years experience of these removals, don't you think that the system of turning them out of these glens, and putting them down by the sea shore, was a great mistake?—Yes.

25476. Mr Cumming stated that a good number of people emigrate, because they cannot find anything to do here. Is that consistent with your observation?—Yes, but the people are so poor in our place, that they seldom leave the country, and the population does not increase much. A few emigrants leave every year, but very few, the population is about 300.

25477. Does the going away of these emigrants benefit those who remain behind?—In many cases they support those they leave behind.

25478. Does the emigration of these young men do any good to those

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

that are left behind?—No further than that they support the families at home very often, after they leave.

25479. By sending money?—Yes, and by helping in various ways.

25480. *Is it a common thing in your part for a croft to be actually* vacant, so that the neighbours may get it?—It is never heard of.

25481. I suppose whatever difficulties there may be in providing crofters with bigger crofts, in some places there would be no difficulty in providing your people with large crofts, because there is a big farm above you and below you?—I don't suppose there would be any difficulty.

25482. You would not require to move many miles?—No.

25483. You said that the part that is occupied by the crofters is not very good land in some cases, and is liable to flooding; is the upper part of the glen, where the people once were removed from, a sound healthy place?—Yes.

25484. And if anybody walked up through it to the head they would find a great many remains of ruined houses, where the people once lived?—A great many.

25485. Not now turned over by the plough at all, but lying waste under sheep?—Fast going to waste at any rate.

25486. *The Chairman.*—You stated that there were some houses in your place in which the entrance was through the byre or cow shed?—That is so.

25487. You also stated that there was some, in which there was no division between the cow shed and the dwelling rooms?—There is one I know, and I fancy there is another one or two.

25488. You mean there is no partition between the byre and the kitchen?—None whatever.

25489. Was that the case long ago in the old Caithness and Sutherland houses?—It was the case in my first recollection in the greater number of houses in Strath Halladale.

25490. Are those houses that still remain in that condition, the houses of crofters or cottars?—Crofters' houses.

25491. Do you know whether any application has been made, in connection with those houses, to have new houses built?—The people cannot build them, and therefore don't apply.

25492. But we heard that assistance was given to build new houses?—With that assistance they cannot do it. A tenant was removed on that account nine years ago from my neighbourhood.

25493. Why?—Because he would not build a new house upon the croft his father had before him; and there was a good house already upon the place.

25494. Why did they want him to build a new house if there was a good one already?—That is a question I cannot answer, but the fact is clear, the tenant had to leave the place on account of his not building a house.

25495. You said that one of the regulations on the estate was, that crofters were removed for killing a grouse. Do you mean that in the case of a first offence against the game laws, or one offence, a crofter would be removed with his family from a holding?—I am aware of one case only. There have been other cases, but I cannot specify them in the meantime.

25496. In which for a first offence—a first act of poaching—a man was removed?—Yes, so far as I know.*

25497. Were they cases of single men or men with families?—It was a case of a married man assisting his father-in-law in keeping the croft in order.

* See Appendix A, LXIV.

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25498. A married man assisting his father-in-law—was he properly the occupier or tenant of the croft?—He was not the tenant of the croft, but likely to become so.

25499. I am rather particular upon this point, are you acquainted with any case of a man actually an occupier of a croft being removed from his holding on account of poaching or killing game at all?—I cannot recollect any case from memory just now.

25500. Either for one offence, or more than one offence?—I cannot in the meantime say; but there have been such cases in the past.

25501. Are offences against the game laws common or uncommon?—Not common.

25502. What is your opinion generally, about the state of the people from what you have heard?—Are the people in your place better off on the whole than they used to be,—better fed, and better clothed, or are they poorer, and worse off?—I should say one-third of them are better off than the crofters I see anywhere here about. And another third of them exist someway or another, and the remaining third live in misery and poverty.

25503. But are they better off than the last generation—than their fathers and grandfathers, or are they worse off?—They are not better off by any means.

25504. Do you see any improvement going on in the way of building and fencing and so on?—A good deal.

25505. Is there any improvement in the breed of cattle—are the cattle bigger and better than they were?—His Grace the Duke of Sutherland gives a bull to the tenants which improves the breed considerably; still the animals are of an inferior breed.

25506. And the sheep?—The sheep are inferior to those upon the sheep farm in the neighbourhood, owing to the over-stocking.

25507. Do you think your arable and pasture ground generally is decidedly of worse quality than the arable and pasture land in the hands of the sheep farmer; or are they much about the same?—The district in which I live is much worse than any part I know, so far as pasture is concerned, for sheep or cattle.

25508. Do you think that the best pasture was deliberately taken for the purpose of forming the sheep farms, or was it an accident?—It was deliberately taken.

25509. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Why were a few people left, when the others were removed from up and down the glen?—The only answer I can give is that, I suppose their places were scarcely worth coveting at that time.

ADAM GUNN, Crofter's son, Strathy West (23)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LXIV.*)

Adam Gunn.

25510. *Mr Cameron.*—Were you elected a delegate?—Yes.

25511. How far is Strathy West from here?—About ten miles.

25512. Are there many crofters where you reside?—Yes. I have a written statement which embraces the grievances between Strathy and Armadale. I acted as secretary for five townships.

25513. And you speak for them?—Not exactly, but I will be able to answer any questions. There are crofters from the several townships to speak for themselves:—'*Strathy.*—There are forty-two 'crofters in this township. Previous to the Sutherland clearances 'there were only four. Of these above twenty families were 'evicted from Strathnaver alone, and the remainder from the neighbour-

'ing straths. The immediate result of these clearances was over-
'crowding. Our crofts are so small that we cannot afford to give
'them due rotation, while constant cropping has completely impoverished
'the soil. Our chief grievance is the small size of our holdings and the
'want of sufficient hill pasture. We want more land to cultivate at a
'reasonable rent. We want more hill pasture, of which there is abundance
'in the vicinity. Let an oversman appointed by Government fix the rent
'—one acquainted with the nature of the soil and climate, and the relative
'value of property in Sutherlandshire. We also want compensation for
'improvements in cases of removal at the crofter's own request, and a
'permanent hold on the soil of our forefathers. *Leadnagullen.*—There
'are eleven crofters and two cottars in this township. At the time of the
'Strathnaver evictions the land allotted to us was wholly unreclaimed. It
'was valued at £2, 10s., and after years of industry on our part, without
'any aid from the proprietor, our labours were rewarded by raising the
'rental to above £20. We desire more arable land at a fair rent, and
'hill pasture, of which we may say we have none. We are unwilling to
'emigrate so long as there are so many depopulated glens in Sutherland-
'shire. We complain strongly of the system of raising our rents
'invariably when a new name has to be inserted. The sea-blast destroys
'our crops every other year, and we are thus compelled to carry meal for
'our families and provender for our cattle a distance sometimes of
'twenty miles. We do not want a tract of useless, barren, moorland,
'such as the neighbouring townships possess. Let us get a share of good
'hill pasture, and let an oversman appointed by Government fix the rent.
'*Strathy Point.*—Between crofters and cottars there are thirty families in
'this township. We complain of the small size of our holdings and the
'want of hill pasture for our cattle and sheep, which in consequence of the
'small extent and inferior quality of our pasture are always lean and
'fetch but low prices in the market. A good proportion of the people
'prosecute the fishing, and would be greatly benefited by the erection of a
'harbour at Portskerra. There is plenty of hill pasture in the vicinity
'for which we are willing to pay a reasonable rent. Our cultivated land
'consists solely of scattered patches among the clefts of the rocks and
'exposed to the sea-blast. Only in a few cases can horses be of any
'service to us, and we are thus compelled to do their work ourselves.
'*Armadale.*—There were seven crofters here before the Sutherland
'evictions; here are now thirty. Our crofts vary from $1\frac{1}{4}$ acre to 4
'acres, only one as high as six. Sea-blast destroys our crops, and we have
'in consequence to provide provisions for ourselves and stock from the
'market. Owing to the small size of our holdings, and constant cropping,
'the land is deteriorating. We want more arable land, of which there is
'plenty in the vicinity; so that each crofter may have from ten to twenty
'acres; of hill pasture a sufficient amount to enable us to rear not less
'than twenty sheep. We want a permanent hold on the land, and
'compensation for improvements when the removal takes place at the
'crofter's own request. Let Government appoint an oversman to value
'our crofts and hill pasture. *Baligill.*—There are nine crofters and two
'cottars in this township. We have about four acres each of arable land.
'Our chief grievance is the small size of our holdings. In 1829 a
'promise was made to reclaim more land in the neighbourhood and to
'extend our crofts. That promise was repeated several times by the
'present factor, but never fulfilled. We had also a lime-kiln which
'provided the crofters in the neighbouring townships with lime for their
'crofts and houses. Ten years ago a flood carried away the bridge
'leading to the kiln, which at once cut off the supply of lime from our

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'selves and neighbouring crofters. We applied, but in vain, to get the 'bridge rebuilt, and the consequence now is that this whole surrounding 'district suffers from the want of it.'

25514. These various petitions appear to be written in the same handwriting, and are almost identical in their terms?—Yes. I have acted as secretary for the people, and prepared these statements in the presence of the crofters themselves, and that is how the writing is all in the same hand.

25515. Was there a separate meeting at each of these places?—No, it was not necessary. We assembled in Strathy Free Church, and the delegates drew up the statement there.

25516. So that the whole of the crofters from the five districts assembled together and had one meeting at one place?—I don't mean to say the whole of them, but a good majority of them. They came to a meeting in the Free Church and appointed delegates.

25517. And you acted as secretary?—I did, for the whole district.

25518. So that practically the grievances and requisitions of the different townships are identical?—There is a want of hill pasture and of more arable ground.

25519. I notice there is no complaint as to excessive rents in any of these?—Well the rents are not perhaps excessive, but when you consider the small size of the holdings they are. The rents would not be excessive supposing we had two or three crofts at the present rate.

25520. You can imagine the size of a croft being so small that any rent would be excessive?—Exactly so. A croft of about 1¼ acre is too small at merely a nominal rent. There are no cases of rack-renting.

25521. I see the general demand is for more land, does that include more arable land or more hill pasture?—It includes both. We want more arable land to give us a holding of ten or fifteen acres, and we want also a sufficient amount of hill pasture to enable us to keep some stock. Of hill pasture we may say we have nothing; it is of inferior quality—the worst patches were given to us because they were of no other use in the world.

25522. In order to carry out the wishes of the crofters and give them more land, they would have to remove bodily to some other part of the country?—No, but we want to migrate to the strath our forefathers had; and some of us could then remain in the several townships by getting the neighbouring crofts along with our own. But the majority of them would require to migrate.

25523. Would the crofters be willing to migrate to a distance as you have described?—Certainly.

25524. Would the crofters in case they were moved to these straths be able or willing to erect houses for themselves?—Well, no, they would require some help, because they are at present in poverty, and it could not be expected that they should be able. They are verging on pauperism, the most of them.

25525. Are the crofters verging on pauperism?—The most of them I should say are verging on poverty; they have no money at their disposal. They may be able to get help from the south, and some go elsewhere to earn money, but most of them have no money at their disposal, and could not build houses all at once.

25526. You don't think a fair proportion even of the crofters would manage to build houses for themselves—I mean such a proportion of them as would make a substantial and effective relief to those in the present townships?—No, I think not.

25527. So that in order to carry an effective relief to the overcrowding

in these townships a proportion would require to be migrated, and would also require help to build their houses?—Certainly.

25528. Would that stock which these crofters possess already be sufficient to stock the ground, or would they require more stock to be satisfactory?—They would require more stock; they have scarcely any stock at all in sheep in these townships.

25529. That would be another difficulty in the way of carrying out their wishes, would it not?—Yes.

25530. So that they would require assistance to build their houses and assistance to furnish stock to fill the ground?—Well, with respect to stock, some of them might be able to put on about thirty sheep each, and I think if they got the hill pasture the whole of them might in a few years be able to stock it; some of them to do it might require help from Government, but we have had to contend with difficulties in the *past, and I think we would be able to do it again and stock the land* ourselves.

25531. Would help be required from Government or other sources for any other purpose connected with these new settlements, such as fencing or improving land, creating crofts, and so on?—No.

25532. The crofters would be able to do that themselves?—Yes.

25533. To fence their land?—Perhaps they might do it in conjunction with the large sheep farmer in the vicinity, provided there is one. The large sheep farmer might do one half and they might do the other.

25534. But they would not be able to do the whole of the fencing themselves?—There would be no occasion if there was no tacksman in the vicinity.

25535. And as I understand it there would still be a large sheep farm at the back?—Yes.

25536. The crofters would not be able to occupy all these numerous sheep farms?—Not at once.

25537. These Sutherland clearances took place a great many years ago; may I ask you how the people have managed to get on for so long as they have?—Because they are people with whom the fates will have to bargain before they are annihilated, or succumb to bad usage.

25538. Do you think they are much worse off now than they were twenty years ago?—No, twenty years ago they were much the same, I think. Of course there is a downward tendency so far as the value of the crofts themselves is concerned, because the land is deteriorating, and they don't raise the crops they did at that time.

25539. In regard to other sources of profit to the crofters, have they any more employment now than they used to have?—Of late years there has been more employment in the shape of making roads to villages which have for seventy years had to do without them, and to which the people had to carry their meal and everything on their back a distance of two or three miles. Of late years roads have been made, and consequently some of the men have got employment.

25540. Can you mention any other employment which has benefited the crofters of late years?—The reclaiming of such farms as Ribigill and Kildonan has given employment to some of the people in the district.

25541. Has the price of cattle improved at all in the last twenty years?—Certainly it has, last year at any rate.

25542. If the people have got employment on the roads and these improvements, and if the price of cattle has increased, would it not be the natural inference that their condition is better than it was twenty years ago?—But their crofts don't produce the same amount as they did formerly; and it is only a limited number of people who are employed on

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the roads—nothing at all to the large population of the several townships—only a few men here and there, perhaps twenty or so.

25543. But, as I understand, you say that the crofts are so small that the people could never depend upon them to produce sufficient food for the sustenance of themselves and their families?—That is true.

25544. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The petition from Strathy Point refers to the want of a harbour at Port Skerra, is that a suitable place?—Yes, I have heard it said it is the most suitable place between Cape Wrath and Dunnet Head.

25545. We were told that another place was the most suitable—Talmin; but you think Port Skerra would be the best?—I have been told that.

25546. Would Port Skerra suit the whole of these five townships?—Yes.

25547. They could all live at home and keep their boats there?—Yes, and be able in a short time to build better boats. They cannot compete with the east coast fishermen now, owing to the small size of their boats, and if they could prosecute the fishing at home they could provide themselves with better boats so as to compete with the east coast fishermen.

25548. What would a harbour at Port Skerra cost?—I cannot say.

25549. Has it ever been talked of?—Several times.

25550. Has it ever been brought under the notice of the Duke of Sutherland?—I think so, and the grievances also which the people had to endure owing to the want of it. There is a man present with a written statement who will tell these grievances.

25551. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You told us that a good number of the people in the five townships referred to, came from Strathnaver?—Yes.

25552. Strathnaver is a big place?—Yes.

25553. Supposing the Duke were to send back to Strathnaver all the people who came from it, would that be a good thing for them?—Certainly.

25554. Would it not also be a good thing for those that would be left behind?—Certainly, it is the only way to remedy the present condition of things, I think.

25555. If all the Strathnaver people were sent back would there be enough left for you?—I don't know, I am sure.

25556. Pretty nearly?—I think so, it is such a wide place.

25557. *The Chairman.*—You said you were a crofter's son—is your father in the occupancy of a croft?—He is not alive.

25558. You are not at the present moment engaged in cultivation?—Yes, I am at present.

25559. Who is the actual tenant or occupier?—My mother.

25560. Have you always been engaged in agricultural labour, or have you had any other occupation?—I am a student as well.

25561. In the university?—Yes.

25562. Which university?—St Andrews.

25563. For the purpose of entering one of the professions?—I am not sure.

ANGUS MACKAY, Cottar, Strathy Point (80)—examined.

Angus Mackay.

25564. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Are you a crofter?—No, I have no land at all, I am living at the east side of Strathy Point, and some old

people wanted me to give information about the poor circumstances they were in.

25565. What were you when you were a young man—were you a crofter?—I was worse than a crofter, I was a cottar—a slave completely.

25566. What did the people of your place ask you to say on their behalf?—To tell how poor they were. According to my judgment they are the poorest people under the Duke of Sutherland. Strathy Point is two miles in length on one side and three upon the other. The westerly wind blows upon it, the north-west wind blows upon it, the north wind blows upon it, the north-east wind blows upon it; and when a storm comes it blasts the croft, and the people have no meat for the cattle or for themselves.

25567. How can these matters be put right?—Really it beats me to make that out; I was only desired to state these people's poverty, and I am doing so. The place is allotted on both sides, and there is pasture between the two lots, and they have each of them a few sheep, but they must have them in the house all night and out on the hill all day. Anything they have between cattle and sheep they keep on the hill during the day until eleven o'clock at night.

25568. There is arable ground upon each side of the pasture ground that they have?—They have no pasture at all, and the arable ground they have, if you go there to-day you would see on it as bonnie a crop as there is in the country, but if a storm comes on, in a fortnight perhaps it might be blasted so as to be of no use.

25569. There is no fence between the bit of arable ground they have and the pasture?—None in the world. There was one single individual spoke to me when I came away and said—'I hope you will speak on 'my behalf.' They made a road, since two years, through his place, where there ought to have been one sixty-four or sixty-five years ago, but it was not done till then. He said—'Hares will be out all night and 'will be in my corn, and I must be out Sabbath and Saturday, and every 'day in the week, watching as I can; and, after all, my corn is eaten in 'the night.'

25570. The road was no advantage to that man?—Very little; it destroyed the crop he put in the ground. The people are in perfect poverty. They are something kind towards one another, and when they see one destitute a small help will be given by the neighbours, but it came to that state last year that they had to raise a collection in the Free Church to assist the poverty of the people.

25571. Were the crops blown very much last year?—Blasted with the storm.

25572. You say you never had any land yourself?—No, and I have been there thirty years. I came there from Ribigill.

25573. Had you land before you left Ribigill?—Yes, an acre and a half from Mr Mitchell; and I was paying £3, 10s. I had to pay, not money, but seventy days' labour—a shilling a day during the time the rent was to pay.

25574. Mr Mitchell was the tacksman of the place at the time?—Yes.

25575. How have you been maintaining yourself since that time?—By working at Caithness in the quarries; and I was so unfortunate that, one day I was working in the quarry, a large flag which was supposed to be half a ton in weight fell upon me, and made me useless to this day, so that I have never won a penny since then.

25576. What do the people of the place in which you are just now, think themselves should be done to improve their circumstances?—Give them more pasture for their cattle and more land—land that would suit for

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cropping. At present they may have a crop one year, but they will not get three years' crop on it.

25577. Would they require to move out of the place altogether?—It ought to be so done; never a man should be put there at all. It is just a wild nasty place.

25578. Were there people there in old times?—There might be some six or seven, and they might live comfortably, but now there are beyond sixty. There are seven or eight people living in their good-mother's and good-father's, raising their family. Another thing is that you cannot see a lassie or a boy of from seven to ten years of age, but must go away herding when they ought to be at school. They go to herd in Caithness and Strath Halladale, or wherever they can get work.

25579. Do they get wages as herds?—Yes, from £1 to 30s.

25580. Do they attend school in winter when they come back?—Yes, they do that.

25581. Where do the people themselves wish to go to?—That is a thing I did not ask them, I am just a poor man amongst them.

25582. I suppose the place is very much crowded?—Yes, just crowded like my fingers.

25583. How many houses do you think there are in the place where there are two families living together?—I could not say, I did not count, I did not think it would better me. I only came to favour the people. There is a town holding three tenants in the place, and the place might be a kind of living to one in a good year if the crop were got in. But there are three on it, and they cannot get a right to their houses, and they have to carry everything upon their back. In my opinion, these three ought to be taken out and placed somewhere else, and their places given to the rest of the crofters for pasture for their sheep or cattle; but I have no business with it.

25584. Where were you brought up yourself?—In Strathnaver.

25585. When did you leave Strathnaver?—I left when young and came to Strathy Point, when the sheep commenced.

25586. Do you remember the time?—Yes, I was very nearly drowned that day.

25587. Is that what makes you remember it?—Yes. I will remember it as long as I live. I got a terrible fright.

25588. Were you old enough to remember the circumstances of the people at the time?—It would be a very hard heart but would mourn to see the circumstances of the people that day. He would be a very cruel man who would not mourn for the people.

25589. What condition were they in before they left?—If you were going up the strath now you would see on both sides of it the places where the towns were—you would see a mile or half a mile between every town; there were four or five families in each of these towns, and bonnie haughs between the towns, and hill pasture for miles, as far as they could wish to go. The people had plenty of flocks of goats, sheep, horses, and cattle, and they were living happy.

25590. Do you remember yourself quite well that these people were comfortably off at the time?—Remarkably comfortable—that is what they were—with flesh and fish and butter and cheese and fowl and potatoes and kail and milk too. There was no want of anything with them; and they had the Gospel preached to them at both ends of the strath. I remember of Mr M'Gillivray being there as a preacher. But what I have seen since then! There was a beggar like myself, a woman living in Strathnaver, and she went round the shepherds; and when she came back there was one Gordon in this low country asked her 'had she

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'news from Strathnaver,' 'I shall tell you my news from Strathnaver,' 'what is it?'—'The wood has been taken off the crofters' houses and it 'was sent to Alt-na-barra for a house of revelry and drunkenness. The 'manse which the godly ministers of old occupied is now occupied by a fox 'hunter, and his study is the dog kennel. The house which yourself had, 'and the great big stone at which you were wont to pray, the crow now builds 'its nest upon the top of it.' Now I consider at that time the Gospel was preached at both ends of Strathnaver, and in the middle of the strath; and in several other towns the elders and those who were taking to themselves to be following the means of grace were keeping a meeting once a fortnight—a prayer meeting amongst themselves—and there were plenty gathering, so that the houses would be full.

25591. I am sure those good practices have not been altogether forgotten?—I hope not.

25592. You are quite satisfied yourself that these people were far better off then than their children are now?—Oh yes, I am quite satisfied of that. The thing that frightened me when I was nearly drowned that day was this: my father and mother and my brother went away, having got notice that if anything was upon the ground at twelve o'clock they would be fined. They rose in the morning and went away with cattle, sheep, a horse, two mares, and two foals, to the place they were to live in after, and left me and my brothers who were younger sleeping in the bed; and there was a woman came in and said—'Won't you wake up, Sellar is 'burning at a place called Rhistog.' We got such a fright that we started out of bed and ran down to the river, because there was a friend of ours living upon the other side, and we wished to go there for protection. I took my brother on my back, and through the river I went; and the water was that deep that when it came up upon his back he commenced crying and shaking himself upon my back, and I fell, and he gripped round about my neck, and I could not rise nor move. We were both greeting, and took a fright that we would be drowned. There was a poor woman coming with her family up the strath, and she saw us and jumped into the river and swept us out of it.

25593. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Did you see any burning houses yourself in Strathnaver?—No, I did not. I was naked when I went to the river; and when they took me out of it my friends took such care of me that they dried me and put me into a bed.

25594. How old were you when this happened to yourself?—About eleven years of age.

25595. How old was your brother that you were carrying?—Three years of age.

25596. Do you know that a number of houses were burned at that time?—Oh! yes, yes.

25597. Many houses?—All from the river Owenmalloch and another river coming into Strathnaver on the east side, down to Dunvedan Burn.

25598. The houses were burning?—That is said, but I cannot say; I saw nothing because I was in bed.

25599. But you were told at the time?—Yes.

25600. Were the people very willing to leave Strathnaver?—You would have pitied them, tumbling on the ground and greeting and tearing the ground with their hands. Any soft-minded person would have pitied them.

25601. Were there a great number of people removed at that time?—I cannot give the number, but you was the first removal in Strathnaver.

25602. What was the notion of the people at the time as to

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the real cause of all?—I cannot say who was the cause, but this is my opinion—Sellar was factor, Roy was clerk, and William Young was head factor, and they had Lady Stafford under their own control, and the factors were something troubled gathering their rent, and they just blindfolded Lady Stafford and said—'We will give you £100 or £200 out of that and move the people out of the place and give the money to you all at once,' and the people were removed.

25603. Who got the place after the people were removed?—Sellar got it, but in five years time we had a second removal.

25604. Who got the place from which you were removed the second time?—I believe Sellar. I was in Caithness herding at the time, but I suppose it was just Sellar who got it.

25605. Would you like to go back to Strathnaver?—What would I do there? *Nothing at all.* I want *nothing but raiment and daily bread, if* the Lord provide that for me.

25606. Was there, to the best of your knowledge, and from what you have been hearing since then, any cause whatever for removing these thousand people from Strathnaver?—I never heard any cause for it.

25607. Any good cause?—No, I never did; no reasonable or lawful cause about it at all.

25608. *The Chairman.*—You stated that your father and mother and the family went away with the stock of cows and horses in the morning?—Yes.

25609. So as to reach their new place of abode?—Yes.

25610. And that they left you and your brother in the house lying asleep on the bed?—Yes.

25611. How do you explain that your father and mother left their two sons alone in the house in bed asleep when they went away themselves?—Because we were weak and young, and they were sure we would sleep to nine or ten o'clock, when they would be back again. My father was back before I was ten minutes out of the river.

25612. How far had your father to go; how far was the new place from the old?—About a mile and a half to the place called Wood of Skail, which was an uncultivated piece of ground until then.

25613. What sort of place was it; was it worse than the old place?—It was a place that never was laboured before.

25614. Was he assisted to build his house?—No, he had to build his house with feal and no stone at all.

25615. Did the proprietor give him any stones to build a new house?—No.

25616. Did he give him any compensation for the old house he left?—Nothing in the world.

25617. How long was he in this new place?—Five years, when he got a second removal.

25618. Why did he get the second removal?—To Strathy Point, to *the worst place there is in the district.*

JOHN MACKAY, Crofter, Melvich (48)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, LXIV.*)

John Mackay.

25619. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you any statement to make?—I have. '*Statement of the Grievances of the Melvich Crofters* (part of 'the Parish of Reay in Sutherlandshire):—(1) Our grievances are 'numerous and hard to bear, arising first from overcrowding. There are 'now forty-four crofters, one hotel with about sixty acres arable land

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'following. A ground officer's dwelling with about seven acres where 'there were only seven crofters before the Sutherland clearances took 'place. We are surrounded at our front, at our side, and at our back by 'the sheep farm's grazing, and on the other side by the sea-shore. The 'boundary line of the sheep farmer's grazing is almost in our doors, so 'that we always suffer grievances from that source. We have to watch 'and herd our stock regular before any of them cross over that 'boundary line, and if any of them happen to cross over they are sure 'to get a pair of dogs to return them back, and to be in danger of being 'damaged. The proprietor is bound to protect the sheep farmer's grass 'from the crofter's stock, and the sheep farmer's underlings take the 'advantage of this with boldness, and would wish the crofters and their 'stock out on the sea. Our neighbouring sheep farmer has the grazing 'of between 100 and 120 square miles of the best green and hill pasture, 'and the poor forty-four crofters have only about three square miles of the 'very worst of hill pasture—not deserving the name of pasture; but the 'name of waste ground. The extent of ground occupied by the forty-four 'crofters as arable land (the most of it being reclaimed by themselves and 'their predecessors) will be about a mile and a quarter long and three 'quarters broad. (2) The spring water or well from which fourteen 'families got their supply of water for drinking and the preparing of their 'food and other purposes has been locked up under lock and key, and 'brought over in a lead pipe to the sheep farmer's residence to accommodate 'that establishment with one of the best spring waters in the north of 'Scotland. When the well was proposed to be closed up in a house with 'lock and key, the people depending on it for their supply of water were 'promised to get their necessary supply of water; but the consequence is 'that the people get only the overflow, and when there is no overflow, 'which is very often the case, the inhabitants want, or else shift for 'themselves the best way they can; while there is ample water at the 'farmer's residence, and very often when the water is scarcest with the 'crofters, it is running at the sheep farmer's residence without check. (3) 'The chain boat ferry, which is a great drain on the poor people's pockets 'and paying road assessments besides. This ferrying differs very much 'from toll charges, as a person crossing has to pay every time he or she 'crosses or recrosses. The remedy:—Sheep farms broken down, more 'land and more hill pasture given to such crofters as could remove 'thereto, security in their holdings, compensation for unexhausted 'improvements, that the fourteen families mentioned above get their 'necessary supply of spring water without any restriction or scarcity 'from the closed up well, that a bridge be erected across the river at 'the ferrying place. Suppose the landlord would grant the crofters their 'present crofts rent free, what would it help them? It would only help 'them to pay two or three bolls of their year's meal. The only cure for 'the evil is more land to cultivate, and more hill ground for pasture. 'Statistics, showing how the crofters of Melvich township manage to 'bring through their stock, the number of stock of all kinds, the 'expenses that are out in keeping them in life, the yearly supply of meal 'bought by the crofters of the township, &c. All his supply is bought 'from another county—the county of Caithness—which supply, if closed 'up from the crofters of the north coast of Sutherland, themselves and 'their stock would starve in one six months:—Population 203; cattle '118; sheep 204; horses 23; pigs 17. Straw and hay bought last 'winter and spring—straw, 984 stones; hay, 423 stones; grain for seed, '16½ quarters; seed potatoes, 3½ bolls. Cost, straw, £28, 5s. 8d.; hay, '£21, 3s.; feeding stuffs, £9, 11s.; grain for seed, £16, 10s.; seed

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'potatoes, £7. Meal raised of last year's crop, 139 bolls; bought for the 'year 350 bolls—cost £315. Total expenditure for the support of man 'and beast, and seeds bought for the twelve months, £397, 9s. 8d., 'groceries excluded. Present rent about £120, 6s. 1d., rent thirty years 'ago £81, 3s. The question now is, Where does the money come from 'that will pay this amount and also rent? It is earned mostly in other 'counties, not in Sutherlandshire, when most of the young people male 'and female are away at this season of the year. But would it not now 'be more satisfactory for both landlord and crofters that they would be 'paying this enormous sum of money (that they pay yearly for meal) in rent 'to the landlord if they had value of land so that they could raise this meal 'off their own holdings. The land is close beside us, the land from which 'our forefathers have been exterminated and driven down to the rugged 'sea-coast, there to live out a pitiful life.'

25620. Does this statement contain almost all you have got to say?—No; I could expand upon it.

25621. How long ago is it since the well was taken from you?—Eight years.

25622. How long is it since the farm house to which the water is now taken was put up?—It was the residence once of the Mackays of Bighouse.

25623. Where did the family used to get their water from?—They had a pump in the garden, and they got water from the river also.

25624. And what satisfied the old family of Bighouse would not suit the tenant?—No.

25625. And he took away your water?—Yes, except when there was an overflow. When there is no overflow we have to dig wells for ourselves like the people of old.

25626. Are you sure you are correct in saying that there is an unnecessary escape of water at the house?—I am quite sure of it, at times.

25627. Have you seen it?—No, but there are men here who have seen it, who can testify to it.

25628. And there is no other well for supplying the people except this one?—Not in that place. Any well that is there, the water is inferior and not near that place at all.

25629. What rent do you pay?—£10.

25630. How long have you had your lot?—Nine years.

25631. Have you a lease?—No.

25632. Were there any conditions under which you took your land?—Yes.

25633. Was there any writing about it?—Yes. There is a piece of round of eight or nine acres just in front of my house that I was promised verbally by the factor would be reclaimed; but that has not been done yet.

25634. He was to take that in for you?—Yes.

25635. Was that a condition upon which you were to pay rent?—No. I was to pay 2s. 6d. an acre, besides interest on what was to be laid out.

25636. You were to have paid that if the money was laid out?—Yes; and I have reminded the factor of it two or three times since.

25637. Did you build your own house?—Yes, I expended close on £200 on building. I have not built a dwelling house, but I have built all the offices, and had the factor's hand of writing for timber for the offices.

25638. Timber and lime?—No lime; but I had the factor's writing for the rough timber for the offices, which was never fulfilled, and I had to go and buy timber at a cost of £17 to £19.

25639. When you made the bargain originally did you intend to get a lease?—No.

25640. How long were you to be on the place?—There was no statement about that; I was only a tenant at will.

25641. It was not very wise of you to go and build all these houses without security?—Well I would not do it to-day.

25642. Are you afraid you will be turned out?—Not the least; but then there is no security, and that leaves matters that the tenants have no encouragement to improve.

25643. You said you have not built a dwelling house?—No, and I have only one single room for a dwelling. I built a house seventy-four feet long of stone and lime and timber, and also shed covers.

25644. What was that for?—For a byre, barn, stable, and a room to dwell in.

25645. Have you applied to the factor for a lease?—No.

25646. Don't you think you should have done so, and had the thing put upon a satisfactory footing?—I did'nt suppose I would get a lease.

25647. Is that the reason why you did not apply?—That is what I understood in my own mind.

25648. With regard to the other people whom you represent here, you said that every one of them is buying meal from another county?—Every one in the locality.

25649. If you got more land and got some security in your holding, would you begin to reclaim land and make holdings for yourselves?—There is no land for the rest to reclaim in the position they are in just now.

25650. But supposing they got some of the land of the farmer, who is hemming you in every way, would the people be able to take it?—Some of them would.

25651. And would they thereby be able to dispense with buying meal?—Of course they would. There are meadow lands where there are hundreds of bolls of meal lying in the soil.

25652. You say there are meadows quite close to your croft and the crofts of others which, if cultivated, would produce annually hundreds of bolls of meal?—Yes.

25653. What does that land produce at present?—Grass.

25654. If you have anything special to say, you can now do so?—I have nothing special to say, except that I will answer any questions that may be asked.

25655. *The Chairman.*—You stated that one of the complaints was about a chain boat ferry; has there been a ferry at that place from time immemorial?—Yes—since the country road went by there.

25656. In old times how did the people get over there?—I cannot account for it unless they were crossing down at the foot of the river at Bighouse. They cross there still when the sea is out, and there is no flood.

25657. They could ford the river near the mouth?—Yes.

25658. Is there any appearance of any old road which led to that place?—There is; that is the way the old road led before the county road was made.

25659. The ferry was first established at the time the road was made?—I suppose it would be about that time. There was no need of it before, as there was no road there.

25660. Is there a charge made for foot passengers?—Yes.

25661. How much?—A halfpenny for a foot passenger.

25662. How much is it for a cart and horse?—A pony and cart, 1½d.; but for a horse passing fifteen hands, 3d.

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25663. In old times the people went round and forded the river near the mouth; is that stopped now?—No, it is not stopped; but a horse with a load cannot go there; a horse with an empty cart could go there.

25664. But the people are allowed to go that way if they please?—Yes.

25665. Have the people ever petitioned the road trustees to build a bridge?—Not to my knowledge.

25666. Is the water very deep?—About six feet at this time of the year.

25667. Does the tide come up and down?—Yes.

25668. Did you ever hear whether there was any difficulty about building a bridge?—I never heard of any difficulty at all.

25669. Did you say the people had petitioned to have a bridge?—Not to my knowledge, but I suppose the matter has been considered at a meeting of the Road Trustees since a year or two ago, but still we are without a bridge.

25670. Did the Road Trustees take any resolution to build a bridge or not?—I cannot say.

25671. Why do the people not petition the Road Trustees if they feel this to be a grievance?—As far as my knowledge goes the Road Trustees have nothing to do with it; it is the proprietor as far as I understand.

25672. Who keeps up the road?—The assessment.

25673. Would the Road Trustees not be responsible for the bridge too; do they never make improvements on the roads?—The roads are contracted for by contractors who repair them. There are Road Trustees in the county who have management of these roads, and who are elected by the ratepayers.

25674. I think you would do well if you feel this to be a grievance, to petition the Road Trustees and agitate the question; and perhaps you will get satisfaction.—Thank you, my Lord.

25675. You say the well has been given to the farmer, and that the families are sometimes deprived of the water from it; how many familes of crofters depend on this particular well?—Fourteen.

25676. Is it a common thing to be deprived of the use of the water?—During this dry summer almost every second day we are wanting water.

25677. Have you any other water you can get conveniently?—I do not draw my water from that spring.

25678. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You produce certain statistics with regard to your expenditure for twelve months amounting to £397, 9s. 8d. Was that sum returned to you by the crofters?—Yes.

25679. The forty-four?—Yes.

25680. How did you ascertain it?—I just went round the crofters, and every one of them told me.

25681. What is the average rent of the crofters there?—There are two in the township about £5, and I pay £10, all the rest pay from £1 to £3.

25682. You have a £10 croft; is that sufficient to supply your wants without importing food?—It keeps me from buying much; but I have no family.

25683. What size of croft would be required generally in the county?—A croft rented at from £10 to £20.

25684. £120 is the rent of forty-four crofters; that makes an average rent of about £2, 14s.?—About that.

25685. And the others who import food to the extent of £397 make the money by fishing?—Yes.

25686. Have they boats?—No; but they go to the east coast fishing.

25687. If they had larger crofts they could still do that?—Yes; and

there was a harbour at Port Skerra it would benefit Melvich also, because the men at the sea-coast are, I believe, all fishing.

25688. But if they had boats and went to the fishing they could not take larger crofts?—I could not answer that question.

25689. Who is the local factor?—Mr Crawford, at Tongue.

25690. Did the people ever represent to him the want of water in consequence of their supply being taken to Bighouse?—They have represented it to the ground officer, I know.

25691. What reply did the ground officer give?—That they would get the necessary supply of water.

25692. How long ago was that?—I could not say.

25693. Did he specify in what manner they would get this water?—He did not.

25694. About how long ago was it that they spoke to the ground officer?—I could not say.

25695. Was it this year?—No.

25696. A long time ago?—Yes.

25697. Was there any understanding as to how the water was to be supplied to the people when the ground officer promised it to them?—The people understood they would get the necessary supply of water from the same well.

25698. By another pipe or how?—They expected that they would get their supply by a pipe that let it flow out on the same level with the pipe that leads to the sheep farmer's residence. The pipe which leads to the sheep farmer's residence is at the bottom of the cistern, and the pipe that lets the overflow out is up near the brink.

25699. From that time to this have you heard anything more about it?—As far as I know any time that they spoke to the ground officer about it, he answered in such a way that they expected to get what they wanted.

25700. Perhaps you don't know much about the circumstances, seeing you don't get your water there?—No, I was not personally there, but I have heard what he said.

25701. Are the people in your district very poor?—Yes, in general they are.

25702. Can you give us any idea as to the number of crofters who might be in a position to take more land provided they got the chance—what proportion out of the whole number?—From twelve to twenty.

25703. Out of a total of how many?—Forty-four.

25704. There must be a good many cottars on the place?—Only one who pays rent, and he has a few sheep.

HECTOR MUNRO, Croftor, Scullomie, Tongue (71)—examined.

(*See Appendix A, XLIV.*)

25705. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—You are a delegate from Tongue?—I am.

25706. Have you any statement to make?—Yes, I have a paper which I shall read.

'*Scullomie in parish of Tongue*:—There are twelve crofters in this 'township, who pay from £3 to £6 of rent.

'Hector M'Kay hold about 3 acres, for which he pays between rent 'and taxes,			£6	0 0
'Colin M'Kay holds about	2½ acres, for which he pays		5	2 6
'Hector Munro (scarce)	2 „		4	16 3
'Angus Sutherland	2½ „		5	10 0
'James M'Kay	2½ „	(besides 7s. taxes)	5	19 0

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'Widow Sutherland holds about	2½	acres, for which she pays	£5	10 6
'William Mackay	2½	„ besides 8s. taxes)	4	5 0
'Charles Mackay	3	„ (10s. taxed besides)	4	12 0
'George Mackay	2	„ (besides 6s. of tax)	3	7 7
'Sandy M'Kay	3	„ (besides 11s. tax)	5	13 0
'James Mackay	3	„ . . .	5	15 0
'John Mackay	4	„ . . .	6	6 0

'They hold of arable land from two to four acres, and pay of rent from '£3, 7s. to £6, 6s. There are thirty-six acres rented in my district of 'arable land, for which we pay £58 and £9 of taxes—£67. The township 'yields in good years the average crop of forty-eight bolls of meal and '120 barrels of potatoes. If whole produce were sold it should fetch £18 'for potatoes and £33, 12s. for meal—in all £51, 12s., which is £6, 8s. 'less than we pay to the Duke for rent, and £15, 8s. when taxes are 'counted. We buy of meal £43 worth to support our families every year; 'some years far more, but some less—this of an average. Rents were 'raised as follows:—(1) I was paying £5, 5s. 4d. of road money; (2) it 'was reduced to £4, 9s; (3) it was raised to £4, 16s; (4) 2s. 6d. taken 'off for the pier; (5) Mr Crawford took off 3s. 3d.—I can't tell why. 'I lost two crops within the last twelve years by a burn that runs through 'it. The proprietor refuses to protect my lot from the ravages of the 'stream; only he offers to do it on condition I pay interest on the money 'expended; which I think unreasonable because my rent is bigh. I pay 'now between taxes and rent £4, 16s. for scarce two acres. We 'petitioned the Duke for reduction of rent last November, on the ground 'that a storm damaged the corn crop, and that our potato crop was 'almost an entire failure; but we did not get as much as a reply to, or 'acknowledgment of receipt of, our petition.—HECTOR MUNRO.'

25707. Your rent is more than £2 an acre?—Yes; I pay £2, 3s. 6d. of standing rent, forbye taxes, per acre.

25708. Is your land very fertile?—Most of it is not—two inches of soil in some parts, and most of it solid rock.

25709. What crops are you able to raise?—It cannot be very much for all that I have.

25710. Is it oats and potatoes entirely?—Oats and bere, but mostly potatoes.

25711. Does the land produce good crops?—No; the third part will be good and the other part nothing at all.

25712. What sustenance does the croft afford to your family?—I think one would be abundance to consume all that it would produce except potatoes; and when they are a failure I may say we have nothing at all upon it. When there is a good year we may have four bolls of bere-meal. I often keep two cows on the croft, but I have to buy food for them; and my neighbours in the whole township whom I represent here are similarly situated. I am about the worst of them.

25713. How much money are you obliged to spend in the whole year for the support of your family in buying meal and other food?—I could spend more money than I have. If I had not good credit I could not do at all.

25714. Can you give any estimate of what you actually spend. How many bolls of meal do you buy?—Four or five bolls, but our family is not big, there are only three of us just now. The people don't require so much just now, because they are nearly all away. They are scattered through all Scotland; all those who can earn anything are away from home just now.

25715. Are you surrounded by large farms in your parish?—All the place is bordering with them.

25716. Is most of the parish occupied by large farms?—Yes, except round about the rocks, from one end of the parish to another, the same as if the crofts were a fence for keeping sheep and other beasts from the shore.

25717. How many big farms are there in the parish?—Two and a half. There is one the half of which is in Durness and the other half in the parish of Tongue.

25718. How much of the land of the parish is occupied by these farms?—Mostly the whole of it.

25719. You have only a little strip along the shore?—Yes; and we have a little pasture, but the grass is no resource at all; we cut peats and divots for the houses.

25720. How many cows do you keep on your croft?—I keep two cows, but I have to pay for them.

25721. Any sheep?—About half a dozen. I think the whole township will scarcely average eight sheep. Some have none at all, and some two or three, and some more than that; but on an average I think perhaps about eight.

25722. Where is your hill pasture?—It is adjoining the large farms.

25723. Is there a fence between you and them?—No.

25724. Do their sheep come over to you?—Yes, and ours go over to them; and we agree about that.

25725. Do they ever poind your sheep at all?—No, I think not; they are not very hard upon us. We must give honour to whom honour is due.

25726. Would you like more land?—Very likely the young people would, but not the like of me.

25727. Supposing you got additional land at a reasonable rent, something less than £2 an acre, would you like to take it?—I would like to take it at less than £1 an acre. I think I pay too much rent. I think I have paid more than £50 to the Duke since fifty-five years; I have been paying rent above what I should, and the Duke is not a bit the richer for that.

25728. You say you petitioned the Duke last year for a reduction of your rent?—This last spring.

25729. Was your corn crop destroyed by the storm?—Yes, the most of it was destroyed and scattered away, a great deal of it.

25730. Was your potato crop bad?—Yes; there was a great failure amongst the potatoes generally. The storm did not spoil the potatoes, but it spoiled the corn.

25731. Did you get any answer at all to your petition?—Not yet.

25732. When did you send it?—I think some time in November.

25733. Perhaps the Duke was not at home?—I don't know if he was.

25734. How often does the post leave this?—Twice a week.

25735. Then you ought to have got an answer before now?—Yes, long before.

Rev. JOHN ROSS MACNEILL, Free Church Minister, Tongue (37)—examined.

(*See Appendix A. XLIV.*)

Rev. John Ross M'Neill.

25736. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate?—I am one of three delegates from the middle district of the parish of Tongue, one of whom you have already heard, and another of whom met with an accident this

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morning, and is not able to be here. The one who is not able to be here sent me a statement which he had prepared to read before the Commission.

25737. You were elected a delegate along with two other persons, one of whom we have heard and another who is not able to attend?—He met with an accident this morning. He handed me this paper (produces paper).

25738. This statement is perhaps rather too long to read. Could you give us the substance of it in your verbal evidence, or is it desirable that we should read it?—It is not my statement.

25739. Is this a statement on behalf of the people, or a statement referring to a particular personal case?—It is both.

25740. I think we will take your own statement first.—'I was appointed 'delegate at a meeting held in the Free Church on Wednesday 20th June '1883, by the crofters of Coldbacke and Rhi-Tongue. In the district I 'represent there are eleven crofters, who hold from one to five acres of 'arable land, and pay from 30s. to £7 between rent and taxes. Their 'common pasture is Cnoc and Fhreiceadain (Sentinel Hill). 1. Rents.—'The rents are considered high. Within the recollection of some of 'themselves their rents were doubled. Since the year 1808 the rises were '(1) a lot of 2½ acres was rented at 20s., which was considered a hardship 'at the time; (2) the lot of 2½ was rented at £4; this was done after 'a southern sheep-farmer of the name of Clarke (and Anderson, factor) had 'moved Lord Reay to re-value the land; (3) 4s. added for road money 'and 6s. for work that was wont to be done by the crofters; the road-'money had to be paid by every young man as well as old, and whether he 'held a croft or not; this was about thirty years ago. The 10s. of 'additional rent were not taken off, though we pay road money now, and 'though we know and all acknowledge that to give labour or money in 'lieu of work to the laird, to whom a reasonable or rather unreasonable 'rent is at the same time paid, is wrong—most unjust. Still rents are 'raised as often as a change of tenant takes place. And three years ago 'there was an attempt made to raise our rents, which failed, for well-'known reasons. 2. Houses.—Their dwellings contain two rooms and 'a closet. They were built and are kept in repair by themselves. 'They were built on certain conditions; these were—that if evicted 'within seven years two-thirds of their value was to be considered as 'belonging to the tenant; if within fourteen years one-third, and if after 'nineteen years nothing—the whole belongs to the proprietor. Some 'timber and lime were given by the Duke's agent for building them; six 'couples for a thatched house, which requires about fifteen; twenty couples 'for a slated house; and some tabling for the walls; but no doors nor 'windows. Three bolls of lime were given; and for outhouses, all of 'which were built by the crofter, permission at certain seasons was granted 'to cut down natural wood. 3. Stock:—An average of three head of 'cattle and six sheep. 4. Required:—We want re-valuation of our 'lots, larger holdings, security against evictions, and compensation for 'unexhausted improvements. *Coulbackie*, in parish of Tongue.—There 'are eleven crofters in Coulbackie and Rhi-Tongue district, viz.:—

'The Free Church minister,	having 5 acres,	and paying	£5	10 0
'Widow M'Kay,	1 „	„	1	10 0
'Mrs Munro,	5 „	„	7	0 0
'Widow Alexander M'Kay,	2¾ „	„	4	4 0
'Hugh M'Kay,	2¾ „	„	5	1 6
'James M'Kay,	1½ „	„	3	0 0
'John Bruce,	1½ „	„	2	18 0

'Andrew Ross, having . .	2¾ acres, and paying	£4	12	0
'William M'Kay, . . .	2¾ „ „	4	12	0
' M'Kay, . . .	2¾ „ „	0	0	0
' Sutherland, . . .	3 „ „	4	10	0

'These hold from one to five acres, and pay from 30s. to £7.'

25741. In the district you represent there are eleven crofts?—There are.

25742. And each crofter holds from one to five acres of arable land?—Yes

25743. Their common pasture is called Sentinel Hill; is it a spacious and convenient pasture?—It is.

25744. At what period was this little district formed? Is it an old place? Have there been crofters there from time immemorial; or was the land lotted out at a recent period?—I cannot answer the question with that exactness I should like, but I know that some of them are descendants of those who were evicted from Ribigill to make room for sheep.

25745. Where is Ribigill?—To the west of the district, about four or five miles.

25746. Is it still adjacent to those crofters' lands?—Not quite.

25747. Does it march with their hill pasture?—I think so; that is my opinion.

25748. How long have you been acquainted with the district?—Only three and a half years.

25749 Are the crofters at the present moment in a state of great depression and poverty?—They are.

25750. Is it your impression that the rents as here stated are too high; are they higher than the fair value of the land?—It is my impression that they are high.

25751. They seem to have been raised at three or four different periods. Do you know whether any benefit was conferred upon those people in connection with their rents being raised, or any improvement made upon the lands by the proprietor?—I am not aware. I know that the proprietor has improved, but I am not sure that it was in connection with the raising of the rents, and I rather think not.

25752. Of what nature are the improvements on this portion of his property?—He has given encouragement to them to build better houses.

25753. Has he done anything for roads?—There is a road through to Coulbackie—a county road.

25754. Are there any other outlays the proprietor has made, in the way of draining and fencing for instance?—I am not aware. Generally speaking the people themselves drain and fence and trench their lots.

25755. Are you cognisant of any case of eviction which has ever taken place in this township?—No.

25756. When the tenants fall into arrears of rent are they proceeded against summarily, or is time given to them to pay up their arrears?—There is time given to them—at least in some cases.

25757. Do you know of any case in which a removal has taken place on account of arrears of rent?—Not within my district.

25758. Are the dwelling houses generally of a very mean character?—No, they are better than the houses in the surrounding districts.

25759. Are they generally houses built with stone and lime?—They are.

25760. Are they slated?—Some of them; perhaps I should say most of them.

25761. Are they houses of two rooms?—Two rooms and a closet.

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25762. Have any houses of that kind been built since you came to the place?—Yes.

25763. In your statement you say they were built and were kept in repair by the people themselves; but then it appears by the explanation that they are not built entirely at their own expense—Quite so; that is the general statement made by the people themselves at a meeting we had, at which I took down their statement. The proprietor did give some assistance.

25764. Have you heard it generally stated since you were here that the people were dissatisfied with the conditions on which the houses were built?—Yes.

25765. I mean, not recently, since the present movement began; but did you hear so at a previous period?—They have said so to me.

25766. From an earlier period?—From an earlier period.

25767. The statement says that after nineteen years have elapsed the whole of the houses would then belong to the proprietor; there would be no compensation paid afterwards upon that?—None whatever.

25768. Do you think that such a house would have any material value after the lapse of nineteen years, if it were kept in good repair? Would it still be a substantial house?—I think so; I am sure it would.

25769. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Have you got anything else to state on behalf of the people generally of your parish?—I have to say that I know there are loud complaints that there is no encouragement given to the young people to stay at home, and to get lots to work; nor is there much encouragement given to those who do stay at home to seek employment. My meaning is that the young and able-bodied men have to leave the country during the larger half of the year to seek employment far from their homes. Consequently much of what they earn away from home is spent away from home, and they do not therefore benefit their families by their earnings as they might otherwise do if they were enabled to earn their bread at home.

25770. Are you a native of Sutherland?—I am not.

25771. Where did you come from?—Tyree. I may say I come from Skye, but I happen to have been born in Tyree.

25772. Do you concur in what has been stated by some of the previous delegates, that there is a large field for young men in the county of Sutherland if it were opened up to them?—I do.

25773. Do you think it would be useful and profitable for the county for the young men to get employment at home instead of going abroad?—I think so.

25774. And there is nothing in your mind to prevent this to a great extent being developed in this county?—No, not so far as I know.

25775. All that is necessary is the means and inclination?—Yes.

25776. The hands are here to do it?—They are when they are at home; but most of the people are away just now, earning daily bread in the rest of the country.

25777. But if encouragement were given all the year round would they prefer working at home in the country?—During the winter season when they are at home a good deal could be done in the way of giving them employment, but I am sorry to say there is little being done.

25778. I am referring more to the opening up of big sheep farms, and forming a number of smaller farms within the reach of the people of moderate means; do you think that would be a wise thing to do?—I do think so, and I think it is a thing our young men are looking for—it is what they would like.

25779. Although young men from Sutherland do go away, it is from no want of attachment to their country that they do so?—I believe it is not, I believe they are warmly attached to their native country.

25780. Is it from hard necessity that they are obliged to do it?—It is.

25781. Do you suppose now that if a croft were enclosed to such an extent that it would really of itself support a family respectably, there would be any danger of the croft being subdivided?—No, provided the proprietor gave new land to the young men who asked for it.

25782. And so long as there was any land in the country do you think the proprietor ought to do so?—I think so.

25783. Do you find the people in the place quite peaceable and industrious?—Very quiet, very peaceable, very intelligent, and very orderly.

25784. Are there many inns or public houses in the parish?—Only one.

25785. Where is it?—At Tongue village.

25786. Are there any grocer's licences in the parish?—Not one so far as I am aware.

25787. So far as your observation has led you, do you concur in what has been said, that there is a great want of harbour or quay accommodation in the whole north-west of Sutherland?—I do; I know that it is very difficult, during the winter season especially, to prosecute any kind of fishing.

25788. And both in exporting and importing there is hardship and expense placed upon the people which might be avoided?—There is; and I think the want of harbour accommodation is one of the great drawbacks of this coast.

25789. Are you aware if the attention of the proprietor has been drawn to the improvement of that?—Often; I know that his attention has been directed frequently to it.

25790. Why does it come to nothing?—That is what I cannot tell.

25791. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Do you know the circumstances of the people of Tyree?—No.

25792. Of Skye?—I do, and also of Lewis and of the islands.

25793. You mentioned that the rents here seemed to you to be high; are they high compared with the rents in Skye and Lewis?—In the district which I represent I think they are higher.

25794. Than in Skye or Lewis?—It is difficult for one to speak for the whole island.

25795. You think they are high?—I did not think of comparing them, but I know Skye pretty well, and Lewis, and I know that Coulbackie and Scullourie are more highly rented than some places I could mention on those islands.

25796. Do you think the people here are anxious to find work in the winter months?—They say so to me, and I see no reason to doubt them.

25797. It is an old custom in the Highlands to lie on their oars from Christmas till seed time?—Some of them do work when they can get it.

25798. Is the weather similar to what it is in Skye and Lewis?—Not so wet.

25799. It is more suitable for outdoor work?—It is.

25800. Has encouragement to build houses been given since ever you have been here?—Yes.

25801. You have not noticed that the encouragement has been increased within the last few months?—Yes.

25802. *Mr Cameron.*—You have stated that you thought the rents were high, and you compared the rents with the number of acres of arable

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land; at the same time you said that the hill pasture was good. Do you not think that the condition of the hill pasture ought to be taken into account in criticising the rents?—Yes, I do.

25803. Supposing the crofters had arable land and no hill pasture; in that case almost any rent would be too high, would it not?—It depends upon the nature of the soil. If there was very good soil, of course they could live on it without any hill pasture.

25804. You mean that hill pasture to a crofter in the Highlands is essential?—It is.

25805. And therefore ought fairly to be taken into consideration in judging whether the rent is a fair one or not?—It should.

25806. You mentioned in answer to the chairman that assistance had been given by the proprietor to people in erecting their houses, but I did not understand what that assistance was?—Some timber and slate until such time as they could relieve him; and also some lime. The statement which I handed in refers not so much to the present as to the past.

25807. You seem to dislike any of the young men from Sutherland going away. I suppose you don't mean to say absolutely that you cannot bear the idea of any young man going abroad?—To be sure not.

25808. You are aware, I suppose, that much of the greatness of this country is derived from people who have gone to the colonies and foreign lands?—Yes; and the fact is many of them do go abroad.

25809. You do not object altogether to any one going abroad?—Certainly not. I was making general statements.

25810. You were making special statements?—I know young men from this country have succeeded very well elsewhere. I have met with them in the south as well as in other parts of the country, and I know that they do very well.

25811. In your position as adviser, or friend, on the whole would you wish to deter any young man from going abroad to build up his fortune in any of the British colonies?—Never.

[ADJOURNED.]

BETTYHILL, SUTHERLAND, WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 1883.

(See Appendix A, LXIV.)

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq., M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

PETER M'KAY, Crofter, Strathtongue (80)—examined.

(See Appendix A, LXIV.)

Peter M'Kay.

25812. *The Chairman.*—Had you ever any other occupation?—I was thirty-five years a builder carrying on slater work and carpenter work.

25813. Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes.

25814. By the people in Strathtongue?—Yes, and Dalchurn and Blundy, which only contain thirteen crofters altogether.

25815. Have these places always been townships, or have they been allotted in your recollection?—They have been townships since before my recollection, but only occupied by one tenant—one tenant in each of them.

25816. Where were the additional people brought from?—They were brought from the heights of the strath in order to make way for extending sheep farms at two or three different times, till at last they got their farm to their own mind and put all the people to the breadth of the sea-shore, where they are in danger of losing their stock and even their children over the rocks.

25817. Is the number of crofts increasing—is the subdivision going on, or is it stopped?—The subdivision went one again in 1808. There were then six crofters. Again in 1815 there were other six put in, and lately by the present factor there was one lot divided into two, making thirteen altogether.

25818. How long ago is that?—It is about eighteen years since the last lot was divided.

25819. Why was he brought in; was he a son of one of the crofters, or was he brought in from the outside?—He had the half of a croft in Dalcharn, the next township, and he was turned out by the present factor for a son-in-law of the ground officer, and the factor gave him a croft in Blandy.

25820. How long is it since the last increase of rent took place?—The last great increase was in 1808; but I am not quite sure of the date, because an old man is apt to get rusty, and my memory would require to be assisted.

25821. Have there been any new houses built in the township lately?—There were a great many built in 1832, more than the people required, and far more than their means could bear. The most of those who were tenants at that time are in their graves now, and went to their graves insolvent. Other people have built houses, and have never got a thing from the Duke for them but the bare rent.

25822. That was in 1832?—In 1832.

25823. Are the houses which were built in 1832 inhabited by the people?—They were inhabited by the people at that time, but in a few years afterwards some of the people emigrated to America and the houses were valued by the Duke's factor, and some of the people had to pay £20 for the houses for which they had never got a farthing from the Duke; others were valued at £8 and so on.

25824. Are the houses which were built in 1832 still standing?—They are still standing.

25825. Are they inhabited?—Yes.

25826. You said they were too good for the people long ago. Do they seem too good for the people now, or are they just what the people require?—I did not mean that they were too good for the people, but that the people would have done with less accommodation—the houses were too good for their means.

25827. You mean they were too expensive for the people to build?—Yes.

25828. How much would it cost at that time for the people to build a house? The people built the wall, I understood, and the proprietor put on the roof?—Yes, he only gave the roof.

25829. Who gave the timber?—They only got planted timber, which is now gone away this long time. It was not foreign timber, but planted timber from Inverness and this place.

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25830. What are the houses covered with—thatch or slate?—At that time mostly, except one or two houses, they were covered with divots and thatch. A few people who were getting better up in the world by having good dutiful sons got their houses slated. They were not able to do that themselves, but it was done through their family coming up, and being by good example and training dutiful sons, who helped their parents to slate their houses. Most of the houses, however, are still under thatch, and many a drop the people have upon their head too.

25831. Are the crofts all of the same size?—No, they are not all the same size.

25832. Have you got a large or a small croft?—First it was my father who got the croft, and there is a map in the Duke's Tongue office which will show how much arable land there was in the croft at that time. I think there would not be two acres of arable land altogether when I got it. I improved the lot and made it one piece. The factor gave me a piece of very bad ground, so steep that I could not work it, and I promised that I would improve part of it, and I improved twelve acres of new ground between the old lot and the new one.

25833. You have now got twelve acres of improved ground altogether?—Yes, I have fully that—about fourteen.

25834. What is your rent?—£5, 5s. 4d.

25835. Have you got good hill pasture?—No we have not.

25836. Have you any hill pasture?—We have hill pasture. We have about six square miles of heather pasture—nothing but heather—which is divided between 160 crofters. We have double the number of the cattle upon it for the number of crofters, and it is of no avail to us for that reason.

25837. Do you make any use of the hill pasture?—Yes, we do.

25838. How many sheep do you keep upon it?—It is eight sheep I have myself.

25839. What stock do you keep; how many cows?—I keep three cows.

25840. And followers—young cattle?—May be a calf and stirk; that is all I have just now.

25841. And horses?—Two horses, because the ground I have is so steep that I require a good pair of horses to work it; but they are idle with me a great part of the year.

25842. How long have you been paying £5, 5s. 4d. of rent?—Since 1829.

25843. Your rent has not been raised since 1829?—Yes, four or five times by some trifles—£1 at one time, 5s. at another time, and 4s. at another time.

25844. Your present rent is £5, 5s. 4d.; how many years have you had it at that sum—how long have you been paying that?—About forty-four years.

25845. You have been paying your present rent of £5, 5s. 4d. for forty-four years?—Yes, as far as my recollection serves me.

25846. Then your own rent has not been raised for forty-four years?—No, not from that present sum.

25847. You have been paying the same rent for forty-four years?—Yes.

25848. And you have been improving your ground all the time?—I have been improving the ground, and I built a mill for the tenants, of which I have only had the benefit as one of the tenants. I was promised many a thing when I built it, but never got it. I laid out £650 upon the new ground and buildings, which left my rent without altering.

25849. When you say you have laid out £650, do you count the value

of your labour?—I do not count the value of my labour at all, but the labour of those who did the work, whom I paid with money.

25850. Can you tell me from your own accounts how much you have paid in money in improving the ground?—Every farthing I say, between labour and timber and slate and lime and smithy expenses upon these improvements—altogether clear and clean cash.

25851. When you say you have laid out £650 in that way, do you include wages you have paid in the regular cultivation of the croft; or do you merely include the wages you have paid for substantial improvements?—For substantial improvements—what I have paid to tradesmen and labourers for building dykes, making drains, trenching, and smithy expenses.

25852. Did you receive any security for the reimbursement of any portion of the £650?—I was promised by the late Duke that I would get a lease, but I never got it, and that led me to make these improvements more than I would otherwise have done. I petitioned the Duke last year to give me some compensation for all this money, being an old man and my family being taken away by death, except one daughter who is a widow, and I cannot work a stroke; but the factors were putting in things which were not true, and spoiled the thing upon me altogether. I was wanting some compensation while I was alive, which would not be long, but I did not get anything, and I was blaming the factor for the whole, the Duke being a childish fellow himself. He is a good man, but very childish, and takes factors to be infallible, and will not come to investigate the case between the factor and his tenants.

25853. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—What factor are you referring to?—In one point to our present factor, but in other things to his predecessors. But I may say he is the worst we have ever had. I may say that distinctly, and I have many a reason for saying it.

25854. You are paying £5 odds of rent to the Duke, and you have laid out £650; if you put interest upon that at 5 per cent. that would be £30 a year would it not?—I cannot follow you in these figures, because my father was thrown out of a good place into a croft of an acre and a half, and had not means to give me education. He had to put me to herding, and all the education I ever got was what I taught myself when herding.

25855. Supposing you put that £650 into the bank you would get something for it would you not?—I would expect that.

25856. So that the place is standing you a good deal more rent in the year than what you pay?—A good deal for keeping it in order. Those new things cost me as much as the rent, and I am only keeping them up for the Duke.

25857. You said you keep two horses?—Yes, with no use for them, only for six weeks when laying down the crop; but I would require to leave the place barren unless I had the horses.

25858. Could you work double the quantity of land with the pair of horses?—Yes, nearly five times as much. These horses are too heavy for me, and the grass upon the place wont keep them in working condition. Are the people in the town which you represent pretty well off in their circumstances or are they poor?—They are generally poor; but according to Providence some of them will be in better circumstance than others. Some of them, by having large families and dutiful sons, get better on than others, but that is not from the land.

25859. In your own case, does the land support you?—No, that is the case with the three townships I represent, and mostly in the whole district of Tongue; it applies to the whole district of Tongue what I say.

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Peter M'Kay.

25860. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You have spent £650 on this place; after spending all the money, if the Duke were to give you a nineteen years' lease and you were to subset the holding, what rent could you get for it?—I would not get the rent I am paying for it.

25861. After spending £650?—No, it is bad ground. Sometimes I cannot get out of it the seed I put in. I cannot gather manure, and I had to buy artificial manure; and I was prohibited taking sea-ware by the factor, and then I could not work at all.

25862. What was the good of spending £650 if it brought nothing back?—I was foolish, and looked for better days, and wished to be in the place that my father lived in. But I see myself a very foolish man to-day.

25863. But the Duke has gained nothing more by it than you have?—He has gained by it because I improved his estate.

25864. But if the croft will not fetch any more money than it fetched before, it has not been improved?—It is worth more money for grazing, but where would my crop be?

25865. If it is worth more than before, what rent could you get from another for it if you were to let it?—I do not see that I would get any one to take it at all, because they know the place to be so bad that they would not take it; that is my real opinion.

25866. *Professor Mackinnon.*—How do you make out the £650 you spent upon the croft?—By measuring the land and drains and fences.

25867. Did you keep an account of it all?—I kept an account, but I cannot say that I could gather it together now. But the very place will make it out; the ground will show for itself.

25868. You mean your own labour that you expended?—I do not mean anything I expended myself.

25869. Is the £650 what you paid to other people?—Yes; I never put 6d. upon my own labour.

25870. How were you paying other people for improving the croft?—I only kept account of the money I paid out, not upon anything I have done myself.

25871. What was the money paid for—for making drains?—Trenching, making drains, building fences and houses, and smithy expenses.

25872. What do you mean by smithy expenses?—It was this; there were some parts where the gravel being so hard, I had to pay more smithy expenses for picks and things than for the rood of ordinary trenching—owing to the ground being naturally stiff and hard.

25873. The smithy expenses were those that were connected with the improvement?—But the whole of the ground was not that.

25874. You do not include of course the ordinary smithy expenses of keeping up the croft, ploughs and horses?—I think you would not expect I would include that.

25875. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What kind of house have you?—I have a house of two rooms and a little garret, a good kitchen, a carpenter's shop, stable, byre, and a good large barn, and a good outer house for keeping timber in, which I have no use for just now, but only it cost me money. All the houses are good enough, because I am a mason myself.

25876. Your houses are rather superior?—Not outside.

25877. Are they slated or thatched?—Slated; the barn, stable, shop, and byre are all slated.

25878. Did you build them yourself?—I did; it was by my orders it was done. I was maybe only as one hand, or providing things for the workmen. I had other masons doing it.

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25879. Was the wood supplied to you by the landlord?—Only for the dwelling house, which is about 36 feet long by 12 broad. I only got the roof of the dwelling house; I never got an inch for the other houses.

25880. Did you get lime also?—No.

25881. Have you kept the house yourself in repair all the time you have lived in it?—Yes, and I have never got a grain of lime from the factor, and only now and then I would get that same.

25882. What kind of houses have the people round about you—are they anything of the same sort as yours?—There are a few of them of the same sort—most of them are, but they do not build those additions for the steading as I did. I had money about my hand and did this, being foolish, and I am at last left in the lurch. The Duke has the houses, and I am without money and without house when he likes to evict me.

25883. *The Chairman.*—Did you ever know anybody who was evicted in your township?—No, not in my memory; they were only huddled in with us, not evicted.

Rev. THOMSON MACKAY, Parish Minister, Tongue (35)—examined.

Rev. Thomson Mackay.

25884. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been minister in your present charge?—For seven years.

25885. Were you here yesterday?—I was.

25886. Did you hear the evidence that was given?—Every word of it.

25887. Would you be so kind as to make any remarks which occur to you in connection with the evidence?—I may remark that I have not been appointed a delegate, but in respectful obedience to the Commission I am willing to give any information I can. With respect to the evidence, I think the holdings are too small as a rule. Through the constant application of sea-ware the land is exhausted. They must use the sea-ware. If a larger holding could be given to the crofters whereby parts of the land could get rest, the people would be in comfort, but the land is exhausted every year with sea-ware. I am of opinion that the less sea-ware they would use the better, but in present circumstances they must use sea-ware to force a crop out of the land.

25888. We heard a good deal stated about the effect of the wind upon the crofts, and the loss of crop by wind and stress of weather. Is that the case in your neighbourhood?—It was the case last year.

25889. Is it frequently the case?—Not in the Tongue district, with which I am best acquainted.

25890. The smallness of the croft is a disadvantage?—I think so.

25891. What do you think of the facilities that exist for enlarging the area of crofts—could that be done in your district?—It could not be done without taking the landlord's interest into consideration.

25892. Could the crofts be enlarged by adding to them on their own borders from other lands; or would it be necessary to take the people and transplant them elsewhere?—It would be necessary to transplant them elsewhere.

25893. What do you think about the scale of rental?—I have been a minister in Argyleshire for half a year, in the island of Ulva, and I was a student missionary in the island of Tyree, and also assistant to the late Rev. John Macleod of Morven, and I consider that the rents of the crofters in Argyllshire are much higher than the rents of the crofters in the Reay country. But the Argyllshire men on the other hand have steamboat communication, and can send their produce direct to the market; any produce in the shape of eggs and dairy produce they can send to the

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best markets in the south. We have no steamboat communication in the north.

25894. Comparing the stock kept by the crofters in the two countries, is the stock here superior or inferior?—The breed here is inferior, but the people have more cattle.

25895. Do you see any improvement in the breed since you came here?—Not much.

25896. We heard yesterday that the Duke was in the habit of keeping a good bull or bulls for improving the breed?—I do not think there is one of that kind in my neighbourhood.

25897. Do you think the accommodation in the houses is such as to be prejudicial to the health or morals of the people; or are they sufficiently and decently housed?—They are sufficiently and decently housed.

25898. Better than in the Western islands?—Yes.

25899. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the general condition of the crofters in your district as to means of comfort?—On the whole with the most of them it is a struggle for existence.

25900. Do you find some of them are poorer than others, or are their means pretty much the same?—They are poorer, but there are degrees of poverty amongst them.

25901. Do you find that those who are comparatively well off are willing to assist their poorer neighbours in times of distress?—Yes.

25902. How many of the people have got relations in the colonies?—Not many in the colonies. There are some, but not many.

25903. Did many of the people emigrate to America?—A few, but not very many.

25904. What class of people chiefly emigrate?—Chiefly young men.

25905. Are they generally dissuaded from doing so by their parents, or do their parents encourage the idea?—There is a tie of natural affection between mother and son; she is unwilling to part with her son.

25906. And does she push it to the length of preventing young men from going abroad to better their position; or is it simply an expression of natural affection?—The expression of natural affection.

25907. You state that the lands on the borders of the crofts would not be available for enlarging the area of the crofts; what is the nature of the lands on the borders of the crofts—in whose occupation is it?—Sheep farms.

25908. Why in your opinion would it not be suitable for enlarging the crofts?—The present interests are concerned, it would be a matter of time.

25909. But if the Duke chose when the leases of these farms are out, could he not take, with advantage to the crofters and without any great disadvantage to himself, a portion of these farms so as to enlarge the holdings of the crofters?—The question of rents comes in there.

25910. Have you ever considered the question of comparing the rents paid by crofters with the rents paid by large sheep farmers for a similar quality of ground?—No, I have not studied that.

25911. Then you are not in a position to give an opinion as to the rents paid by one class as compared with the other. Do you think that the crofters pay on an average as high rents for a similar quality of land as the large sheep farmers do?—Yes, I think that.

25912. Then, in that case, the Duke would not be a loser, would he, if he let a portion of these farms to the crofters?—I do not think so.

25913. Have you ever had any conversation with the large farmers themselves on the subject?—I have.

25914. What do you find their opinion to be about it? Do they, in conversation with you, think it possible that without altogether spoiling

the remaining portion of the large farm, some of it might be added to the crofters' lots as opportunity offers?—Not as a rule; they do not think so. They think it pays the Duke better to have large farms.

25915. I am not so much referring to that as to whether in their opinion the occupation of the large farm could be carried on profitably by them as tacksmen if a portion were taken away and added to the adjacent crofts?—I do not think that they would approve of that.

25916. Do you know on what account?—Probably on the grounds of selfish interest.

25917. Have you ever heard it stated that one difficulty in the way might be—I am talking of the country which you know and I don't—that it would be difficult to keep the sheep on the upper or higher lands if the low grounds used for wintering were devoted to other purposes?—I have never heard the question put in that shape.

25918. Do you think from the nature of these large farms in the vicinity of Tongue, that a portion might be allotted to crofters and yet leave a sufficient portion available for wintering so as not altogether to interfere with the proper working of the large farm?—I do not think that could be carried out if the sheep farming system is to be continued; they must have low and high ground, and if the crofter system is to be continued they must have the same.

25919. Could these large farms in the vicinity of Tongue be so redistributed so that a portion of the high ground and a portion of the low ground could be left with the farmer, and a portion of the high ground and a portion of the low ground given to the crofters—could that be worked?—I think so.

25920. In that case would it not meet the objection which you stated to the Chairman that the lands adjacent to the crofts were not available for adding to the crofts?—Yes.

25921. What I mean is this—are the large farms so situated that they might be divided longitudinally, reducing the size, but giving a proportion to the crofters, and not taking away merely the low ground and adding that to the crofter, and leaving the high ground without anybody to occupy it?—I think the two would be mutually exclusive. I think it must be either a sheep farm entirely or a croft entirely — a fairly large holding.

25922. I understand you to mean that if anything was done by the Duke in the direction asked for by the people, he would require to take the whole of the large farm adjacent and devote it exclusively to crofting; it could not be left partly in a large farm and partly given to a crofter?—It would be a difficulty, whether large farmers would come forward and bid for holdings of that kind, if the large farms were divided. It would interfere with freedom of contract.

25923. I am talking about what in your opinion the Duke might do voluntarily of his own accord. Supposing you were in the position of the Duke, do you think, from your knowledge of the country, that a re-arrangement might be made so as to afford satisfaction to the people without any considerable sacrifice of rent on the part of his Grace?—As a question of rent I could not give an exact answer.

25924. In your opinion, if it were done at all the large farms should be altogether devoted to crofters or left as large farms?—Quite so.

25925. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You spoke about young men emigrating from the neighbourhood, is there really any prospect in the parish here for an active young man, a member of a crofter's family?—In present circumstances I could not conscientiously advise young men to remain in this north country.

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25926. There is no prospect for them in their own country at present?—I could not advise them to remain here.

25927. Supposing there was a strong young man who wanted to remain in the country and to get a small holding of his own, and he went to the authorities and asked for it, what reply would he probably get?—A new holding or an old one?

25928. A new holding?—He would probably get the reply that there was no land for him.

25929. For him?—For him.

25930. *Professor Mackinnon.*—I suppose you know the whole parish of Tongue?—Yes.

25931. And the neighbouring parish of Durness?—Yes.

25932. Between the land occupied by crofts and the land occupied by big farms, do you say that the low ground and high ground are about equally distributed between them; in all the big farms is there a good deal of low ground suitable for cultivation?—Yes.

25933. Is there much about the same proportion of ground suitable for cultivation upon the big farms as there is upon the crofts around us here—pasture and arable combined?—Yes, and better land, more fertile land.

25934. Do you know about the relative rent that is being paid acre for acre, high and low, arable and pasture, between the crofter and big farmer?—No. I have not studied that.

25935. But your opinion is that the crofter pays about as much as the big farmer?—For the extent of his land my opinion is that he pays fully as much.

25936. I happen to have a paper here which just exactly agrees with that. Taking pasture land and arable land, the crofter pays 10d. per acre and the large farmer pays 10¼d. You think that the low ground suitable for cultivation on the big farms, and now out of cultivation, is at least fully as good if not better than the low ground cultivated by crofters?—I think so.

25937. Do you think that the pasture ground occupied by the big farmers is as good as the pasture ground occupied by the crofters?—It is as a rule better, but I daresay the crofters themselves, owing to the taking off divots and turf and so on, spoil their pasture.

25938. The crofters' pasture would be worse although naturally it was the same?—Yes.

25939. But you think the big farmers' ground is naturally equal to the small crofters' ground?—Originally they might be much about the same, but now the big farmers' ground is better.

25940. So that it is worth the farthing extra?—Very likely.

25941. Then if each big farm, paying say a rent of £1200, has a fair proportion of ground suitable for cultivation, and its proportion of high hill land, would there be anything in the nature of things except the expense of fencing to prevent the farm being split up into two parts high and low together, leaving a big farm upon one side of the fence and distributing the ground on the other side among crofters?—I think that would work.

25942. *Mr Cameron.*—I understood you to say that it would not work?—I mean that it would not work as at present.

25943. I understood you to say that the sheep farms either should be left as sheep farms altogether or devoted to crofters altogether, and that they could not be divided in the way I suggested; but now you say you think it might be done?—I misunderstood you.

25944. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There is nothing except the cost of erecting a fence to prevent such an arrangement being made if the authorities were willing to do so?—The stocking of the ground would be a difficulty.

25945. Are there many crofters throughout these two parishes of Tongue and Durness who would be able to bear the expense of removing to one of these places if they got it?—A number I think would make sacrifices to enable them to occupy such a holding.

25946. Is there a number of them who, after making a sacrifice, would be able with reasonable expectation of carrying it out, to do that?—A few of them—perhaps not many—with outside assistance.

25947. From your knowledge of the people, in the country and out of it, do you think that there might be a reasonable expectation of outside assistance?—Do you mean Government assistance?

25948. I was rather alluding to voluntary assistance from friends; but put it that way if you like?—Friends would help in some cases.

25949. I suppose you know the feeling of the people is very much in the direction of getting more land?—Very much.

25950. We heard yesterday and to-day too, and from yourself also, that the croft for its acreage cannot be said to be too highly rented?—As a rule, but there may be exceptions.

25951. We heard also that practically there have been no evictions for a great number of years past?—Practically.

25952. Still the people ask for security of tenure?—Yes, they do.

25953. And compensation for improvements?—Yes.

25954. Do you think it is a genuine feeling in the minds of the people that that would be a very desirable thing to get?—They want security of tenure, partly I think so that the landlord may not be in the position to raise the rents periodically.

25955. What benefits do you think yourself might reasonably be looked for if security of tenure and compensation for improvements were secured to the people by right?—It might induce the great bulk of them to take more interest in their holdings if they had compensation. If they were aware they were to have compensation in the event of their leaving the holding.

25956. You think they would make the best of their holdings then?—Yes.

25957. And would work them better than they work them now?—They work the arable land well enough already, but they might trench more new land. In fact they work their crofts too well in some cases, because they use too much sea-ware.

25958. And you think relative to the south, even allowing for the advantage of steamboat communication, this place is not too highly rented?—I don't think so.

25959. So that the great grievance is not the rent but the smallness of the croft?—No, it is not the rent. Some of them would be poor even although they had the land for nothing.

25960. And you think that if the croft was twice or three times the size that would not be the case?—I think they would be in comfort if the holdings were enlarged.

25961. Do you think if parties were willing to do it, there is plenty of suitable land in the country to give the people such a croft as that?—I think so.

25962. I see there has been no subdivision to speak of for a number of years back in this place?—Not much that I know of.

25963. Do you think that if the people got these big crofts there would not be a danger of subdividing the crofts and making them small again?—There would need to be a *sine qua non* that there should be no subdivision.

25964. And you would secure that by quite as firm a right as you

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would secure tenure and compensation?—Yes; if Government interference at all is to be allowed in this case, I think it might be allowed to prevent the subdivision of crofts. I know there is a difference of opinion as to Government interference.

25965. I observe that although the area of the crofts has remained the same for thirty years under the present management, both the cattle and sheep of the crofters have decreased in number; were you aware of that?—No.

25966. Do you think it could be accounted for by the people having heavier beasts than before?—No, I do not think the breed has improved; but perhaps their pasture has deteriorated by their taking away divots, turf, and peats.

25967. In the two parishes you mentioned do you think the land is equally as good for arable cultivation as in the island of Tyree?—Tyree is a very fertile island.

25968. But in the matter of housing and general condition the people of this country are probably, taking all in all, superior?—Taking all in all they are very comfortable tenants in Tyree; but there are a great many poor people, as poor as anywhere.

25969. They are less equal in their circumstances there than here, some are better off and some worse off?—Yes, better off and worse off.

25970. *The Chairman.*—You have been asked a number of questions with reference to the extension of the croft and the division of sheep farms. I would take the liberty of asking you whether the replies which you have given upon these points have been the result of previous inquiry and deliberation, or whether you have been answering as it were on the spur of the moment without previous preparation?—I have studied the question during the recent agitation about the crofting system. I had not paid much attention to the subject until the recent agitation.

25971. But has that particular point been presented to your consideration before, of the division of a large sheep farm in its whole length, dividing both pasture and arable land, and the restoration of a portion of it to the crofter—has that particular point been before you previously?—Recently, I have thought of that.

25972. You have stated that there is a general desire on the part of the people for an increase of the area of their crofts, for fixity of tenure, and for compensation?—I have found when I have been moving about among the people that they want these things.

25973. Have you been aware that these feelings and wishes have been entertained in past years—for a long time past—or do you think they are the result of recent discussion and agitation?—They may have lain dormant in former years; the thing has been quickening by recent agitation.

25974. You think that the same wants have been almost unconsciously felt before, but were not expressed so much?—Quite so, not expressed.

25975. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—I think you stated that you wished to say something?—I wished to say that this north country is very badly off for steamboat communication, and for want of piers. I do not mean a harbour of refuge as some delegate stated yesterday, but piers at which a small steamer could land and discharge goods—piers at which fishing boats could be securely moored. I think there is traffic enough to keep a small steamer going, say for Strome Ferry to Thurso, right round the coast.

25976. And you wish some calling place for the steamer?—Yes, I do.

25977. What place would you suggest as the most suitable for the two parishes you have been referring to?—There is one on the Melness side already, and I do not think it would cost very much. On the Tongue side

there is a tidal ferry at the place where the pier would be most convenient, but perhaps it would not be so easy to make a harbour there. SUTHERLAND.

25978. But there are places where it could be done?—There are. I think it was stated also by the delegate that there is no right mill in the parish of Tongue. The little surplus here the crofters have, many of them have to carry seventeen miles to get it turned into wholesome here meal. BETTYHILL. Rev. Thomson Mackay.

Rev. JOHN STUART MACKAY, Free Church Minister, Alt-na-harra, Strathnaver (45)—examined.

25979. *Mr Cameron.*—You have heard the evidence given by the last witness?—Yes. Rev. John S. Mackay

25980. The other Mr Mackay was questioned a good deal upon the subject of the possibility of giving more land to the crofters by taking it from the adjoining sheep farms; have you at all studied the question, and are you prepared to give evidence on it, or would you rather touch upon other points?—I am quite prepared to give evidence upon that point; I have made it a study. But I wish to make this statement before giving the evidence upon that, that I know farmers having these holdings personally, and holding them in the highest respect, I would not wish it to be supposed that in any opinion of mine I should be supposed to be inimical to the gentlemen.

25981. You are acquainted with the parish of Farr?—Yes, I am a native of the country.

25982. The parishes of Farr and Tongue are adjacent?—Yes.

25983. And you are acquainted with both equally well?—Yes.

25984. You are aware that the crofts are bounded by farms on either side?—Yes.

25985. And these farms are very large?—Very large.

25986. What is the smallest of these large farms in rental?—The smallest is about £350. There are two farms paying about that rent, one of them at the extreme top end of the Strath and the other at the lower end. The one at the top end is in the hands of a farmer having another farm extending from the other end. They were two separate farms in my time.

25987. From your knowledge of the people do you believe there would be any objection on their part to migrate to these farms even although the distance be something considerable?—Not at all; quite the opposite. But it might be difficult from lack of means on the part of many of them.

25988. Have you ever had any conversation with the tacksmen with whom you say you are acquainted, as to the possibility when a suitable opportunity offers of adding to the crofters' holding some of the land at present occupied by them?—Yes, I have spoken to some on that point.

25989. Will you tell us if these gentlemen have any objection to such being done, and what is the nature of their objection?—One of them expresses himself that his farm is too large, and that having respect to the rights of the body of the people, he thinks they ought to be more liberally dwelt with; and he would personally wish very much that should be done.

25990. My questions refer exclusively at present to this; suppose the Duke of Sutherland were willing to do this voluntarily when the existing tacks are out of lease, would it be possible, and how far, to give the crofters what they evidently desire most ardently, additional land, out of these sheep farms? I cannot talk of anything but the voluntary giving up of it by the Duke, and I want to know how far in your opinion, and that of the tacksmen, that could be profitably or satisfactorily carried out?—

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That is, by the tacksman retaining as much as would make good farms of them?

25991. Yes; what I wish to know is whether the tacksmen could give up a portion of his farm such as would enlarge the holdings of the crofters who remain, and yet be able to pay an equal rent proportionately for that which remains as he does now for the whole?—I do not know that the present tacksmen would be able to do that, because the larger the holding is for them the better able they are to carry on their sheep farming; it is more profitable for them the larger the holding. But I have not the slightest doubt that the Duke would realise a larger rental by placing the ground in the hands of small tenants.

25992. It is a fact now, is it not, that these very large sheep farms are so difficult to let, that it is almost impossible to get tenants?—That is coming to be the case.

25993. That is generally owing to the enormous capital required to stock these sheep farms at the present high price of sheep?—Yes, and also on account of the high price of wintering and the badness of the pasture.

25994. From that point of view, provided the Duke or any other large proprietor had a sufficient amount of capital to subdivide his farm, it would be more profitable to him to let even sheep farms of smaller size than at present?—I believe it would.

25995. There only remains the question of the possibility of dividing these farms in such a way as would give a moderate share, a fair proportion, of hill pasture for summer and wintering for the sheep in winter, and still leave ground suitable for the crofters?—Yes, leaving low ground for the sheep, that would be on the high ground in summer, for the farmer, and the ground being of the same nature almost all along the strath, the rest could be more profitably placed in the hands of small tenants.

25996. Would the land that might be taken from the large tacks be divided in your opinion more suitably up and down?—Much more.

25997. Rather than horizontally?—That would not do at all. That would not suit either the crofter or the large farmer; they must have it up and down for the waterside.

25998. Is that your opinion from experience and also from conversation with large farmers?—Certainly. Some of the farmers express a doubt, and say that dividing the ground into small sheep farms would not pay the small sheep farmers better than the large sheep farmers pay their shepherds. The shepherds themselves say it would pay them better. The farmers say if the farms are divided among so many farmers as there are of shepherds, the farmers in these small farms would not be paid better than the shepherds are, but the shepherds are of a very different opinion. They think they could make the thing pay much better by having farms of that size or less, and they would give double the rent.

25999. But that would hardly apply to the case of a crofter, because the crofter would not get as large a holding as the hirsel of a shepherd at present?—Certainly not, but the crofters would be comfortable with from twelve to twenty acres of higher pasture.

26000. And the crofter would plough and turn up the land now under grass?—Certainly. The haughs are not adapted to be cropped constantly, they are better adapted for grass; but in the meantime the grass is deteriorating for moss, and it would be the better of being cultivated for a few years, which would give the crofter time to trench on the hillside and lay the ground out again in pasture, which would be very much more beneficial. It would in the meantime be better by putting the plough in

and giving sustenance for his family and give an opportunity for cultivation of the hillside, and then lay this out in pasture again.

26001. In your opinion would much of this land which might be occupied by crofters require draining?—It would require draining certainly, that is to say ground which was to be trenched; but not the ground in the present haughs.

26002. In the ground which shows the remains of old cultivation, were there drains?—No, that would require to be cultivated.

26003. How was it cultivated before?—It was not thoroughly trenched, but merely scratched over. But that was sixty or seventy years ago when they had different ideas of agriculture. Had they been cultivating the same way as they are now, I believe the ground would have been worth five times its present value.

26004. But the people grew considerable crops of grain?—In that case they would be infinitely better to-day, under better agricultural processes.

26005. What I want to know is whether in your opinion all these lots now under permanent pasture, and which if occupied by crofters would be cultivated, would require draining?—Certainly.

26006. That would involve considerable expense?—Yes, but it would pay itself in a few years.

26007. Have you ever considered the question of how this expense might be met?—Yes. My opinion is that everything of that kind done by the proprietor is done at great expense, and it is scarcely worth doing on a large scale in this country; but by a small tenantry it could be done better and at half the expense compared with what it could be done by the proprietor giving money at so much per cent. to the holder and allowing him to do it. The tenant would have double interest in doing it well and cheaply. He would keep down his own rental by spending money to the best purpose, and the croft being his own, he would do the work much better than it would be done under contract.

26008. Do you think the proprietor would advance money to the tenant when he gave him this new land without charging him interest?—No, charge interest at a reasonable rate.

26009. Would you consider the proprietor also entitled to ask rent as well as interest?—Of course—for the hill pasture and for all the ground besides—rental for the ground in its state of nature, but not as arable ground. The interest of the money would be paid on that.

26010. Do you think the people who appear to us to be not only willing but very anxious to migrate to these lands, and to obtain a portion of the lands now occupied by the large farmers, would be in a position to enter into an arrangement of that kind, paying a rent and paying interest?—A goodly number of them are, but that is the great difficulty I see in the way, that they have no capital to do it.

26011. But you have got over the difficulty about capital by the way you suggest of the proprietor's finding capital?—Yes.

26012. But do you think the tenant would be in a position to pay rent plus interest upon the new farm he would get?—I think so, for this reason that there is a great portion of land that might be immediately put in cultivation until such time as he gradually took in the hillside ground, and he would only be paying interest for the money he was gradually spending, and his stock on the hill in the meantime would pay the rental of the holding.

26013. But some portion of the expenditure would require to be laid out altogether and immediately?—Yes.

26014. The houses would require to be built at once?—Yes, and that

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is a great difficulty. I have no doubt some of the people might be able to pay—they would gradually get into it with houses not very commodious.

26015. Enclosures would also require to be made at once?—That might be done gradually.

26016. There is another difficulty which I am afraid is still greater, that of stock?—Yes.

26017. Of course if they are to have larger holdings they must have more stock?—That is the great difficulty we see in the way, and I believe his Grace would be most willing to meet the people anywhere if he only saw they were able to stock the ground, and by translating a number from places overcrowded at present it would leave room for the benefit of those who remain in the present places.

26018. I am afraid there are one or two more difficulties. One is the question of schools.—New schools will require to be built; would not that add to the already heavy taxation?—I do not think that would be a great difficulty. The taxation presently in this parish is only a matter of 6d. in the pound or so.

26019. But by this arrangement the parish would not be relieved of any of the existing schools, and those new schools would be additional?—There are schools at present in these straths for children, and they might be enlarged; and one or two others might be placed at other places. I do not think that would add very much to the rates.

26020. It would clearly add to the rates, because a whole staff would be required for every one of those schools?—We have presently schools for the shepherds with a pupil teacher, but not a right staff.

26021. But not sufficiently large to accommodate a population?—No, but these might be enlarged at a not very great cost.

26022. What salary do the teachers of these shepherds' schools get?—Very small.

26023. I suppose the teacher of the regular schools under inspection would be something on a par with the rest of the teachers in the parish?—That would depend upon the community. If you put a number of people in one place where they would not be within reach of the school there would require to be a school there.

26024. But it would be all additional?—Yes.

26025. Would the Free Church to which most of the people belong find the money for building churches?—Yes. I would undertake to do that.

26026. I might eliminate that difficulty from the others?—Yes. The help of friends has helped us before. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie and Mr Fraser-Mackintosh have already helped us to the amount of £300.

ANGUS MACKAY, Crofters' son, Cattlefield, Farr (22)—examined.

A. Mackay.

26027. *The Chairman.*—You are a student?—Yes.

26028. Of what?—Divinity.

26029. Were you elected a delegate by the people?—Yes.

26030. Have you got any written statement?—Yes. 'At a public 'meeting of the crofters and cottars of the townships of Achnerkickaird 'and Cattlefield in the parish of Farr, the following resolutions were 'agreed to and grievances discussed, with a view to lay them before the 'Royal Commission:—(1) That our crofts are ridiculously small, not being 'sufficient to maintain us and our families for a few months in the year. 'To enable us to pay our rents and buy meal, we have in the summer

'months to go to the herring fishings, in England and East Coast of 'Scotland, or labour in the large towns of the south. Thus, we are 'neither fishermen nor crofters in the true sense of the term, but "Jacks '"of all trades and masters of none." If we had crofts of the right size '(from 7 to 25 acres arable land together with hill pasture) we could stay 'more at home, and devote our energies to the working of our crofts, 'which would then be sure to give us better returns. (2) That we have 'no security of tenure. Under the present form of the land laws we 'can be turned off our crofts at term day, without a penny of compensa-'tion for all our and our fathers' labour in bringing our crofts into proper 'working order. (3) That we and our fathers have been cruelly burnt 'like wasps out of Strathnaver, and forced down to the barren rocks of 'the sea-shore, where we had in many cases to carry earth on our backs 'to form a patch of land. And now, after we have improved the land, at 'our own expense, and built houses, our rents are raised at every 'opportunity—always when the head of the family dies and a new name 'is put upon the roll—to double and treble the rental before that. We 'consider it to be unreasonable thus to raise a man's rent after he has 'spent labour and capital on the improvement of his croft. Compensa-'tion for improvement is a thing unknown to the small tenants here. '(4) That we are too much "kept under" by the proprietor's officials. 'The only way that we can live here at all is by becoming absolutely 'passive and suffering ourselves to be used and misused at the factor's 'pleasure. The Duke of Sutherland is a good proprietor, but his officials are 'tyrannical. (5) That the land our forefathers lived upon so happy and 'prosperous is now under deer and sheep, and turning into moss and fog, 'which is not profitable to man or beast, while we are huddled together in 'small townships on the sea shore, exposed to all the fury of the wild 'north sea breezes, which generally carry away the little corn we have. 'Every good piece of land was taken from us and we were planted on 'every spot for which no other use could be found. We want more 'land, security against eviction, compensation for improvements, and fair 'rent. ANGUS MACKAY.'

26031. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are one of a number of delegates?—Yes.

26032. Is it understood by the other delegates that the paper you have read expresses the views of all?—Yes, it is.

26033. It is a general statement regarding this part of the parish?—Yes.

26034. And you have reason to believe that the others will concur in that?—Yes.

26035. You say you are used and abused by the officials of the estate will you be good enough to mention instances of abuse?—I will give you a few specimens. The first case is one of Angus Gordon, tenant, Aird. In 1879 a road was made through Angus Gordon's croft while a large piece was taken from him at the lower end and a lime storing-house built upon it. The tenant was promised surface damages as his corn was partly destroyed, and a reduction of rent, but on making his demands when paying his rent he was only laughed at, and told that they would get plenty men to take his croft if he was not pleased with it. As he had roused the ire of the officials they gave permission to the vessels carrying lime into the river, to use for ballast the stones of the dyke fencing in Gordon's lot at the lower end. The dyke was pulled down accordingly, and now his croft is exposed to damage from his neighbours' cattle; and next year his rent was raised eighteen shillings—that was when the general rise was made on the rent—but he went to the Duke and the rent was reduced again.

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26036. Are you aware personally that the factor gave permission to pull down this dyke?—The factor or the ground officer gave permission.

26037. Did the captains tell you?—They told William Gordon, and he is present here himself.

26038. That they had permission to pull the dyke down?—Yes; and he believed them and could not stop them.

26039. Have you other instances you wish to bring forward?—I have. Another instance is the case of one Christina Mackay, Beathag. She was an old woman and permitted James Thomson, her brother-in-law, to live in an end of her house, but, as the factor was at enmity with this man, he evicted Christina before the term, and sent the ground officer round the district forbidding the people upon pain of eviction to give her shelter in their houses. The public broke open the door of her house and she went in again and stayed till the term, when she was formally to be evicted upon a warrant. The thing preyed upon her mind so much that when the day of final eviction came she died about twelve o'clock, broken hearted, the ground officer and sheriff officer being then within half a mile of her house on their way to evict her.

26040. Was Christina Mackay in a croft?—Yes.

26041. Did you know her?—No, I did not.

26042. Did she live near you?—This was before I remember; it was about twenty-five years ago.

26043. Are there any other instances of abuse?—There was another instance in the western corner of Aird. There were four lots and one of the lots was in the hands of two women.

26044. What period are you speaking about?—1860 or 1861, Mr Crawford was factor then. A salmon fisher from the south country came to fish at Naver here, and they wanted to give him a piece of land and they evicted these two women, and the other three crofters were called to Bettyhill, and two of them went to Mr Crawford who asked them to sign a paper. They wanted to know what was in it and he refused to let them know. But he wanted them to sign it and forced them to do it, and they did so. The paper contained words to this effect, that they were agreeable to have their lands cut up. The other man who did not come to Bettyhill was summoned out of his lot, and he had to yield too, and the lots were divided. Jane Mackay, a daughter of the old woman, and William Gordon, a son of the old man, are here and can tell the facts.

26045. That is twenty-two years ago?—It was in 1860 or 1861.

26046. And the instances before that were twenty-five years previously. The only modern instance you have adduced is the first case?—Yes. I want to say something regarding the acreage and what the crofters pay compared with what the large sheep farmers pay. The acreage of Farr is 188,355 acres, equal to 259 square miles. The number of crofters is 293, so there is enough land in the parish to give more than one square mile to each crofter. Of the 295 square miles the crofters only occupy 16½, while the remainder, amounting to 278½ square miles is portioned out among eight sheep farmers. The crofters pay for their land, hill pasture and all, at the average rate of 1s. 3½d. per acre, while the sheep farmers pay only 8½d. per acre for infinitely better land; and since the last three or four years they have the land for half the rent, so that we pay 1s. 3½d. and they pay 4d. per acre.

26047. Is there much variation in the rate of rental between the various parishes here?—I cannot say regarding other parishes.

26048. You don't know whether the crofters are lower rented in other parishes or whether the sheep farmers are higher rented?—No, I just looked at the valuation roll for Farr.

26049. How did you take out the acreage for Farr?—I got it in a guide book.

26050. The acreage has been taken out by the factor here, and I understand it is correctly given, and over the whole factory the crofters pay 10d. an acre, and the sheep farmers 10¼d., according to the rental in the valuation roll?—I am speaking for the parish of Farr. I could not say what other parishes pay.

26051. Then the crofters must be paying much higher in Farr than elsewhere, and sheep farmers much less?—Yes.

26052. From whom have you heard about the prosperity of your forefathers in Strathnaver?—From my forefathers; and it is the common talk of the people who have been in Strathnaver who saw the doings and burning of it.

26053. But with regard to the prosperity at the time, have you reason to believe that the people were very prosperous there?—They were better off as regards land; they had more land and more flesh and more fish and the like of that; but they were not given so much to work in the south then as now, and were not so intelligent. They did not bring so much money into the county, but if they stayed at home now as they did then they could not live at all.

26054. Were there fewer years of scarcity then than now?—There were. I have heard of a year of scarcity 100 years ago.

26055. A hundred years ago there was a very scarce year; but were there not frequently years of scarcity before the removals from Strathnaver?—No, I think they were pretty well off in Strathnaver, it was one of the best straths in Sutherland.

26056. With regard to the raising of the rents on the death of a holder of a croft, do you know in what way a croft is valued?—I don't know how it is valued. You are told to pay the rent; they never say what it is. Whenever a lot becomes vacant it is always raised whether it is worth the rent or not; a rise of rent is always looked for whenever a new name is put on the roll.

26057. You don't think the value of the croft is always increased although the rent is increased?—I consider the crofts were made by us. When we were forced down here it was barren moorland, we had to trench and drain and fence the ground and build our houses, and do everything, and we got no help to do that. I consider that if we got the land at perhaps what it is really worth now, it would be too much, because we have brought the land to be what it is ourselves, and we are improving the land every day—so that we are not only paying rent but interest on what we have done.

26058. But I understand it is the new tenant who does that?—But it is always the son of the old tenant so that the new tenant is the man who really does the work.

26059. The new tenant is more a new tenant in name than in reality?—It is always the son, the croft descends from father to son.

26060. With regard to the want of security of tenure, is it your experience that there is much insecurity?—Not since the great clearance in Strathnaver, but the feeling rankles in the breast of the people that they may be turned out any day. They don't believe that the present Duke would do it, but they don't know about his successor, so that they have no encouragement to improve, as if they had security in their lots or crofts.

26061. *The Chairman.*—I did not understand you when you stated the acreage under farms and crofts. You stated that you had derived your information as to area from what source?—A guide book.

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26062. What book do you call it?—*Rev. D. Mackenzie.* The new *Statistical Account.*

26063. I only want to know whether you are well assured that the statistics given by you upon that point are well founded and accurate?—*Angus Mackay.* They are founded on the *Statistical Account*, and the rent is taken from the valuation roll for the year. It was out of a guide book I got the figures; I saw it written in the book.

26064. Did you see the area stated in the book? Did you take it out of the book?—The number of acres—the figures.

26065. You get the figures in the book, but what book was it?—I cannot be sure of the name of the book just now.

26066. Did you do it yourself?—Yes, I did, in company with Mr Mackenzie who has the book.

26067. What Mr Mackenzie?—The minister of Farr.

26068. *Professor Mackinnon.*—There is a great deal of the surface of the county in lochs; are these not more in the places where the farmers are than where the crofters are?—There is not much room for lochs where the crofters are.

26069. Do you include lochs in the acreage of the whole parish?—The way I arrive at a mile and a half broad is that in some cases the big farms come down to the sea and in other cases they go up two miles and I drew a rough line across.

26070. It was a rough calculation which you think quite fair. If there was an accurate acreage taken of the parish which would materially affect your figures would you be prepared to modify your statement?—I did it as fairly as I could.

26071. *The Chairman.*—Your statement is not derived from any official document?—No. There is another thing I wanted to speak about, namely, the extending of our hill pasture some years ago. We applied to the Duke of Sutherland for more hill pasture and got some. The hill pasture at both ends seemed to be pretty good—it was green—and when the line was drawn giving us the pasture they drew it in a curved way and whenever the land was bad the curve was drawn up and we got the bad land, and wherever there was a green spot the curve came down and they cut the green spot off us, so that we have the line drawn crooked, back and forward in curves taking the best land from us.

26072. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Keeping out all the good land?—Keeping out all the good land.

26073. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Whose hill pasture are you speaking of?—The hill pasture of Farr proper.

26074. *The Chairman.*—Is there a fence up along this place?—No.

26075. How was the division marked?—There is a heap of stones here and there.

26076. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is the hill pasture of Farr common to the townships on the property?—No, it is limited to seven.

Rev. DONALD MACKENZIE, Free Church Minister, Farr (54)—examined.

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26077. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—How long have you been minister here?—Thirteen years.

26078. Where were you before?—I was in America a few years. Before making my own statement I wish to read statements by two delegates from Kirkton. The delegates are fishermen who could not be relieved to attend here to-day:—'The crofters of the townships of

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'Kirtoney, Swordly, and Ponberiskag met at the Public School, 'Kirktoney, on the fourth instant. Different resolutions were put to the 'meeting and unanimously agreed to. The following grievances were 'discussed and agreed to. That the township of Kirtoney comprises 'nineteen holdings or crofts; Swordly, ten; and Ponberiskag three. 'That the soil is poor and unproductive, producing in its annual returns 'what will barely support the crofter during the winter months of the 'year. So that he must seek employment elsewhere, striving hard to 'make both ends meet. While, on the other hand, he would require to be 'at home, during the laying down and gathering in the crop, but as no 'work of any description is to be had at home this cannot be so. Cod 'and ling fishing would be remunerative on this coast, but the want of any 'kind of harbours, render this aim of industry abortive. We are cheer-'fully striving, year after year, trying the best means within our reach to 'make the sterile patches amongst the rocks yield something like a return 'for our labour, but our efforts are very often fruitless. A bad harvest 'comes, when the crop is scattered by storms in the fields, or driven over 'the rocks into the sea, as in the case of last year when a third of it had 'been lost. Taking the township of Kirtoney, for example, there is 150 'souls located within the small area of one and a quarter mile 'circumference. This year's produce for the nineteen holdings only 'amounted to fifty-four bolls of meal. How is this to support the above '150 souls during the twelve months of the year? The people had been 'huddled and packed together, driven by wholesale eviction from the 'fertile fields and valleys of Strathnaver, to make room for sheep and 'deer, for the benefit and pleasure of a few farmers and sportsmen. How 'is it possible for us under present circumstances to raise our heads above 'water? Actual beggary is staring us in the face unless some amendment 'takes place. What we want, to meet our requirements, is extension of 'our crofts from our present small holdings to moderate sized farms of 'from ten to thirty acres, arable with hill pasture, wherewith the 'occupier could maintain himself and family in the necessaries of life with 'comfort, and find employment on the same during the year. We want 'some of the sheep farms of Strathnaver to be broken down to small farms 'of the above, two-thirds or so of the crofters to be replaced in the 'holdings once their fathers,' and the crofts which they left to be added 'to those remaining at a fair rent, and fixture of tenure. This system of 'farming would also benefit His Grace the Duke of Sutherland. He 'would realise as much rent as is now paid by the big farmers, besides it 'would diminish pauperism amongst the people, and raise a class of 'respectable tenantry throughout the land.' '*Statement of George 'M'Leod, Crofter, Crask of Farr.*—I represent the townships of 'Crask of Farr and Clerkhill. There are thirty-three crofts and 'on these there are no fewer then 245 souls. Before the Strath-'naver evictions there were only twelve crofters. The average rent 'of each croft is £3, 7s. 3d. The land is being encroached upon by 'the sands of the Bay of Farr, and in one instance a croft has been spoiled 'by the sand to a great extent. The people I represent are the 'descendants of respectable tenants who passed the greater part of their 'lives in the enjoyment of abundance and in the exercise of hospitality 'and charity. We are now pining on a few miserable acres of poor land, 'with but a few half-starved cattle, while our able men are spread all 'over the British Islands and America trying to keep the wolf from the 'doors of their families and never see their home except for a few 'months in winter. It is very aggravating to be kept in abject misery 'when there is plenty of good land lying waste under sheep and game in

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'the same parish. We do not ask much or any unreasonable thing, but 'that our crofts should be enlarged to fifteen or twenty acres of arable 'land, with proportionate hill pasture at a fair rent, with such a fixed hold, 'as that we could not be liable to eviction as long as we paid our rents. 'I have further to add that my rent has been twice raised this last fifteen 'years from £2, 16s. to £5, 11s., not including poor-rates and other rates 'besides. The yield of corn is about 4½ bolls.'

26079. Were there many people present at the meeting which appointed you as delegate?—Yes. It was publicly intimated and a large section of the church was occupied.

26080. You were present all day yesterday, and you have been present to-day?—I have.

26081. And you have heard what was stated?—I have.

26082. In particular you have heard the first delegate, the Rev. Mr Cumming?—Yes.

26083. Do you agree with all the statements he made?—I do; as far as my information goes.

26084. Are you a native of Sutherland?—No, of Ross-shire.

26085. It has been often stated that what is now called the agitation of the people for more land is of modern growth; is that consistent with your observation?—Well, it has been reanimated and revived but it has been slumbering in our minds for years. We required no one from the outside to come and agitate us upon this question.

26086. Do you find that this feeling is pervading the crofters of all ages, from old men of eighty to young men of twenty-one?—Yes, but it is more common among the young who go south and mingle with the people in the south and labour there. Our young men go there for a season and some of them even go across the Atlantic. They get no work or employment here. There are eight or a dozen young men, heads of families, who crossed the Atlantic and worked there for a season and then came home.

26087. So that there is a strong attachment to their native place?—Very strong.

26088. I asked the parish minister of Tongue whether a strong active young man had any prospect of benefiting himself within this parish; is there such prospect in the parish of Farr?—Some of those young men have gone across the Atlantic. One of them, a man who had learned his trade and had a good knowledge of building, extended his hand and said he had never earned on the Duke's estate more than 3s. 6d., and that was for putting in a grate into a public school. There is no work here.

26089. And no prospect of any?—No prospect.

26090. Does that not give rise to a good deal of discontent?—It does; to a very great deal.

26091. To some extent does it not give rise to a feeling of hopelessness?—It does, and there is this in it—I have heard some of the other delegates refer to it—last year a good deal of our corn was threshed and it was blown over the rocks. A numerously signed petition was prepared in the parish of Farr and sent to his Grace. It was sent to Dunrobin where it was understood the Duke was and we never got any acknowledgement of it. No one connected with his Grace had the grace to acknowledge receipt of the petition. The petition was sent away in October last. It was forwarded at that time and we thought it would be taken into consideration at the rent collection in November.

26092. Is it the fact that the proprietor is not very accessible to the people when they want to see him, or to complain of any grievance—that

he is surrounded as it were with a hedge?—That is the fact; all that we are allowed is to gaze with admiration on the retreating wheels of his carriage when he is going away. Last year was an exception. He spent three days here at that time, an unprecedented thing in the Tongue management.

26093. Did he at that time come freely in contact with the people?—He did; more freely than he was ever known to come before.

26094. Was that much appreciated by the people?—Much appreciated, and it was looked upon as perhaps a sign of good times coming.

26095. I suppose you have frequently talked with old people upon the subject of the Strathnaver evictions?—I have.

26096. With people who were themselves alive, and eye-witnesses of the evictions?—Yes.

26097. And you have read many accounts of what occurred?—I have.

26098. Am I right in coming to this conclusion, that the descriptions which were given to you were more vivid that anything than has been written on the subject?—The accounts of old men living in Aird, and in the different townships about, are more graphic and vivid and harrowing than anything that has ever been written on the subject.

26099. And those are credible men whom you can quite well believe?—Credible men whose word one would take for anything.

26100. Is there anything in reality in your mind to prevent the proprietor if so minded, when the present leases fall out, meeting the demands of the people?—I see nothing.

26101. And it would not be disadvantageous to him pecuniarly?—My belief is that it would be the very opposite.

26102. You concur in the observations of Mr Mackay, Alt-na-harra?—Yes.

26103. He has paid attention to the subject?—Yes, and also Mr Cumming and others.

26104. I suppose now the people don't want anything they are not prepared to pay for; they want no eleemosynary assistance?—Decidedly not. They don't consider their present rents high; but really although they got the crofts for nothing what good would it do them? There are 293 crofters who pay a rental of £681, 12s. 8d. Divide that among the whole and you have an average rent of £2, 6s. 6d. Now how much land can they have for that? It is nothing one way or another; it would not keep them a couple of months.

26105. If you take the crofter population of Farr and the neighbouring parish as a body is it the fact that were it not for extra assistance, earning money and labouring outside, and getting money from relatives, they could not exist?—Decidedly; above three months in the year; during the other nine months they would die. That is a general thing I believe.

26106. Will you make a brief statement about what is called some interferences by estate officials?—I will. It intimately concerns my profession. I would like to see the people having the liberty of free citizens in a free country, but I find their liberty is interfered with in connection with the elections for School Boards, Poor Boards, and Road Trustees, and so on. I may instance the case of the School Board election which took place in 1879 in this parish. There was a good deal of canvassing and I may refer to the case of one widow woman, the election had taken place, and of course Mr Crawford, the factor, was elected, as he always is, with double the number that would carry any other. A few days after the election the ground officer went to this woman's house and accused her of not having voted as she had promised—accused her of not having voted for Mr Crawford after he had been so good to her. The lands

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had been revalued shortly before that, and the impression—we were then more amenable to terror, from the local officials—had gone abroad—I cannot say who was responsible for it—that according to the voting so would be the rent. But the ground officer went on this occasion and accused this woman of not voting as she had promised, but in favour of another who was obnoxious to the local officials and Mr Mackay of Skelpick. She said, no, she had voted for Mr Crawford, given three votes to him and two to me, the answer was—'No, no; that's a lie.' These were the words that were used to her, as the daughter of the woman, who is here, can testify. The woman said she would go to the returning officer, who gave her assistance to vote, as she could neither read nor write, and get him to testify how she had voted. The ground officer said she need not; but the woman came to the inspector and said to the inspector—'Don't you remember how I voted?' 'Yes,' he said, —'and do you remember what I said to you?—take care and not spoil my pencil.' The returning officer testified that she had voted right. The daughter then went to the ground officer and said that the inspector remembered how her mother had voted and was ready to testify to it; the ground officer said—'You should not have gone to the returning officer. Perhaps I may have made a mistake, but Mr Crawford and I will look after the papers;' as if the ballot papers were in possession of the local officials, and they were interfering with our liberty at elections.

26107. That is one illustration of the interferences?—Yes. I could give another on the same occasion in connection with that election. It is the case of a widow Murray whose house I can see from the window here. She had been visited more than once—more than ten times—to induce her to vote in a particular direction.

26108. By whom?—By the ground officer. She is a member of my church and had favoured me before, and was known to favour me at that time. She was set upon incessantly by the ground officer, and she said—'No, she would not vote as he wished.' Then he said she had not paid her rent, and would she not better give up her holding—because parting with her holding was parting with her food; and she said—'No; she had not paid, but Providence would help her yet.' I am obnoxious, I know, to the officials; and, failing every effort to keep this woman from voting for me, the ground officer went to her house on the morning of the day of the election—she is an old woman over eighty—and said Mr Crawford had sent him purposely to tell her not to come out—not to vote; and adding for himself—'If you want the factor's favour or mine you won't come out.' This got wind among the people, namely, that this woman was made a prisoner in her own house, and that one of the Duke's officials constituted himself her jailer.

26109. Did she come out?—She got weak and trembled because the loss of the factor's favour was the loss of house and home; but before the close of the poll she felt better and was able to come out.

26110. What is the present constitution of the School Board?—It is very much in the territorial interest. Mr Crawford, the factor, is chairman.

26111. How many members are there?—Five; Mr Purves, Mr Sellar, Rev. Mr Munro, Strathy, and myself.

26112. There is no representative of the crofting interest?—It is all the territorial interest; and so it is at the Parochial Board—it is all the territorial interest that is represented. Of course, whatever interest our friends the sheep-farmers have in education our children get the benefit of it. But they are absent the most of the year, and their interest is rather to keep down the rates, and we suffer. But I should complete what I had

to say about widow Murray. This happened in the election of 1879. Had they succeeded in preventing that woman coming out they would have excluded me from the School Board. When the state of the poll was declared, well might Mr Purves say with a cynical smile—'This is the result of compulsory education,'—putting a fool's cap upon all the proceedings. I don't object to canvassing in a reasonable way, but the canvassing in this case was abusing the Duke's influence to suppress the liberties of the people. By the next election the woman got a summons of ejection. She had paid her rent and after paying her rent and after the factor received it, she still was ejected out of her lot and her lot was given to another, and this was the case of an aged woman, upwards of eighty. The community who knew the circumstances looked upon that as the following out of the threat at the previous election. This took place upon the eve of the following election.

26113. Not until then?—Between the nomination and the election day she was evicted and the lot given to another. It is fair to say of Mr Crawford that he said he did not authorise the ground officer to go; and my reply to that was that I did not say who authorised him, but that the ground officer himself said Mr Crawford authorised him, and the intimidation was all the same, as he went there as his master's servant.

26114. Is it perfectly certain this poor woman was put out of her croft?—They looked upon me as the cause of her losing her croft, and I wrote Sir Arnold perhaps more earnestly than I should have done for my own matter, and stated that this woman had been paying rent for sixty years on his Grace's estate, and that she was not a single sixpence in arrears. She had her son and daughter in beside her, besides her daughter-in-law and some seven or eight orphans; and on taking the case into consideration Sir Arnold allowed her to remain, and she will be there I hope until she dies.

26115. Do you positively affirm that there does exist in this parish in the minds of the people of Farr, founded upon good causes, an impression that if they do anything in the way of asserting independence they will be put down by officialism?—That is the case. I know nothing between myself and the Duke's representative here, but that I am not simple-minded enough to say, 'No,' when he chooses to say 'No,' and 'Yes,' when he chooses to say 'Yes.' I know of nothing more against me. I know that people are in fear and terror, and I only hope that the meeting of this Commission will enable them to assert their independence. They have a feeling of being cowed down and trampled upon. I may mention that the factor who is chairman and clerk to the School Board got a present of some £50 or £60. The other gentleman besides me who was obnoxious, Mr Mackay, Skelpick, opposed that. I did not oppose it, but I was understood to sympathise with Mr Mackay's view, and the first thing done as soon as the new board was elected was to vote £60 to the factor as clerk to the School Board. I did not oppose it. I said I saw the reasonableness of it, and that I would not do the work for the money. But by the next meeting of the board I saw in the Code that it was illegal to give any of the ratepayers' money to a member of the board, and I then dissented. I did not object. But Mr Crawford hearing that, and that others were opposed to it, accepted the money and returned thanks for it, and I did not object to it. But at the next meeting I had a copy of the Code where it was stated that it was illegal to give any of the ratepayers' money to a member of the board. Mr Crawford then declined to accept it, and returned the money.

26116. Did the other members of the board return thanks to him for returning it?—Not likely. The first thing was to vote the £60 to the

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factor; and the second thing was that one of the members turned round to the ground officer and said—'Will you not have some addition to your salary?'—He did not know what Mr Crawford might think of this and did not refuse—no one would refuse—and then Mr Purves seconded the motion on the ground that the ground officer would be more successful in taking out children as compulsory officer if he got an additional £5.

26117. Do I understand you that the chairman and factor is also clerk to the School Board?—Yes; and he occupies the same positions in connection with the Parochial Board. Mr Crawford is chairman and the ground officer is a member also. The landed interest comes in so that the only thing any other person can do is simply to object.

26118. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Who was returning officer at the first election you spoke of?—Mr Macdougall, Inspector of poor and public teacher.

26119. Are you under the impression that he offered to tell how somebody had voted?—No; but the woman who had voted and who had been accused of not voting right—not voting as she had promised—went to him and said—'Do you not remember how I voted; could you bring evidence to show how I voted?'

26120. How did he know?—She was illiterate and required his assistance to enable her to vote.

HEW MORRISON, Schoolmaster, Brechin, Forfarshire (33)—examined.

H. Morrison.

26121. *The Chairman.*—Are you a native of this district?—I am the son of a crofter in Torrisdale, Tongue.

26122. Have you got any written statement?—I have, but I am afraid it is too long, and the delegates, of whom there are seven, here, asked me to make a short statement.

26123. You were elected a delegate?—I was compelled to become one besides being elected for Tarrisdale and for the Skerray district.

26124. Be so good as to make your verbal statement?—One time there were just about twenty crofters in this district of Skerray, before the general evictions. Now there are eighty. When these twenty crofters occupied the place they were all very comfortable, and in evidence of that I may say that my grandfather paid a rent of £14, which was raised afterwards to £21, which he was very willing to pay, and paid for many years until the estate passed into the hands of the Sutherland family when the rent was reduced by thirty per cent. But on the lotting of the lands three years later he only got one-fourth of the holding he previously had, because there were other crofters put into the same place. He paid £4 for that reduced croft, a rent which has been paid for the croft ever since. I have been asked to say a few words regarding the condition of the people. Many of them as they stand at present have come from Strathnaver, from the farms of Ribigill and Borgie and were settled on the lands that the original crofters held, and were told that they could reclaim this land which they could get at a nominal rent. There was no reduction of the rent of the former tenants when those people were settled down upon the lands. Fourteen families were sent from Borgie and Ribigill and got land at the nominal rent of one shilling. They improved the lands and now pay rents varying from £2, 10s. to £3, 17s. Their condition is wretched, always verging upon poverty, and they could not keep themselves alive were it not that they have young men who go to the east coast fishing and elsewhere in the south, and send home money

to pay for meal and provisions which they require over and above what they are able to raise upon their crofts. They are hardly able to raise anything on their crofts except in one way. A crofter who has a horse can hardly make any meal; the only way he can make meal is when he works the land himself, and turns it with what is called the *casdirach*. That instrument—I should like to have shown it—is the most primitive of all agricultural implements and much inferior to the *caschrom*. The soil is poor and the people are not able to make much of it. Those who till in the way I have mentioned make a little meal, but the meal they make is the produce of what they ought to have given to the horse which ought to work the land. They apply a great quantity of sea-ware to the land. Then a harbour is greatly wanted at Skerray. It is a fishing place, and I believe the fishermen there would be better without crofts, if they were settled simply as a fishing community.

26125. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You say Skerray. Is that the same as Port Skerra?—No, this Skerray is eighteen miles to the west of Port Skerra. Skerray has advantages which none of the other two places which have been mentioned as harbours have. I am anxious there should be harbours in other places, and I recommended them in a guide book which I published. But Skerray had advantages as a harbour, and is about an equal distance between Port Skerra and Talmin. The number of acres tilled in Skerray is 246; the number of crofters eighty; and the average rent of each crofter is £3, 7s. The average rental per acre is £1, 2s. During the last forty-one years there has been no valuation. There has been no rise on the average rental per acre since, although rents in several cases have been raised. The people don't complain as Mr Mackay, Tongue, said, of the amount of the rent so much as of the want of land. There are only among the eighty crofters 383 sheep, 39 horses—half a horse to each croft—and 182 head of cattle. In regard to steamboat communication I may say that I had a correspondence with Mr M'Brayne, and Messrs Langlands, and both parties said there were no proper landing places on this coast and that it would not pay to send steamers round, or to add to their present routes.

26126. Did they give as a reason that there were no piers?—Mr M'Brayne said that there were no landing places.

26127. We have had some correspondence with the working men's Association at Skerray; what is the nature of that association?—I believe that was an association set on foot very much in the same way as we have debating or literary societies in the south, just for the sake of getting gentlemen here and there to give public lectures upon passing subjects and to take up any question and debate it or consider it among themselves. I believe it was started more with a view to enable a few of the young men to adapt themselves, or try to adapt themselves, to public speaking in a better way than they could have done before.

26128. Is English generally spoken in the district?—Not spoken.

26129. Is it generally understood?—Yes.

26130. Is there a large centre of population at Skerray where the people can meet together for mutual purposes of cultivation?—Yes, the population is about 700.

26131. And close together?—Very close.

26132. Are you a represeutative of that association or of the crofters?—Of the crofters.

26133. Has this association sent auy delegate here?—Not as an association.

26134. They have been merely corresponding on behalf of the crofters?—So I understand.

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26135. It is entitled a working men's association; does it mean a labourer's association?—Anybody may become a member of it in the place; that is simply a name.

26136. Are there any large farms in the Skerray district?—Borgie farm is in the district.

26137. And it would be admirably suited for crofters to go back to?—Very much so, in great measure.

26138. The farm your grandfather had was worth £24; was that arable or pasture land?—Both, he had not very much arable land, but he had a large outrun of hill pasture extending to the present farm of Borgie.

26139. Was it common pasture?—Yes, common pasture.

26140. Were other tenants rented at about the same rate as he was?—Some more and some less.

26141. Have you any idea what stock they kept at that time and what was the character of the stock, of cattle or sheep?—They kept cattle and sheep and horses, and sometimes they had three or four hill ponies, not very serviceable I should think.

26142. What did your grandfather's sales consist of?—Cattle and sheep, principally cattle.

26143. The sheep farming was not conducted on the modern system?—No, on the old crofter system.

26144. If the lands were given back to the crofters would they revert to the old system or would they adopt improved methods?—I think they would adopt improved methods.

26145. And by doing that you think they could pay as good a rent as the large farmers?—I think they could pay more.

26146. What reason have you for supposing that?—I look upon it in this way, that Strathnaver, for instance, could accommodate, perhaps, two hundred tenants. Mr Sellar's farm pays a rent of £1750 or thereby. I believe that two hundred tenants could be accommodated on that farm who could pay £20 each, including in that the land of Auchnaburin.

26147. Without outlay on the proprietor's part?—No, certainly not.

26148. What sort of outlay would the proprietor have to incur in order to get that rental?—The outlay would be in lending money to the crofters. If they got money at a reasonable rate of interest,—and as one of the delegates stated, it would be far better to give it to them, because they would lay it out to the best advantage.

26149. But £20 would include interest on this money?—Yes, I include that.

26150. How much of the £20 would be interest, and how much for rent?—Many crofters could go to Strathnaver—a few from the district of Skerray—if they got £300 at three per cent. interest, and could improve the land and build a sort of comfortable residences.

26151. Two hundred tenants, you said, at £20?—Yes.

26152. If they had each £300 advanced at three per cent.?—Yes.

26153. That would leave £11 of reut for each?—Yes.

26154. £2200?—Yes.

26155. What do Mr Sellar and the other farmer pay for the ground?—Less than £2000, I understand, but taking the two farms it will be upwards of £3000. There are two sides to the strath.

26156. Then, after all, as you put it now, the 200 tenants would pay £2200 of rent, and the rest would be interest on the money advanced, and at a low rate?—Yes; but I think Strathnaver could afford more than that. I am putting it at a very low estimate.

EWAN ROBERTSON, Crofter's son and carpenter, Tongue Village (44)—examined.

26157. *The Chairman.*—Have you any written statement to make?—No; but I represent two districts—Tongue proper and what remains of Strathnaver, Invernaver—that is a piece of land a short distance above the hotel. I was appointed delegate for Strathnaver, and in the first place I shall deal with Strathnaver, and if you should wish to put any questions to me I shall try to answer them. After that I shall deal with Tongue, as their case is quite different. The complaint of oppression which I have to make, as far as Tongue is concerned, is not against the present or the late factor, but against the loch laws—some imaginary laws we know nothing about.

26158. Deal with Strathnaver first?—The people of Strathnaver are in great need of more land, and they are greatly in need of more pasturage. The best of the grazings or common is now under sand, and the fifteen crofters with their cattle are settled on a miserable fringe of land. Mr Horsburgh, the late factor, when the Borgie lease was being renewed, took it upon himself to deprive the crofters of Invernaver at Borgie, of their hill pasture, and added it to Borgie sheep farm. The people of Invernaver remonstrated with him—this is more than thirty years ago—saying they would have to complain to the Duke. He answered that they might go over the rocks for all he cared, and that he would show the people that he was there as factor. There is an old man here who was present when these words were used—old John Munro. The people also complain that they are closed in on every side while two sheep farmers have a run of forty miles in one direction. The people have petitioned his Grace twice for more land—the first time being when the grazing ground was given to Borgie farm. The late Mr Loch, in answering the petition, wrote that Mr Crawford, the factor, said it would spoil Borgie farm. Now if it spoiled Borgie farm to part with that land to the poor people, why was it taken from them first and given to Borgie? The people petitioned again last year when Auchnaburin was out of lease, but the officials did not condescend to reply to the petition. The people complain also that they are fined for cutting divots on the sheep farm, their own land being so poor that what is low of it is covered with sand. Their upper pasture is something like a human being covered with smallpox—all over with rocks in every direction. The average rental is £3, 10s. The crofters are prepared to take as much land off Auchnaburin farm as they have at present and to pay the same rent as they do for their crofts, which is more than the sheep farmer pays for what he has. The average acreage is $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres per croft. The whole crofts in Invernaver are cultivated; the whole of the land the crofters hold is cultivated with the exception of about five acres. Again, the mountain pasture which I have described—rocks and cliffs—is a mile and a half by three quarters of a mile; and the general average of cattle is two cattle and following—which means perhaps a heifer—a calf, one horse, and five sheep. In this district there is only one pauper. A great complaint of the people also is in relation to the school; but I shall leave the school for the present and shall dwell upon the amount of land in Strathnaver; and as I know it well and wrought it and examined it, I am very glad to know that your lordship is to go up the strath. You will not see the whole of the land of Strathnaver. I heard you asking why the people were turned out; a jargon was got up at the time that the people were lazy.

26159. *The Chairman.*—I must ask you to have the goodness to speak to Invernaver, that is the part of it which you individually represent, and

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not to enter upon the general question.—I wish to give the Commission every honour, and shall bow to your Lordship's ruling; but as I have visited the place and formed an opinion, I thought I might tell your Lordship the result of my examinations, so that it might throw a little light upon the subject.

26160. Adhere in the meantime, if you please, to Invernaver. It is impossible for us to go into the general question of the clearances on this occasion; and besides that, there is a great deal of evidence open to us from a variety of sources, written and otherwise.—I have placed the Invernaver case before you.

26161. But there is another place which I understand you represent?—Then I shall go on to Tongue. Tongue proper is supposed in this part of the country to contain the most comfortable class of tenants we have. There is a law there which applies to all his Grace's estate in this part of the country, and it stops all improvements. A son, if he assists his parents and spends his time and his labour in improving the croft, under these land laws, the moment his father dies and he comes into the croft, there is a rise of rental. I can instance one case here and another in Tongue. On entering Tongue by the Thurso road one is at once struck by a pretty line of villa-like cottages on Brae Tongue. The first that catches the eye is a long white, slated house with large slated shop and stabling, which were occupied by the late Mr George Mackenzie, merchant. More than three-fourths of that lot was trenched and drained at his own expense. Nor did the house, shops, out-buildings or dykes ever cost the Duke one sixpence although, they cost poor Mr Mackenzie several hundred pounds. After his death one of his sons applied to get his name entered as tenant. He could not get it unless he paid £5, 10s. of a rise of rent. The young man thought this a great hardship; that he should have to pay the Duke for the improvement his father made, for if his father had left the lot as he got it, it would not have been worth £2 a year instead of £10. What is the consequence? The widow now has only a room, closet, and garrets with her married daughter, who may have any day to join her husband in America. The widow's sons are, the eldest in Manitoba and the other in Queensland. Both left about twelve months ago. The father only died four years ago. Another man has got the rest of the premises and lot for the sum asked of the son. We will now go to the extreme end of Tongue village. There we will see a large lot on a beautiful flat; and we will probably consider this crofter very fortunate. But on making inquiry we find that there are two, and that the one who ought to be the real crofter has only one-third of the lot, namely, the widow of James Mackay. The whole of this lot was made by her father, brother, and her first husband, William Mackintosh, during his lifetime. During her first widowhood and part of her second husband's time this lot was shared equally between them and her brother. Her brother went to Australia about twenty years ago. She naturally expected to get the lot and applied for it; but no, another tenant got two-thirds while she had to be content with one-third. And the worst of the matter is that neither she nor her husband ever owed a penny of rent. Her aged mother lived in the house occupied by her brother which had only two rooms. When her mother died the factor ordered her to give up possession of the house which was found for her and when she refused to do so, as she wished her married daughter to live there, she was summoned out of it legally. But instead of their taking legal steps for the removal of her furniture the ground officer was sent with assistance and broke open the door and took possession of the houses, built a wall across the centre, cut out another

door, gave one room to her married daughter and turned the other into a house for paupers. The houses, trenching, and draining of this lot never cost the Duke a farthing. My reason for instancing this case is to prove that instead of the people wishing to have the lots subdivided, in certain cases it is the Duke who subdivides the lots and not the people. The people are entirely against the subdivision of the lots. In other districts I know of no cases of voluntary subdivision. By-the-bye a large drain was cut across the brow of the hill above the Kirkebol lots which cost the Duke something, and the widow something too, as it greatly assisted to destroy their lot. For instancing these two cases of oppression I ask no guarantee from Mr Purves as I believe that neither Duke nor factor dare take these poor widows' lives, and they cannot do them more injury than they have done. Then there are two crofts adjoining Tongue woods, the one on the Brae Tongue side and the other on the Rhi Tongue side. Both had to do away with their sheep because they were going into the woods, which were not properly fenced. These tenants had a right to keep thirty sheep each. They were not ordered to part with them, but they were continually getting letters from the factor. I have other complaints, but I shall not trouble you with them just now. Only I should wish to say, as to the district which we represent that what the people want in general is more land. The Farm of Ribigill adjoining is suitable to have eight crofts, and I have not the slightest doubt but that it would pay his Grace, and at the same time keep down this cry of poverty, because Ribigill farm alone gives more employment than any other works about there. As far as his Grace is concerned, and according to the people here, any office, it does not matter what it is, from gamekeeper to contractor—no man belonging to this place, or native, or inhabitant of Tongue proper, or about it, can get any position, not even gamekeeper under his Grace; no native get into any position under his Grace except perhaps a common day-labourer. It has been asked whether the people are industrious. I say the people are industrious, and I was sorry to notice that the Rev. Mr M'Neil did not say directly that they were. The people would work if they had the work to do. They will walk many a mile to work if they can get it, and I am sure at the present time I am justified in saying that most of the people in this church who are not employed, would walk three or four miles to employment if they could get it.

JOHN MACKAY, Contractor, Hereford (61)—examined.

26162. *The Chairman.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes. The good people of this district, knowing the interest I take in the class from which I sprang, elected me a delegate and sent for me to come here from England. But I am also a delegate appointed by the natives of Sutherland in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Queensland, and Ceylon, to represent them before this Commission when it visited Sutherland. Having regard to your time now I shall defer making any observations that I had to make to another occasion, when I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting you in another district, and of submitting myself to any examination the members may wish.

26163. Where shall we have the pleasure of meeting you again?—Very likely in Inverness.

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A. MacHardy.

ALEXANDER MACHARDY, Ground officer, Farr (43)—examined.

26164. *The Chairman*—How long have you held office as ground officer?—Ten years.

26165. You have heard some statements relative to the alleged undue use of your influence as ground officer?—I have.

26166. Especially concerning a School Board election?—I have.

26167. You desire to make a statement?—I do.

26168. Will you have the goodness to make it?—In the case of widow Murray, on which so much stress has been laid, it is stated that I intimidated her. The old woman told me before the election that she wished to vote for Mr Crawford. She was an old frail creature, and on the morning of the election, in case of any blame being attached to me for taking her out, I called and wished her to stay at home. I had no idea Mr Mackenzie had her vote. It is said that we wished to put her out of her home. That is a wrong statement altogether, because, after the election, when her horse died, I gave her a foal myself and took the money by instalments. I wish to make that statement because it will go forth that we have been intimidating people. We did not wish to turn her out, but the croft was to be transferred to her eldest son; and a widow and eight children were staying there. Her eldest son is here. He was to give his mother so much weekly if he got charge of the lot, and now we have heard that we wished to turn the widow adrift.

26169. Did the widow ever receive at any time a summons of removal?—She did; but it was to give the charge of the lot to her eldest son.

26170. Was the summons one of removal?—She was not to be removed from the house, bnt the charge of the lot was to be conveyed to her eldest son.

26171. Was the summons of removal from the land sent to her after the School Board election?—It was nearly three years after.

26172. Was there ever any desire or intention on your part to influence the vote of this widow in any sense at all?—None. She told me she would give her right hand upon it that she would vote for Mr Crawford, but I knew he had plenty of votes without it, and told her to stay at home.

26173. When she made this declaration that she wished to vote for Mr Crawford, where was she?—In her own house.

26174. Why did you happen to go on that occasion to her house?—I am in amongst the tenants' houses every day, and there was a good deal of influence tried at that election, and the people were speaking to me, and I was speaking to them about it when the widow told me she was to vote for Mr Crawford. I told her on the morning of the election, I did not think there was any necessity for her coming out.

26175. When you paid her the visit on that morning had you any other business?—I was going past, and was not going into the house at all, but I happened to see her son, and if it had not been for that I don't think I would have gone in at all.

26176. Did you originate the question of the election, or did she speak to you about it first?—I cannot be sure about that. Perhaps I spoke to her, because there were four ministers wanting in and a fifth offering, and it was a general desire of the parish not to put in five clerical members.

26177. You may have spoken to her first?—I may.

26178. I would like to know whether you think it perfectly right or prudent on your part, holding the position of a ground officer, to canvas people with reference to elections?—I am a ratepayer and a parent, and I have a good right, I think, to speak to anybody I think proper about that. I pay £10 of rent.

26379. There is a difficulty with reference to a person in your position, in discriminating between your character as a parent and ratepayer and your character as a ground officer; your position is rather complex.—I am aware of that.

26180. You state now positively that you never had any desire to influence the vote of that widow in one sense or another, and that she was at perfect liberty to vote for anybody she pleased?—Perfect liberty, I said to her that we did not want her vote, as I was sure Mr Crawford had plenty of votes.

26181. But when you said she had better not go, that might have prevented her from voting for the minister?—She did not tell me she was going to vote for the minister.

26182. She was not obliged to tell you?—I did not know she was going to do that. I told her if she was to vote for the factor, not to go out.

26183. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Was it upon the faith that she was to vote for the factor and for nobody else, that you spoke to her on the morning of the election?—Yes.

26184. You asked her to keep back because the factor did not require her votes?—I asked her not to come.

26185. But it was not to deprive any other person of votes?—No. I never mentioned any other soul upon earth.

Mrs ANN MURRAY, Widow, Cattlefield (42)—examined.

26186. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you a house at Cattlefield?—I live with my mother-in-law.

26187. Were you here in the morning when Mr Mackenzie gave his evidence?—Yes.

26188. And you have heard what the ground officer has said now?—Yes.

26189. Have you anything to say upon the matter in dispute?—Yes. On the morning of the election he came up and said to my mother-in-law if she wanted the factor's favour not to go to-day; that he would rather want the votes than that she should go.

26190. If she wanted the factor's favour?—If she wanted the factor's favour not to go down to vote to-day. He would rather want her votes than that she should go.

26191. Was that all?—There were some more words, but I don't recollect them.

26192. Was that all that concerned the matter of voting?—I think so; most of it.

26193. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—You are quite sure he did not say that if she wanted to vote in the factor's favour she had better not go down?—He said if she wanted the factor's favour not to go down; he would rather want her votes than that she should go—if she was going to give them to another. He heard that Mrs Murray was going to give them to another man.

26194. He said so?—He did not say so, but I believe he heard that, and I know of my experience he did.—*Alexander MacHardy.* This woman never saw me on the morning of the election at all. They have a little ill-feeling in the matter because they were summoned out, and the holding was given to another. It is quite erroneous, I had no hand in the summoning her out.

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Mrs Ann Murray.

26195. But the question is whether you ever said to her that if she wanted the factor's favour she should not go to vote that day?—I never made such a statement.

JAMES MURRAY, Labourer, Cattlefield (47)—examined.

James Murray.

26196. *The Chairman.*—Were you present on the occasion on which Alexander MacHardy stopped at the door of your mother's house?—Yes.

26197. Were you in the house or outside of it?—I was inside and outside at the same time. Mr MacHardy was in and outside and he spoke of it outside too.

26198. Be very careful to recollect as exactly as possible what passed?—The words mentioned as far as I can remember were these—that the factor sent him on purpose for her not to go out to vote that election day—if we wanted the factor's favour not to go.

26199. I want to understand this, whatever the ground officer did say, was the impression left upon your mind and the mind of this woman, that she was asked not to go if she wished to have the factor's favour?—Yes.

26200. Is that the impression under which you remained?—Yes; true.

26201. How did the old woman take the message; how did she understand it?—*Mrs Murray.* She understood it that he did not want her to go to vote for the person she intended to give her vote to.

26202. But she did go?—Yes.

26203. Was anything done to her afterwards for having gone?—Not at the time.

26204. How long afterwards was it?—I don't recollect—some years.

26205. How do you know that what was done three years afterwards had any connection with her vote?—I cannot say, only there were no arrears except one, and there were others two years in arrears who were not summoned out.

26206. Whom was the land given to?—It was given to her son.

26207. The son of your mother-in-law?—Yes.

26208. Is he in it still?—He did not get it because the widow was not put out; but he was ordered to get it by the factor.

26209. And has the widow got it still?—Yes.

26210. In the long run nobody seems to have been much hurt?—No.—*Rev. Mr Mackenzie.* Did your mother-in-law become ill?—Yes.

26211. *The Chairman.*—Did she get better again?—Yes.

[ADJOURNED.]

KINLOCHBERVIE, THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1883.

Present:—

Lord NAPIER AND ETTRICK, K.T., *Chairman.*
Sir KENNETH S. MACKENZIE, Bart.
DONALD CAMERON, Esq. of Lochiel, M.P.
C. FRASER-MACKINTOSH, Esq. M.P.
Sheriff NICOLSON, LL.D.
Professor MACKINNON, M.A.

ALEXANDER MORRISON, Crofter, Sangobeg (62)—examined.

A. Morrison.

26212. *The Chairman.*—Have you any other trade besides being a crofter?—I have been a carpenter amongst the crofters.

26213. Were you elected a delegate?—Yes.

26214. From Durness?—From Sangobeg.

26215. Were there many pople present when you were elected?—The whole town—thirty or forty of them altogether.

26216. Have you a written statement on behalf of these people?—I think there is one with Rev. Mr Ross if he comes round.

26217. What have you to say on behalf of the people?—I have been forty years at Sangobeg. There were tenants upon the whole of our ground, and Bispond was a fishing port. There were twenty-five families removed to make a sheep farm. Twelve of them were sent in to Sangobeg. There are now twelve families in Sangobeg, and there were only six before the change was made. We are deprived of the privileges of sea and land. The seaport is taken from us; it is two miles for the nearest fisherman. We fish for every kind of fish that is needed, and we don't get the proper use of them, because we have no proper means of conveying them to the market. The lobsters die before they reach the market. The lobsters require to go alive to the market, and we are sixty miles from the nearest railway station. There may be a merchant at hand for the fish which are brought ashore who will give an offer for what he wants himself, but the rest are left in our hands. If we had a pier, a telegraph station, a doctor, and some more of the land which has been taken from us, we think we might get through as our forefathers did. We are without any privilege, and it is very hard upon poor people. We must build houses and we only get one rent for building a house which will cost between £40 and £50, we buying lime from the Duke. It is only one rent that is granted us for the house, and—a thing that is very strange—upon the Tongue side they there get, from glass which goes into the window to the floor that goes under their feet, all the wood they required; and we have the same proprietor. The slates for the house are paid in three instalments.

26218. You said there were tenants brought in from another place and put into your township, where did the tenants come from?—There were six in Rispond farm brought into Sangobeg in addition to the six who were there previously.

26219. When these six were brought in was the arable ground of the tenants divided and given to them or did they break up new ground outside the fence?—No new ground could be made; it was the old ground that was given them.

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A. Morrison.

26220. Your previous holdings were divided?—Yes, two lots were made out of the one.

26221. How long ago is it since these six families were brought in?—About forty years.

26222. Has anybody been brought in since?—None since.

26223. Has the number of tenants increased since, or are there just the same number of crofts as there were forty years ago?—There are no more now than forty years ago; there is no place for them.

26224. Are there any cottars; people without land?—One.

26225. When the new people were brought in and the land divided was there a reduction of rent of the six that were there before?—The rent was divided amongst them—equal rent. The two crofters had only to pay the rent of the one that was there previously.

26226. Had they good hill pasture?—No.

26227. Is it large?—No.

26228. Has any of it been taken away from the townships?—None from our township.

26229. You say you want a doctor, would you be inclined to pay something more if there is a doctor appointed by the Duke?—Yes.

26230. A small addition to your rent?—Yes.

26231. You say you want a pier—what kind of a pier would it be? would it be an expensive thing, or a small place for boats?—A pier that a steamer could come to.

26232. Is there a proper place for building a pier?—Yes.

26233. How do you know that? Has it ever been examined by an engineer?—Yes.

26234. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—How far are you from the doctor?—Thirty-one miles.

26235. What do you do when you want a doctor?—Send for him.

26236. Where does he live?—At Scourie.

26237. Why is he there?—I cannot answer that.

26238. Are there most people there?—I cannot tell. I do not know that part of the country.

26239. Have you never had a doctor nearer you than that?—No.

26240. How have the people of Durness been doing without one? Are they better or worse?—I think they would be better of one, as we have often to send for one.

26241. I suppose there are some cases in which there is great suffering because you cannot get one?—Yes.

26242. Have your people any horses at Sangobeg?—No. There is no need for them.

26243. Have you to send a foot messenger for the doctor?—Yes.

26244. And, perhaps, sometimes he cannot be got?—That very often happens.

26245. There is no horse in Sangobeg?—None, but the back of a man. He must first go to the ware and then to the spade; he must sow the seed and then harrow the ground after that, and go three-quarters of a mile up the hill for a creel of peats to make a fire that will make ready his breakfast.

26246. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh*—You stay in Sangobeg?—Yes.

26247. Do you know a place called Laidh?—Yes.

26248. Is it a very poor place?—Yes, it is.

26249. Could a place be poorer?—Everyone is so poor that he can scarcely make a living upon it.

26250. How long is it since the road we have come by was made?—I cannot exactly tell.—*A Crofter.* Fifty-three years.

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A. Morrison.

26251. I see the Rev. Mr Ross here; have you a written statement, Mr Ross?—*Rev. Mr Ross.* I forwarded it to the secretary, Mr M'Neill.

26252. When?—I think last night. I forwarded it to Kinlochbervie, as I scarcely expected to be present.

26253. Was this document which Mr Ross refers to read and approved of by the people?—*Alexander Morrison.* Yes.

26254. And it represents the feeling of the people?—Exactly.

26255. Is there a man called Swanson present here to-day?—Yes.

26256. And Ewan Mackay?—Yes, he is present.

26257. With regard to the other families who were put in upon you, was that done by the authority of the proprietor or the factor?—Yes, one Mr Anderson was here at the time—the previous factor.

26258. Did the six old tenants object to the new people being put in upon them?—They were forced in upon us.

26259. Was the place just small enough for six?—It was too small.

26260. Even for six?—Yes.

26261. Have these families been struggling and in difficulties ever since?—They were very poor.

26262. Did it benefit the six original tenants to have the six other men put in among them?—It was a loss to them.

26263. Have you ever seen the proprietor? has he been here amongst you?—Many a time.

26264. Did you ever represent your state of poverty to him verbally or in writing?—We neither spoke nor wrote.

26265. Did any of the people in the township do so?—None.—*Rev. Mr Ross.* Hugh Munro said at a meeting he was one of three who went about the land which was taken off.—*Alexander Morrison.* There was a fifth part of land taken from us and a fifth part of the land was reduced at the time by Mr Anderson. The rent at first was £20, and it was taken down to £15.

26266. Is Rispond a big farm?—No, it is not a big farm.

26267. What rent is Rispond paying?—I cannot tell.

26268. Was it a great loss to your township the loss of that one-fifth?—It was a great loss.

26269. Was it worth a great deal more to the people than £5 a year?—A great deal more in the condition in which they were.

26270. Why did not you or your fellow-townsman, when you have been in poverty so long, represent your case to the proprietor, particularly when he has been in the country?—The reason is because anything we asked of him we never got.

26271. Do you refer to the present proprietor or to old times?—To the present Duke.

26272. Does it come to this that you think there is no use of making any application to benefit your circumstances?—We never got an answer to any application we ever made.

26273. Have you ceased making any applications?—In our township we have stopped.

26274. Do you know anything about what is commonly called the Durness riots, or does any other delegate know more about that?—There are others here who know more about them than I.

26275. Who knows best about them?—Alexander Swanson.

26276. *The Chairman.*—How many acres of arable land are there in your croft?—I am certain it would make one and a half acres.

26277. Is that all the arable ground you have?—Yes.

26278. What stock do you keep?—Two cows and a calf, but I cannot rear these upon the produce of my own ground.

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26279. Have you any sheep?—Yes.

26280. How many?—Twelve.

26281. What is your rent?—£1, 5s.

26282. Has you rent ever been raised since you became a crofter there —No.

26283. Do you think £1, 5s. too much rent?—I do not think the rent too much, but what sort of a living can a man make out of 25s. worth of ground, and when he has to work it with his own hands?

26284. Are other crofts much about the same size as yours or smaller?—About the same size.

26285. Have any of their rents been raised or have they always been the same?—There are two in the township whose rents have been raised.

26286. Why were they raised?—I do not know.

26287. When a father dies and a son succeeds in the croft is it the custom for the rent to be raised?—That is the reason ascribed to us for it, that the rent is raised on the son succeeding.

26288. How much is it raised?—Ten shillings on 25s. of rent.

26289. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—If you had four times the extent of ground would it be easier for you to pay £5 of rent?—Yes, although it would be £8 it would be easier for me to pay than 25s. at present.

26290. Is the acre of arable land all square, or is it lying in different places?—It is just patches here and there.

Rev. JAMES ROSS, Free Church Minister, Durness (66)—examined.

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26291. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—The statement you were good enough to send in, has not reached us in time. Will you be so good as to state verbally the heads of it?—It is not very easy for me to remember owing to the shortness of my memory. I stated the extent of the parish of Durness. It contains more acreage than any other parish around.—140,800 acres. I took that from what are said to be Government returns, and the rental according to the rent roll is £6615. All that the crofters from 5s. to £5 of rental pay is £224. The population of Durness is the smallest in this county, namely 987, and it has been always diminishing for several decades. There are 100 crofters paying, as I said from 5s. to £5. Their holdings are very small, some, I learn, having only one, or one and a half acres, to two and a half, and, perhaps, up to five acres. My own glebe, which I hold under his Grace, is about four acres in extent, and I pay £5 *minus* 6d. The holdings are small. No one family could make a livelihood on the produce of their crop, neither could any fisherman make a livelihood by his labour and the produce from the sea, according to the present arrangement—that is the want of road transit to the market, besides the wild nature of the coast and the want of sufficient boats and fishing gear. They have no road to the market, and the lobsters are often lost. If it is cold frosty weather they die while they are being sent to London, and often they lose them in the sea. In February last they lost their gear round Cape Wrath, and out of £70 which was returned to them from Billingsgate for lobsters they had to pay about £40 in replacing their fishing gear. The crofts are not subdivided. The system pursued is this, that where parents get old and frail the son or son-in-law goes into the house with the understanding that he will support the parents; but this son and his young family growing up finds it hard and difficult to get on as the croft will not maintain one family and there are two on it. There are several complaints of shortcomings and

tightness, and of tenants murmuring as to their being deprived long ago of strips of arable land which was added to the sheep farms. There was a case from Durini—a big park which they had thirty years ago for putting in their lambs or calves—that was before the present management—and some scores of acres were taken from them and added to Balnoskail. The tenants resisted that, but without avail. They maintain that they got no reduction of rent or compensation for the loss of this park except that the Balnoskail farm dropped the custom of sending their sheep up the hill to a loch to be washed and dried on the grazing. I have also been told that in addition to the crofters and small farmers, the large farmers when they get arable land—that is the tacksmen—claim a share of the grazing on the hill. The tenants dispute their right and say part of the grazing on the hill was cut off and added to the large farms. These are disputed points between them. Last year also, they were deprived of grazing of their horses at Foinaven. They had an ancient right or privilege of sending a horse to the grazing ground, for the number of tenants is limited. Now, they had the privilege of grazing a horse on Foinaven for ages past, and they were deprived of that last year. They got an order, and some were to be ejected, and some did not obey. They got notice from the factor's office. I took part in this and helped to write the petition—not to send horses last year, but some did send them. Those who did send them were fined 5s. I assisted them in writing a petition to the Duke; but I quite forgot the matter when the Duke was in the parish last year, and did not speak to him about it. The result was that this 5s. tax was made perpetual for herding and grazing. Formerly the tenants paid 1s. 6d. for each horse for herding them, and now they are bound under an obligation—they do not get a copy of it themselves, but there is a paper sent to them individually to sign an agreement of that sort—to pay 5s. yearly.

26292. *The Chairman.*—If they paid that were they to get the grazing?—The proprietor undertook then both to allow the grazing of a horse and also the herding for 5s. a horse. Formerly they paid 1s. 6d. They remove the horses about the first week of August before the shooting commences. Some of the people demurred to sign this paper because there were some blanks in it not filled up. Then there was a threat that if they did not sign it they would be reported to the office as disloyal; and this frequently happens. I may say, however, that there might be explanations as to some parts of it; and those who had this right before any change was made in the law of the estate got their horses I believe for 2s. 6d., but there are very few of these surviving. The rest pay 5s. They paid it the first year as a fine. They thought they had the right to the grazing and the right was resisted. As to Sangobeg and Laidh, I am pretty familiar with the people and their circumstances. They are poor, and no family can live on their croft alone. They must provide the rent, large or small, and most of their livelihood they get from other sources, either at home or from home. The fishing classes go to the herring fishing in the summer, and they generally fish lobsters in the winter and spring. The land is not fit for cultivation. The people have no facilities for fishing but Loch Eriboll; and their stock are fed on the sea-ware on the shore and on the hill pasture—heather. Their stock have pretty fair advantages so far as the summer and autumn are concerned, and partly in spring feeding on the sea-ware, and also on the heather, but they will have very little off the crofts but provender to support them in winter, and they make very little. Their only resource, if the potatoes succeed and they get fish, is potatoes and fish, particularly if they succeed in the herring fishing. With the privileges of country air and home, and plenty water and milk, and potatoes and fish, they could live comfortable

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as to the necessaries of life; but when these fail the people are very badly off. Last year the potatoes failed and much of the little crop they had was destroyed by the severe gale of October 1st. The produce failed and the fishing has failed for two or three years, and the little meal people had last year they used in spring. They were accordingly in want of seed as well as meal. It was for seed that I was mainly apprehensive. We applied to the Mansion House Fund for aid, mainly for seed, but in some cases a few families are and always will be poor. We got £50 of a grant from the Mansion House Fund, £20 from the Duke of Westminster, and £10 from other sportsmen,—altogether about £100. We also got fifty bolls of meal from the Glasgow committee, and employment was given at road making. Some poor people, if they were in destitute circumstances, also got a little meal. Any little oats they grew, they must keep for their horses. The Durnie people have horses, but not the people at Sangobeg. Some of them have two cows and a calf, the same as myself. I keep no horse. Once or twice only have I put some barley to the mill during the last twelve years. I am a member of the Parochial Board, and always have pleaded for having a doctor nearer than thirty miles off. Several cases of emergency would pass the crisis before the doctor could be got. Sometimes a foot runner is sent off to Scourie, and sometimes a rider, and it might be the second or third day before the doctor came, and several times the disease has been at the crisis, before the doctor could reach the place. Since I came here, eighteen years ago, we have had, I think, seven doctors. One died and the next had to leave—I was told he was ordered to leave—another, Dr Smith, had a dispute with the factor. The doctors stand on their professional etiquette, and do not like to take orders.

26293. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Even from a factor?—Even from a duke, I suppose. I tried to make things quiet. The next one left too, in some huff or other. Dr M'Callum left of his own accord. Dr Ross left a year or two ago and went to Islay; and now we have the seventh doctor. The late General Scobie supported me always in trying to get a doctor for the parish, and we applied to the Duke, through the factor, to get a share of the grant which he gives. The Duke gives £40 to help to get a doctor for the two parishes of Eddrachillis and Durness. If we got £20 from the Duke and £25 from the Lighthouse Commissioners, we agreed that we would assist the parish to make up a salary for a doctor. Mr M'Iver sometimes said—what would we do with Eddrachillis? and I said that was their look out. We pay half of the doctor's salary, and the doctor lives three miles from Scourie.

26294. *The Chairman.*—How much would the gross salary be?—We pay £55, I think, and I think Eddrachillis pays the same amount; at any rate we reckon the salary to be £150 or £180 besides his practice. There was a committee then appointed to look out for a site—Mr M'Iver, Mr Clark and General Scobie—and get an estimate of the cost of a house, but nothing came of it. This was some years ago. We would be satisfied with the present arrangement, if the doctor were situated midway between the two parishes, but I never did, and the people do not, approve of the present system, for I represent the people on this point. The doctor lives at the extreme end of the parish of Eddrachillis. The people complain—they mutter—and they are afraid of uttering some of the causes of their discontent because they are under the fear of the factor and the ground officer. I beg to state at once and entirely that I have no feeling whatever against the factor or ground officer or officials. What I have in view is the system and the effect of that system on the minds of the people. As to making improvements, there are irritating influences at work. The ground officer gets an

order issued from Scourie—and whether or not, I suppose it is his business really to write his reports to the factor—and sometimes a person improving his house or lot may be stopped, so far as we can see capriciously, and then he will be allowed to go on. But if he does not yield or obey, he will be reported as disloyal. Now this is an irritating influence. The ground officer is the only meal dealer—I mention this to show his power—in the parish. He is very kind and considerate, and I am far from saying he is not the best who could do that, for he knows the capability of the people and knows their stock, and he gives them credit, and many are deep in debt to him. But that gives him such influence that the people are afraid to speak. As to the state of education, the whole officers connected with Durnie school are in the one family of the ground officer. His son-in-law is teacher and registrar; his daughter is female teacher; his son and daughter are pupil teachers, and all the officers are in one family; and the ground officer was himself until now compulsory officer. In some respects all these might be the very best people—*I am not saying they are not—but I mean to say that these* things have an irritating effect on the spirits of the people. I do not say a word against the teacher—he is present—I believe he does his best and does not spare himself. Notwithstanding education is backward, and there are no advanced scholars; and I tell the Commissioners there are children in my neighbourhood, some of them past thirteen years of age, who cannot read a syllable; and there are children elsewhere in the parish in the same condition, besides the families of some shepherds. I remonstrate against that. I am not a member of the School Board; I resigned after the first meeting. Mr M'Iver came to the meeting after the election, and the returning officer was absent. There were five of us there, and I proposed that Mr Clark take the chair until we proceeded orderly to elect a chairman. Mr M'Iver said, 'No, I must constitute the board first, and moreover I am appointed chairman already in other parishes, and none else will be mentioned here, or it will be a slur upon the Duke of Sutherland.' I thought that was assuming authority and superseding the statute. I had no objection at all to Mr M'Iver as chairman, but I did object to concentrate the whole affairs of Durness parish in Scourie office, more than thirty miles off, and my opinion was no secret. I think I proposed that the meeting should be opened with prayer. Mr M'Iver said, 'No, I have decided that already elsewhere.' Now, these were all matters decided, cut and dry for us. If it had been discussed and had been carried by a majority, it would have been all right and proper; but what was to be done, let it be done properly and not dictatorially. I did not leave the board at that time, but I resigned before the next meeting. There is no real representative of the parents of my people at the School Board with very few exceptions, and the rest are representing the estate and the sheep farmers and the Established minister. The Established minister and I are good neighbours and good friends, and we act without any discord or feeling. We quite agree upon all parochial matters.

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26295. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Had you a contested election for the School Board?—We never have a contested election for anything. The way that it is done is this, I believe,—the order comes up to Durness, and the ground officer gets two men, or his son, who is inspector of poor. Formerly we had not a resident inspector of poor, and I objected to that. He used to be resident at Scourie. He was given to intemperance, and when he came to pay the paupers at Durness he was very often incompetent, and I objected to that. We have now a resident inspector, the ground officer's son. That is another office which

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is in the same family, but I do not object to that at all. I am satisfied with the fact that he is resident.

26296. Had you a contested election?—No, we had not at any time.

26297. Are your people dissatisfied with the constitution of the School Board?—So far as I know they are not satisfied with the school arrangements, but as to the School Board they often wish me to return to it. They are not satisfied in that respect, but I did not return to it. Mr M'Iver wished me to return, but I would not.

26298. If there was any great dissatisfaction with the School Board would not some of your people nominate representatives to suit themselves, and contest the election?—There are very few electors resident. I suppose they require to pay a rent of £4 before they can get a vote, and there are very few of that class.

26299. There are 100 crofters, and they are principally your own parishioners?—Yes.

26300. And very few of them paying £4?—Very few.

26301. They would not have a majority of votes in the parish?—No, very few pay £4—£2 and £3 is the usual. There may be a dozen paying £4, but not more.

26302. What is the constitution of the Parochial Board here?—The Board was elected according to statute.

26303. How many elected members are there?—Five, Mr M'Iver is chairman.

26304. Is Mr M'Iver an elected member, or does he represent the Duke of Sutherland?—He represents the Duke of Sutherland on both boards.

26305. Who are the elected members in the Parochial Board?—Mr Clark, Erriboll; Mr Swanson, Rispond; and myself.

26306. There are only three elected members?—Yes.

26307. What is the number of *ex officio* members?—Two.

26308. The proprietor's representative and the minister of the Established Church?—Yes.

26309. Have any of the elders of the Established Church seats at the Parochial Board?—There are no elders in the parish.

26310. Those three elected members constitute the majority of the Parochial Board?—Yes.

26311. And they can, if they choose, insist on having a doctor in the parish?—I often said so, but it happened that it would be of no avail. At every change of doctor I voted for it, and once I made a motion, but it was not seconded. It was very near the renewal of the leases, and the large farmers quite naturally avowed they did not like to oppose the authorities at the time of renewal of the lease.

26312. It is not necessary then for the Parochial Board to have a doctor within the parish?—It would be according to the requirements of the statute.

26313. Have you represented the case to the Board of Supervision?—I am not aware at this moment; I am not positive that I can answer the question directly.

26314. As I understand the great complaint against the proprietor here is want of land?—The smallness of crofts.

26315. They do not complain of the rents?—Some do, that the rent is too high for them in this way—the rents are not considered very high, but the toil and labour drawing sea-ware out of the tide and carrying it in a creel on the back—the labour and work and toil arising makes the whole produce of the crofter accordingly dear. The rents, considering other matters, are not too high. As regards my own croft I would not cultivate it at all if I could get dairy produce. I am ordered to live on

milk, and I keep a cow or two; but I pay for all the work on the croft, horse work and people's work, and the produce of the ground costs me double, more than I could buy it for anywhere else. So that the produce is very dear considering the labour, but the rents are not.

26316. Is the nature of the country such that the ground cannot be ploughed?—Oh! yes, mine can be ploughed.

26317. Then why should it cost so much more to cultivate?—The subject is a very poor one, and as I have no horse, I cannot collect manure. The soil is poor and gets exhausted from continual cropping and sea-ware; the soil gets thinner and poorer, and consequently the crop is poorer and weaker, and is more subject to be driven by the gales in autumn. Some of the larger crofts now sow grass and turnips, but although they sow grass they would need to have lots fenced to keep the sheep off from destroying the young grass and corn. This was resisted.

26318. By whom?—By the representative of the proprietor. I remember my neighbour putting a wire round to keep sheep off, and the ground officer came and insisted that it should be taken down.

26319. Was that at the instance of the neighbours?—Some of the neighbours are opposed to fences, because all the crofts are not fenced, and if the croft of one were fenced their sheep would not get in on his grass to use it as common, and they hold that his sheep would get on to their ground that it would require all the crofts to be fenced.

26320. In fact it is the custom that the sheep that are on the hill, winter on the arable land?—Quite so, on the arable land.

26321. Probably therefore the ground officer was acting on behalf of the people?—In this case he was not. Those who fenced took in their own sheep in time of lambing, and kept them on their own ground, and if they have any yeald sheep they put them on the hill, and the people pay so much for a shepherd, and the ground officer has the management of the sheep. I lost all my barley this year at the time of clipping. The shepherd put all the clipped sheep west near my park, and went away to dinner, and when some person came they were all in my barley and they could not get them out. The ground officer has to keep up the sheep, and those who fence their crofts can keep the sheep at the time of lambing on their own crofts; and with regard to the yeald sheep, the ground officer, having a shepherd, it is his duty to keep them off.

26322. Is that the reason why the ground officer objects to fencing?—I do not know his reason, but that is the reason so far as we can interpret it, and so far as we can learn it—that no one croft should be fenced because his ground was then shut out from the other sheep. The ground officer himself has a larger flock than several of the tenants.

26323. The last witness, Alexander Morrison, thought the same encouragement was not given to improving houses here as in Tongue. Was that one of the complaints mentioned in your paper?—No. I was not so well conversant with that, but I heard of cases where they were improving and building houses; and I heard of cases where the ground officer stopped them for taking the drift sand along the sea-shore, and then he said they might go on with it. I know another where the ground officer stopped a man from building his house, and afterwards let him go on.

26324. What are their names?—It is a delicate matter, and I would not like to tell the names, because the people are under intimidation from the influence I mentioned; whether well founded or not, they are afraid of such influences. It was not the man himself who told me of the second case, but his neighbour; and as I am not well versed or grounded in it, perhaps it would not be wise to mention the names.

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26325. Was there a large meeting at which your representation was drawn up?—It was read at the meeting on Tuesday.

26326. Was it a large meeting?—There would be about forty men present. The substance of it was mentioned at previous meetings at which there were fifty or sixty crofters present.

26327. You had more than one meeting?—I had a meeting called about the Commissioners' visit. The people were hesitating—and I readily got a person to be a delegate. There was another meeting, at which I was not present. About nine or ten of them came up to my house; but the things in the paper were discussed at the meeting, at which there were fifty or sixty people present, men and lads.

26328. Have there been any gentlemen from outside Sutherland attending these meetings?—Yes, Mr Murdoch of the *Highlander* was at one meeting last week. I knew him in Islay nearly forty years ago, and he wrote me, and came to my house. He was at the meeting for a short time. My mind is not cast entirely in his mould. I was for a short time at his meeting, but it was so heated that I did not stay long.

26329. Have you had Mr Mackenzie from Inverness?—I saw him; he passed through. He wrote me a card, and I came up and saw him. I must have met him in Gairloch, when I was visiting the schools. I did not know who he was, but he thinks I must have met him at Gairloch.

26330. But he had no meeting with the people?—No, but he had a meeting with the delegates. He saw some of them in my presence, and I heard that he saw others. I am not sure if he saw them all.

26331. *Mr Cameron.*—You seem to be very much dissatisfied with almost everybody who lives in the place here?—I am not aware of that.

26332. You seem to be dissatisfied with the factor?—Not personally.

26333. With the ground officer?—No; I am dissatisfied with the system.

26334. But with their public conduct?—I would not go that length. I do not think my statement would go that length.

26335. Are you satisfied with the teacher?—The teacher I believe does his best, and does not spare himself.

26336. You are dissatisfied with the poor inspector?—No.

26337. You stated so?—No. I think I stated the reverse. I said I had no objection to the poor inspector.

26338. It was the former one?—The former one was intemperate, but I was dissatisfied with this part of it, that the late inspector, when the change was made, got a pension off Durness parish. He is still inspector at Scourie.

26339. But you were dissatisfied with him?—Yes.

26340. Is there any class of persons who give you satisfaction, and do their work in such a manner as to give you no dissatisfaction?—I am not dissatisfied with the people generally. I mentioned some things in the system, and in the actings that have, in my opinion, a prejudicial effect upon the spirit of the people.

26341. But you are dissatisfied with the public official conduct of those persons I have named?—I won't go that length.

26342. Then I am not to take that for granted?—No, it would not be right. I resisted a few things. I hope I am understood—I stated a few things arising from these influences and this system. They tend to deteriorate the minds of the people and discourage them. The factor is there. I am not dissatisfied with him—I think he is a competent man. I am not dissatisfied with him as chairman of the School Board; but what I am dissatisfied with, is his assuming authority without a fair consideration of the whole. Things seem to us as if they were branded

in his office, and come cut and dry to us. I think him the most competent and perhaps the best man for the place, as I stated in my paper.

26343. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—You stated that the population of Durness is decreasing every decade?—Yes, for several decades.

26344. And it is now 987?—Yes.

26345. And the acreage of the parish is the largest in Sutherland?—It is the largest I have seen in the Government statement.

26346. With a fine rental?—It is larger than the neighbouring parishes according to the rent roll. There are some in Sutherland larger, up to £10,000 or £11,000.

26347. You have just been asked if you were not dissatisfied with certain things; are you satisfied or not with this fact, that there seem to be 987 people only upon 140,000 acres of land, and that many of these people are very poor?—I am not satisfied with that.

26348. Would it not seem curious to an outsider that it should be necessary in such a gigantic parish as this, with such a small population, to apply for outside charity to supply the people with seed?—I presume it would be so.

26349. Had you something to do with the application to the Mansion House Committee?—I did apply.

26350. Did you do so after very careful consideration of the circumstances of the people, and with a due sense of the responsibility of its going out to the world that it was necessary for you to do so?—I did.

26351. Has that money been of great service in the way of providing seed for the people in the parish of Durness?—That is a thing I am not aware of as yet. The Duke of Sutherland supplied seed on the credit of this money, and I cannot say how far the money may be applied to the payment of this seed. Some of the people got employment, and the money they received may have been devoted to the payment of the seed or not; we do not know.

26352. What did you do with the £50 from the Mansion House Committee?—It was banked, and the ground officer's son is treasurer. It is in the bank in his name for the Relief Committee.

26353. What is the name of the ground officer we hear so much about?—John Gunn.

26354. Does he belong to the parish?—He is not a native. He comes from Caithness, I believe.

26355. We have been told in another place that there is not a single Sutherlandshire man in the employment of the estate, from the ground officer up to the head factor—is that the case in your parish, so far as you are aware?—I believe it is; but I am subject to correction in that.

26356. We were told also that the highest grade in which a Sutherlandshire man gets anything to do for the estate is earning days' wages as a labourer. Is that the case in Durness?—Nothing else occurs to me except that at present.

26357. Does the ground officer, besides keeping a store, also deal in cattle?—I believe he does, but I am not conversant with his dealings in that respect.

26358. Other produce besides meal?—I am not aware at present. Formerly he used to keep tea and butter. He used to take cattle and lambs and sheep; he used to sell these, and in some cases got the money; and any work that was going would be got from him.

26359. Is it not a fact here that the most of the business of the crofters with the outer world, in the way of buying and selling, is carried on through him?—I believe that is the case, so far as I know.

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26360. I think you made a remark that this ground officer is also a crofter, or is supposed to be a crofter?—He has a pretty large croft, larger than ours.

26361. Can you tell me whether that croft is in the Valuation Roll?—It is not on the roll so far as I can discover.

26362. It pays no taxes?—It is not in the roll, so far as I am aware.

26363. If it is not in the Valuation Roll, it does not pay taxes?—I believe not.

26364. Do you know whether the proprietor pays taxes for that croft?—I am not aware.

26365. Are the holdings of the bulk of the people here of a very limited nature, and the very worst land in the parish?—The Durnie lands are pretty good—three or four acres; but the other townships are of a very poor description and very small narrow strips.

26366. Are there any people in the central or inland parts?—No, only at Loch Erriboll; but it is 7 miles up the loch from us. The crofter population is within 2 miles of the road, in a triangle—a small spot.

26367. Were almost all these townships or crofts modern creations? were not they the result of people being cleared from other parts?—Laid, Loch Erriboll, I believe, was gathered up from part of Rispond, and the land conneeted with it.

26368. With regard to the value of the crop, you stated, I think, that certain crofts are very severe on a man to labour, for their position, so that to work four acres of a croft in one place among rocks, and four acres of nice rich arable land, are two very different things?—Yes.

26369. So that if you sometimes hear a man is paying a trifling rent for land, whether it is a high rent or not depends on the quality of the land. Except at Durnie is the bulk of the land held by these people of a poor and scattered nature?—Very poor, principally on the Loch Erriboll side.

26370. How was the £6000 of rental made up—sheep farms or shootings?—There are four sheep farms and part of another. The largest sheep farm, I think, pays £1385.

26371. Who is the tenant of it?—Mr Scott of Bulnaskail, but he is not there in winter.

26372. What is the next biggest?—Erriboll pays £1250, I think.

26373. He is a resident?—He used to be, but he stays in Ross-shire a good deal in winter.

26374. What is the next?—Keoldale. Mr Scobie, I think, is paying the same rent for Keoldale as Erriboll, but part of that is in Kinlochbervie.

26375. He is a resident?—Mr John Scobie is, and his brother General Scobie was before him.

26376. These are Sutherland men?—Yes.

26377. Good men?—Well, yes. There are various standards of goodness.

26378. What is the fourth?—Rispond, a smaller farm.

26379. It pays under £200?—£157. The other portion of the rental is all over the side of Loch Erriboll and a portion of Melness. The portion belonging to Durness pays upwards of £700.

26380. How is it that the population is decreasing?—There is no room to increase; there can be no marriages; no house or land can he got. It is against the law of the estate, and perhaps it is a good law. I am not against everybody and everything, and although it is a hardship that young people cannot marry, yet the law of the estate is good, that they should not marry without a house and lands, and no houses or land can be got.

26381. So far as the younger members of the family of a crofter are concerned, they must leave?—They must leave when they rise in the world; they cannot settle. If they were educated to trades they would leave. The land at present is tied under lease, and there is no room for extension of the population.

26382. In your opinion could the parish of Durness not support with comfort and advantage a larger population than 987?—Certainly.

26383. But there would need to be trade opened up—more room—sheep farms broken up?—There must be slices taken off the large farms around both arable land and hill—share and share.

26384. Have these large farms been within the last forty or fifty years made larger; or were they constituted as big as they are at the time of the purchase of the estate? This is the Reay country is it not?—Yes. As to the dates of the historical part of it, I do not think I am competent to answer, as I was not resident here.

26385. But do you think the sheep farms have been getting larger and larger?—They have not been getting larger since I came here. I am not sure as to the dates,—whether they were larger before the Sutherland family came into possession or under Lord Reay.

26386. Were the bulk of the crofters who are dotted along the east coast placed there by the Mackays or the Sutherlands?—I rather think that many of them were placed there by the Reay family, but my memory does not serve me accurately upon that.

26387. You said you never applied to the Board of Supervision about a doctor for the parish?—I did not myself.

26388. You are a ratepayer in the parish?—Yes.

26389. Are you aware what powers the Board of Supervision have in regard to a medical officer in each parish?—Generally I know the statute requires a medical officer, but in my opinion and that of a great many the law of the estate is sufficient for many things. For instance, the superannuation of the inspector of poor.—I used to see a discussion in Parliament to enable boards to grant a superannuation allowance. Durness did not need an Act of Parliament to do so. The Board of Supervision has large powers, I believe, but what they are I am not competent to say.

26390. Perhaps you will consider it more closely now, because this seems a point for yourself?—My time is about done; I am an invalid.

26391. *The Chairman.*—You stated that you were elected a member of the School Board with four other persons?—Yes, that was in 1872 or 1873.

26392. The other four members were either connected with the Established Church or estate management or the sheep-farming interest?—There was the Established Church minister and factors and Mr George Clark. I forget who was the fifth, but I think it was Mr Swanson of Rispond.

26393. Did you look upon yourself as the only representative of the popular element or feeling?—Scarcely that, but I was more in contact with the parents of the children.

26394. Did you look upon yourself as specially capable of representing the interest and wishes of the parents of the children?—No doubt I would think that.

26395. You resigned your office in consequence of the attitude taken towards yourself and the board by the factor?—Yes.

26396. When you resigned your office, was anybody else nominated in your place?—I suppose there was.

26397. Who was nominated?—I think for the time being it was Mr M'Iver's son, but I am not sure.

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26398. But there was a fifth member nominated by the Board, in conformity with the statute?—Yes.

26399. How was your substitute nominated or elected?—I think it was by the members of the board, as far as I recollect.

26400. Did this new member represent the popular interest as it were?—I cannot think that.

26401. You think he was also connected with the estate agency?—I think so.

26402. Suppose you had remained on the board, notwithstanding these disagreeable features in your position, and fought it out, do you not think you might have mitigated any evils which you believed to exist, and so have done some good?—I do not think so. I was getting into delicate health, and I did not think I would succeed in doing any good. If I thought it would be of any use I would do it.

26403. You mentioned there were no natives of Sutherland promoted to positions of trust or authority in the county. Can you state whether any of the Established Church clergy of the county are Sutherland men?—There is one in Tongue, a native of Durness. His parents were attendants and adherents of my church.

26404. Are there any of the teachers in the county natives of Sutherland?—I am not aware of any, so far as I recollect at this moment. There is none known to me. There is a side school to Loch Erriholl, which is taught by a pupil teacher from Durness School. He is three months on this side of the Loch, and three months on the other.

— —

Donald Mackay, Laid, Port-na-Con (60)—**examined.**

Donald Mackay.

26405. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—What has been your business in life?—I was a fisherman in Nova Scotia, a teacher in Rogart, Sutherland, and in Argyleshire, and I have been a landed proprietor and sheep-run holder in New Zealand. I am at present residing at Laid, Loch Erriboll.

26406. Have you been elected a delegate?—I have. At two public meetings recently held I was unanimously elected by all the crofters of the hamlet of Laid.

26407. What statement have you to make on behalf of these people?—Well, I have studied to the best of my ability medicine as a private person. I made myself a good deal acquainted with the order and practice of hydropathic treatment, and have got intimately acquainted with the actual condition of the people in that way, so that I can tell the Commission the actual state and kind of land they occupy. If I may be allowed to say a few words before I am examined, I should like to say that I have no personal grievance. With regard to the factor, I have to say for him that if no good result is to accrue from my presence here, it will in a way be attributed to the factor, for if it were not for his generosity of heart and private liberality to me, I would not be here. With regard to what the people complain of, I have to say that this crofting hamlet of Laid is the most recently formed of all the settlements, in consequence of the evictions previous to 1835, the year when I first left the parish. Laid then was of so little account that there were only some kelp-workers' huts on the shore, that any person could reside in and do what he liked, without let or hindrance. The mountain slope rises from the water side, and the hamlet has a frontage of nearly two or three miles on the slope. The road runs parallel with the sea to the village, and the houses are between the road and the sea. The whole formation

of the surface of the mountain is quartzite rock, and above this there is a cairn of the same material, which is chemically the same as flint, and a thin skin of peat over this, with the cairn protruding, so that there are only patches here and there between the protruding cairn which can be at all tilled. In dry weather this is traversed by currents of air in the fissures, and when the soil is dry and pulverises, this communicates with the cairn above; and in winter or spring the rain falls upon the whole mountain slope and runs down, because there are no depressions in the rock to store it, and it comes through this cairn and wells up through the cultivated soil, so that the tilled land becomes flooded, and it washes away the soil. In dry weather the soil is simply peat dust, which becomes, if there is a length of drought, as dry as chaff and nearly as light, and part is blown away with the winds. The general result is, that since the place was settled in 1835 many of the plots first brought under cultivation have disappeared; and with regard to the remaining plots, some half or more, the same process is going on, and in another generation or so the crofts will have to be left, because there will be no soil. There is a mountain torrent at the little hamlet, and there is a delta of gravel and quartzite sand of some three acres, where this stream enters the sea. The sand and gravel are not drifted away, so that this site, to any person of ordinary powers of observation and the least humanity, would be seen to be absolutely unfit for occupation. It was like penal servitude to put people to cultivate such a place.

26408. Where were the people brought from to that place, and why?—The first man that was put there by eviction was from the sheep farm of Erriboll. He was sent there before the place was laid out. There was a fine green spot at the head of Loch Erriboll, where he had a small croft, and he was evicted, and settled where this stream is. He was a man who had served his country; he was a piper in the army, and was over in Ireland. He was a most inoffensive kind of man, and he was the first who was removed and settled there; and he died there. When I left the place for America, I and my father went to see him on his death-bed.

26409. How many more were sent with him?—The last formed sheep farm was Rispond, and my maternal grandmother was evicted from Rispond, and had to settle here at Laid. Several other parties from Rispond sheep farm also settled there.

26410. How many families are there now altogether?—There are altogether twenty-three families, but one of these, although in the same community, is the family of a keeper who has a croft.

26411. Are some of them cottars, or are they all crofters?—There are nineteen crofts, and one is a cottar, who has a small spot near the boundary, and pays no rent; and I think there are two sub-crofters.

26412. What rent do they generally pay?—The rents range, I think, from £1 to £1, 15s.

26413. Are there none higher than that?—No.

26414. What amount of stock are they able to keep?—There are twenty-nine cows in the hamlet, I believe, and eleven stirks, making the whole number forty, which is nearly two beasts per family. There are, as far as I could ascertain, about 121 sheep, or five and a quarter per family. There is a population, taking an average, of a little over five to each family.

26415. Are there any of them able to make a living out of the land?—No, certainly not.

26416. How long does the produce of their land support them generally?—Since the potato failure it does not support them at all. The

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main benefit which they get from the corn produce in their crofts is to winter their beasts, and it is not sufficient for that; they have always every year to buy fodder for their cattle—to import it. One thing further that I should tell about the place is, that it is imperfectly sheltered; it is an even plane, which tells greatly against it. It is situated on the mountain slope, and there is no shelter from one end to the other. There is abundant shelter on the sheep farms about, but not at Laid.

26417. What means of living have the people?—The only other means taken advantage of to get money by the most of the population is whelk gathering. These they commence to gather about the new year, and they continue to gather them until they commence the crop cultivation in spring. Engaged in this work, in the most inclement season of the year, are women and half-clothed children, which tells most dreadfully against the constitutions of the children.

26418. Are there no fish?—Yes, generally in Loch Erriboll there are fish which can be used for domestic purposes, but there is no market, and there is a great deal of decay in the families of a great many of them for some time now, from the active members going away. Many of them, although the fish are there, cannot get the benefit of them.

26419. Is there no cod or ling fishing?—Not in the loch. They enter occasionally, but the principal fish caught are haddock and flounder, and at the mouth of the loch, at Rispond, cod and ling are abundant.

26420. Do none of the inhabitants regularly prosecute that fishing?—No.

26421. Or herring fishing?—The herring fishing is very poor in Loch Erriboll; some years there may be a few, but ordinarily they are not there.

26422. Do none of the men go to the east coast fishing?—All those who are able are prosecuting, winter and spring, the lobster fishing.

26423. Is it good lobster fishing?—Yes, it is as good as any here, but, as has been mentioned already, there is a great difficulty in getting lobsters in time for the market. They have to cart them sixty miles to Lairg.

26424. What have you to suggest for the improvement of the condition of the people—is it possible for them to get a comfortable subsistence out of that place?—Not so far as I can see.

26425. Is there any land which, if added to their present crofts, would make them more comfortable?—No there is no land. The big sheep farms of Rispond, on the one side, and Erriboll on the other, would in my opinion accommodate more than the present population of the parishes; but there is no other way of providing for them. There is a fertile limestone island; the peculiarity of this place is that there are various formations of limestone, gneiss and micaceous schist; and in this peculiar place there is not a particle of light soil but it goes away.

26426. Why was the place called Port-na-con—Port of Dogs?—There is a tradition that there was a fight between a dog and Fingal.

26427. Perhaps it was thought fit only for dogs to inhabit?—That would be a very good construction, because it is not fit.

26428. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—For human beings?—It is not. The marriageable young people are about equal in number, but I consider, especially the females, from delicacy of constitution and disease, very few are fit to rear healthy offspring. There is a number of young men, who have good constitutions, hardy and able. There are two families side by side, in which there are six young men who have been marriageable for the last ten years, and they have seen that the most misery is where there are large families. I think it is miserable that during youth these young

men should not have sufficient subsistence, and I have been speaking to them, as I have been on intimate terms with them since I came, and they told me what deterred them from marrying was the misery they would entail upon their offspring. I think it is a deplorable state of things, that young men who are industrious and prudent and of good constitution, should be deterred from marrying from these considerations. I was born in Strathmore.

26429. *The Chairman.*—At what period was Strathmore cleared?—Just before I was born. I was removed when I was at the breast to Strathbeg, at the head of Loch Erriboll, and I resided there until I was twelve years of age, when my father removed to Nova Scotia. I have been residing at Laid for ten years.

26430. You consider there is a good deal of land in Strathmore capable of cultivation?—Of profitable cultivation; and I am confident there is not half nor a third of the pasture growing in it that was growing in my young days. It is reverting to a state of nature—heather, ling and moss.

26431. Which side of the strath was the more populous—the side on which the road is or the other?—The east side was the more populous.

26432. It was not so good a strath for cultivation as Strathnaver?—I think it is about the best sheltered spot I know in the conutry. The soil is good on the floor of the strath, and the pasture is good; but it is very much smaller than Strathnaver.

26433. When was it cleared—about what year? was it all done at once or gradually?—I am not able to answer that question just now, because it was cleared when my father left, or before that.

26434. Is it in the Reay country?—Yes, it is in the parish from which I am delegated.

26435. Was it cleared before it was purchased by the Sutherland family or after?—I am not able positively to say, but my impression is that it was cleared before the Sutherland family got the estate.

26436. Do you think there are many of the people in your poor settlement here who would be glad to be transported into Strathmore, and who would be able to form crofts?—Undoubtedly, if they could get crofts there upon terms that they could settle upon. But in my hamlet the people are so poor that they have no means to settle unless they get accommodation.

26437. How many of these poor people in the place you speak of have got frieuds abroad or in Scotland who would be able to assist them?—I am not aware. I know a few have friends in Australia. I know a widow who has a son in Australia who sends his mother assistance.

26438. You have been in Nova Scotia; is there any land there still available near the coast for the purpose of a settlement for emigrants from this country?—Oh! yes.

26439. Is land there still cheap?—I believe it is.

26440. Do you think Nova Scotia a colony well adapted for settlement from here?—Yes, I think so; but I think Australia and New Zealand are more eligible.

26441. Is the voyage there not much more expensive?—It is.

26442. Would the people find more facilities for fishing and practising their natural industries in Nova Scotia?—I don't know, because along the coast in Nova Scotia fishing is one of the principal industries, and the strip of land along the coast is nearly all bought up and occupied by the fishermen. Those who are to settle now must go back into the interior, and live by farming.

26443. Do you think the fishing population on the coast of Nova Scotia happier and more prosperous than the corresponding class of people here?—There is no comparison between them.

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26444. Would you advise your countrymen, unless they got land, to emigrate and settle abroad?—My view of that question is this—I can say that both in North America and New Zealand, I have seen the same class of men working the same as the crofter class here, and because they were certain of the fruits of the labour and industry which they expended upon the soil, they made their places like a gentleman's house; they had the orchards and gardens and fields in such a state. They had there this great inducement to persevering industry which the people here don't understand that they want, because they never had the advantage of it. I look upon them as eagles reared in a cage, who don't know what they could do if they were free. My view as to emigration is that we should not force the people to go, nor prevent those who are willing, but put them under just and free conditions, so that they might be equally well off here.

26445. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Do you think it would be advisable to have a pier at Rispond?—I think so; I think it would be in the interest of everybody. There would be no opposition to it, and I think it would be a great advantage to the whole place. There is a mine of wealth in the sea there, if it could be made available, and it never can be made available until there is a sufficient pier made at Rispond.

26446. Is the place suitable?—It is the most suitable we have. The expense might be very considerable, but it would be a permanent boon to the place.

26447. It would open up the place?—It would, and would enable men to live by fishing, who have no means of living now.

26448. They would be able to send fish to the market, which they are not able to do now?—Yes.

26449. I suppose your meaning with regard to emigration is that the young eagle should fly towards Strathmore rather than Nova Scotia?—Let it fly where it likes.

26450. But you think that would be the best way to start matters?—Yes.

26451. And then after that place was peopled, let them search for other places; is that what you mean?—Yes. My own view is that it would be better for the colonies if the people were to emigrate there, and no doubt, in present circumstances, it would be better for the people; but I think it would be better for this country if the people had these natural inducements. At present whatever a man does in improving his lot, even as a workman, the Duke is heir to it, and this is demoralising, because the people can never acquire industrious habits and the spirit for industry which they would have if they were differently situated.

26452. I suppose the place where they are just now is so bad that it would not be worth giving it to them, even with certainty of tenure?—No. Perhaps two or three persons could live there by the cattle run, but there are twenty-three just now.

26453. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—When were you last in Strathmore?—Last summer.

26454. Do you know how high up the glen people were once living?—They were living up as far as the shooting cottages at the head of the main stream. It then branches into several rivers at the new forest.

26455. Where two or three large streams meet at Gobnanuisgeich?—Yes.

26456. There were actually families living there?—Yes.

26457. All the year?—Yes.

26458. It was not a small shieling merely?—No.

26459. And were living from there all the way down?—Yes; on the slopes of Loch Hope below, there were some settlements; but there is

a great deal of land which is the *debris* of mica schist and micaceous flagstones, which could be tilled profitably.

26460. Have you any idea how many souls, when the place was fully occupied, there would be from the ferry up to the place at the meeting of the waters?—I have no data from which I could answer that question.

26461. Would there be several hundred souls, not families?—I think there would be 200 at any rate.

26462. You have travelled over the world and seen a good deal, and studied many things. We saw an old tower there; can you tell us very briefly what it once was?—I don't know; it is a prehistoric ruin. There are several similar ruins there. There are some even in the top of high hills, and it would be a puzzle to know why human beings resided in such exposed situations.

26463. What story have the people themselves about this tower? it is called Dornadilla's Tower?—There is one story that the stones were taken from a very long distance, but I can give no story about it, which would give any satisfactory explanation. There are others nearer where I live now, the remains of old ruins, which I have explored, and I find that those who had these strongholds lived upon shell fish and animals of the chase. I have got the teeth of very large graminiverous animals, as large as horses and cows, and I sent some of them to the late Professor of Natural History in Aberdeen, but although he knew they were the teeth of graminiverous animals, he could not make out the species. I think they may have been teeth of the Irish elk.

26464. But you don't know anything about this tower in Strathmore?—No.

ANGUS MACASKILL, (formerly Fisherman), Crofter, Tarbert (75)—examined.

26465. *Professor Mackinnon.*—Have you been elected a delegate?—Yes, by the people of Tarbert and Eddriachillis.

26466. Have you got a written statement?—I did commit a little of what I have to say before the commissioners to writing in my own broken English, and with your permission I shall read it:—'That the crofters of 'this parish had been evicted by their proprietor from their comfortable 'dwellings to the most barren spots of the parish, that the small quantity 'of that same is quite inadequate to support the life of those who does 'labour it. The smallness of it leaves no room for rotation, so that 'constant cultivation of it weakens the soil, that it cannot yield crop to 'the advantage of the crofter. Therefore, year by year, their condition 'is getting more deplorable. There are plenty of good land in this 'parish under sheep, which if properly divided and cultivated, would give 'the crofters ample room for to live comfortable by their own industry. 'The way in which this could be effected is that ten acres of good arable 'land would be given to each tenant, with a lease of nineteen years, at a 'reasonable rent by a competent and impartial judge under Government 'control, as the land should pay its own rent. As seasons is coming 'across every country that some failure may appear in the crop, every 'tenant should have some sheep, so as to enable him to have support 'from his stock. Through the poverty prevailed among the crofters 'they are unfit to buy sheep for their land. But the Government 'should buy sheep for them at three and half per cent. per annum, and 'the full amount to be paid in ten years' time, in various instalments. 'Their whole proceedings is carried on in the name of the Duke of

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KINLOCHBERVIE.

Angus Macaskill.

'Sutherland. If grudge or objections is offered by the crofters, the alternative is quit the estate. We were paying roads on rent for forty-nine years' back, but no part is granted as yet. There was a great praise given by his own officials to the second Duke of Sutherland, for granting a free passage to many people from his estate. But as far as known to me, not a foot of that peoples land was given to the remaining crofters, but turned to a sheep walk. Another grievance is deeply felt here. When the heads of the families are going to their long home, an additional rent is charged upon the croft, say from ten to twenty shillings more. If asked why is this extra rent charged, a crooked answer is given that will not stand the light of truth. Through the illiterate condition of our forefathers, no recourse was obtained through the publick prints of the land, so that our forefathers were branded by false reports and defamation of character. But the just judge showed his displeasure *against those who depopulated the people, reduced them to beggary, and* sent them off the face of the earth with the besom of destruction, as he foretold in his holy Word. The most stout and healthy lads belonging to this parish had to quit their native country, as no room was allowed for them to build houses, and marriage being prohibited, so that the most weak and helpless of them are left. In regard of fishing in this part of the country, there lies in the main ocean a bank, say from twenty to thirty miles off, where cod and ling is plentiful; the only way among us to have the benefit of that fish is large decked boats; and a small boat to work their lines, but very few of us can obtain such boats, as no fish-curers are residing in this part of the country, and no markets for them, neither a harbour, but what is formed by nature, so that various draw-backs is meeting our fishermen. The amount of money paid for meal annually by this parish is great, so that clothing and food is not what it ought to be. All that privations is attributed to the want of land to support the people by their own industry.'

26467. Where is Tarbert?—South-west from here.

26468. Have you been there all your life?—I was born in the parish of Assynt, and went to Tarbert in 1833, for causes which I am not willing to mention here.

26469. That is fifty years ago?—Yes.

26470. And have you been in Tarbert for the last fifty years?—Yes.

26471. Occupying the same croft?—Yes.

26472. What is the size of your holding? what is your stock?—It is pretty fair in regard to cattle. I have four cows, a horse and about seven sheep; but of late a good many of these had to be sold for meal, not by me, but off the lot.

26473. What was the rent?—Formerly it was £4, 5s., but now it is raised, with dues and things of that description, to £4, 18s. 6d. taking poor rates and school rates together.

26474. The rent remains the same?—Yes.

26475. But the taxes added bring up the sum to £4, 18s. 6d.?—Yes.

26476. Is the rent too high as rents go in this country?—Rather too high as rents go. I don't know a crofter whose land supports him more than five months in the year. If there is one in our parish I should like to know him.

26477. How do they live the other seven months?—We must live by meal, or starve.

26478. How much money one year with another do you spend upon meal for these seven months?—I can hardly state that with any accuracy.

26479. Is it more than the rent of the croft?—Yes.

26480. In that case, supposing you had the croft for nothing, it would not support you?—It would not support me.

26481. You have been fishing as well as crofting?—Once upon a time, when I was able, but old age and other disabilities prevent me now.

26482. Was it the cod and ling fishing you went to?—Yes, and the herring fishing.

26483. What is the season of fishing at the bank you speak of?—If people had proper boats and a proper way of curing fish, the fishing is very productive, but also very precarious.

26484. What months of the year is the fishing carried on?—February, March, and April, and sometimes it is carried on until June.

26485. Is it a good bank the one to which you refer?—Excellent; men from Banffshire, Morayshire and various parts are inhabiting our country at that season of the year.

26486. Do they take away a lot of money?—A lot of fish.

26487. That means about the same thing?—They get money in their own country for the fish.

26488. Do they salt the fish themselves?—They do.

26489. Are there any of the people of the place engaged in that business?—Yes, and doing well according to the materials they have.

26490. Could they not get better material?—Those who are doing well can, but they must take it from Banff, Aberdeen or Peterhead; such materials are not got in this country to the same advantage as on the east coast.

26491. When the people of the place are engaged in fishing, do they sell the fish fresh or salt them?—Who would buy their fish but the factor?

26492. I mean a merchant?—There is none to buy them; there is no one able to buy them.

26493. They salt them and send them to the market?—Yes, to Aberdeen or Stornoway or Peterhead, and various parts.

26494. Where is the good land you speak of that the people may get?—There is one farm, Mr Gunn's farm, Kyle Strome, and I hold that would supply all the crofters in Eddriachillis.

26495. You know the place well?—Yes.

26496. Is there low ground as well as high ground?—There is good ground on that farm, and not only that, but a place which was memorable for herring,—Kylesku—where people could live, although for the last few years there have not been many.

26497. Do you think if people were going there the herring would come back?—I have had thoughts of that at times, for a man is at liberty to have his own thoughts, though they are not correct sometimes.

26498. *Mr Fraser Mackintosh.*—Were there many people turned out of Assynt where you were turned out fifty years ago?—A good many.

26499. Who did it?—It was all done under the Sutherland family's name; there were inferiors under them, but it was all done in their name.

26500. Who got the place you and others were put away from?—Mr Charles Clark, who lived in Glendhu, and was a scourge to the country in his lifetime.

26501. Where did he come from?—He belonged to this same country, but for all that he died a beggar.

26502. How many people were present at the meeting which sent you and the others here?—There were many of them away at the east coast fishing, so that many of them were not present. Those who were present sent me as one to this place, in order to meet the Commission and their words are set down by me in my paper in my own broken English.

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26503. Was it you who wrote that paper?—Certainly it was.

26504. Are there many crofters in this district of Eddrachillis?—Yes, a few townships; Eddrachillis, Tarbert, Foindale and others in this end of the parish. But there are more people to speak after me.

26505. Have you got a ground officer in Scourie?—Yes, and a factor and a clerk and a poor inspector, and what not.

26506. Are you complaining of the ground officer?—No, we don't.

26507. Is it because he is an old man that he does not trouble you?—No, but because he is an inferior, and therefore should submit to his superior. Of course, my lord, whether you are a lord or a gentleman, you would be displeased if your servants did not do your bidding: a servant must obey.

26508. But you are not complaining of him in any way?—No.

26509. Did you hear the evidence given here to-day?—Part of it; I am rather dull of hearing.

26510. Supposing you and the other crofters were allowed to get back to the glens and get biggish crofts to support you, would you be glad to go?—Certainly the rest would, but my days are numbered, and with all the good the Commission can do it would be madness for me to try it. I don't speak for myself, but for the rest of my country.

26511. The rest would be glad to get back?—Quite glad.

26512. Would many of them be able to stock larger crofts?—It is not consistent with reason that men reduced to poverty would be able to buy stock at first, but in such a good pasture the stock would pay itself.

26513. There is a great deal of waste ground occupied by sheep in the parish?—A great deal under sheep, and in deer forest.

26514. Do the deer trouble you?—No. We are quite close to the shore; we are not allowed to go up where they are.

26515. There is a road between you and the forest?—There is a road through the forest; we have nothing to say about the man who occupies the forest. He is a kind nobleman, the Duke of Westminster.

26516. Have you any other statement you wish to make?—No. I think I have said enough, if well considered.

26517. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—I think you speak very good English, were you always in the position of a crofter?—I am glad such a competent judge would give me that character.

26518. Have you ever had any other vocation but that of crofter and fisherman? where did you learn to speak English?—At home; I have been once or twice in Glasgow, but it was little learning I got there.

26519. You were never a teacher?—No. I attended the old parochial school in Assynt. In childhood I was such a long distance from school that I did not attend, but in my young days I was bestowed with a good memory, and I learned some of my English from books.

ALEXANDER ROSS, Foindale, Scourie (74)—examined.

Alexander Ross.

26520. *The Chairman.*—Are you a crofter?—No, I was helping my parents a length of time.

26521. Was your father a crofter?—Yes.

26522. Is your father alive?—No, nor my mother.

26523. What is your occupation?—Nothing, I am only a citizen of the world.

26524. Where do you live?—At Foindale, at Loch Laxford. But I may

see I have no residence, because I am hated by factors and all in authority.

26525. Have you been chosen a delegate?—Yes by the people of Eddrachillis and the other end of Scourie and Badcall.

26526. Have you a written statement?—I have a written statement of grievances, and what we think would amend our condition:—'It is to be 'acknowledged that it is not easy to tell of the people's grievances in this 'district in a very clear and straight narrative, because it is sometimes 'necessary to give seemingly insignificant details to throw light on the 'leading facts. One of the characteristics of the management in this 'district is that widows who are not likely to be choosen as delegates, 'comes for a special share of hardships. Alexander F. Ross, one of the 'delegates gives a remarkable testimony that the first words he ever 'heard from the present factor was harassing a poor widow in distress, 'telling her hardships, yet no mercy was shown her, but turned out of her 'house without any melioration nor care for when she should be helped. 'The case of the delegate's own mother is equally to the point, and still 'harder. After being tenant for upwards of fifty-four years, and in her '78th year of age, was turned out on the hill by the factors personly and 'party, all doors being locked, even the barn door, which was never heard 'done in Eddrachillis or the Reay district; and fourteen year previous 'she was likewise dealt with allowing no melioration, although there was 'a full claim. These proceedings, as correspondence in the factor's office 'Scourie will abundantly prove, were taken against the widow as part of 'a system against her son. The enmity towards equally instructive, it 'began out of his telling a poor tenant that it was the Duke of Suther-'land and Mr Loch's order, that a tenant removed to give his lot to the 'remaining tenant, M'Iver taking it as curtailing his own plans. The lot 'of the distressed was to be added to the factor's own farm, and it is a 'part of Mr M'Iver's own farm to-day. Another widow, Mrs Dolly Ross, 'suffered because the delegate had helped to lay down the crop one 'season. She was distinctly told that she would only be allowed to remain 'on her lot on condition that she would not permit him to have the 'shelter of her roof. This she had to comply with, and forego his 'assistance that he was willing to render her with her croft. Another, a 'brother's widow, Jannet Ross, was attacked by Mr M'Iver on the road in 'Scourie, and nearly driven out of her senses by fear of being compelled 'to turn out her son, who was supporting her, because he took in a young 'wife. In the township of Ardmore the antagonism to widows had more 'than an ordinary scope, there being no fewer than four of them. They 'were ordered to be removed, that their lands might be absorbed in a sheep 'walk; one of them died within twenty-four hours of being served with the 'notice of removal; the others were kept under sentence of removal for 'two or three years, and I believe some of them yet, but only to finding a 'place in which to put them, they were allowed to remain. Widow 'Robert Fleming, Fanagmore, was dispensed of a portion of her lot to 'augment the lot of a man who was fortunate enough to have the favour 'of Mr M'Iver. Widow Hugh M'Kenzie, Rhemhiche, had her rents raised 'from £42 to £50 a year for no other reason than that her newly married 'son-in-law had been a very few weeks less than an honeymoon in her 'house, and with no intention whatever to remain there. She was written 'to, and a notice of removal served on her; and after the daughter and 'son-in-law was away, she was only allowed to remain on condition that 'she would go under a yearly penalty of £8, which she pays to this day. 'She has to confess, to the credit of his Grace the Duke of Sutherland, 'that she was allowed an abatement when the other tacksmen got it.

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Alexander Ross.

'Closely related to the widows is the distribution of charity, when it became know that seeds potatoes and oats was ordered by the Duke of Sutherland, each was giving as stinted order as possible, owing to the great price; but poor Robert M'Leod had the bad luck of his name being not in the rental, and would get no seed, as Mr M'Iver wished to remove him for a sheep walk for a friend; hut Robert would not be cowed until his effects were turned to the hill, which was too glaring, when a Royal Commission was ordered to the Highlands and was allowed, but on condition that he would pay a rise of 17s. on the rent of one of the poorest lots in Eddrachillis. For years the people of this district have been under this sort of management, and the doings of the present is only in keeping with the past. When the great destitution in '46–'47 in the Highlands, a great quantity of meal and biscuits for soup was sent to Lochinver, Scourie, and Kinlochberbhi. The mouldy biscuits came first in Lochinver in one of M'Donald's vessels, stored in Fanagmore, reshiped and put aboard the emigrant ship, of which Mr M'Iver's brother-in-law was owner, after passing the sound stores by the custom house officer, calling the emigrants roll and ordering them to their bunks, and asking if any stranger was aboard. Sound stores was taken ont, and the bad put in its place. This carrying on of doings will be seen fully yet by various methods. Things were so managed, that lands which should have been available for the relief of the poor crofters havo been laid together for a sheep farm for the factor, which caused his bankruptcy. This grasping of lands has carried with it this glairing consequence among the rest, that he has in his own possession every one of islands which used to be held by the crofter's townships of Tarbet, Fanagmore, and Foindale, for their lambs and rams. Island Handa, one of the best pieces of land for man or beast in the district, and which was occupied by ten crofters and their dependants, is now in the factor's hands. We know that Mr M'Iver took some writing from one of the crofters, to blindfold his employers, saying that Island Handa was not fit for crofters, and by bribes and promises made those remaining to leave. There is not one in the place who believe the truth of this about Island Handa; and immediately eight young men petitioned M'Iver for the island, and it is believed Mr M'Iver's animosity to Angus M'Kascill was that petition, but the connection is very close with the fact of the people's need of reparation. We may mention, as bearing on the relative interests of the duke and the factor, that Mr M'Iver tried to get the tenants of Foindalmore to go to Sciricha, Ardbeg, Inverna-Clashfuchrach, and Latford, that Foindalemore might be added to the farm, and failing in his attempts, the offered lands have been let to a sheep farmer, although there were other tenants anxious to get crofts. In short it would take a Royal Commission specially for the purpose to unravel the Scourie management. All this time the most and best lands in the parish being in the hands of six or seven tacksmen and three or four sportsmen, the vast majority of a population of 1500 are pinched for land—for the land from which their fathers were removed in former times. We have already mentioned a number of the townships cleared and now in the occupation of tacksmen. We have to mention further the townships of Rian-na-strone, Balachintur, Bortlaodhinhorchi and part of the Achriscil ground taken from crofters and given to an innkeeper, all in Mr M'Iver's time. Shegra was cleared for Hugh M'Kay, and Sandwood and (Scherica) cleared in former times for Munro Achany. It is also to be mentioned here that while the blunder of making these great farms or sheep walks has been abundantly proved by the failure of those who got them, the same policy has been pursued. New tenants,

'mostly from other places, have been put in possession, and the native 'crofters still left to become poorer from year to year and from 'generation to generation for want of the inheritance of their forefathers. 'These facts go to show that all this time there have been openings for the 'relief of the crofters, because not only have all the first sheep farmers 'disappeared, but on several of farms more than once vacant since the 'clearances. The remedy which has been so long withheld is the remedy 'which we now propose, the redistribution of the people over the better 'lands of the estate.'

26527. Who wrote that paper?—I wrote it.

26528. Yourself?—Yes, I wrote it myself.

26529. Did you read it to the people of the place in which you live?—Yes.

26530. How many of them were called together?—Not very many; there are not many at home; all that could leave for the fishing were away.

26531. Did you read that paper to them in a meeting, or did you take it to them one after another. I did not read it to them in a meeting.

26532. To how many did you take it?—I really cannot say.

26533. Did you take it to anybody?—Yes, and there are a great many of them in the house, and any one who has anything to say against or for it can speak here.

26534. Did any one sign it?—No.

26535. Why not?—I didn't ask them, or any one to sign it; if they would speak here, nine-tenths of them would confirm the truth of it.

26536. You stated that a man of the name of Ross was threatened to be evicted lately?—I think not lately.

26537. How long since?—I don't speak of a man of the name of Ross, I think, in the paper at all. I said a widow woman of the name of Ross was waylaid on the road to Scourie.

26538. That is not the case I refer to?—I said the widow Dolly Ross.

26539. That is not the case which I mean?—Then it was Robert Macleod I spoke of at Ardmore.

26540. How long is it since the case of Robert Macleod happened?—This last winter and spring. His father died this last winter. His father was a servant of the Duke of Westminster and the Duke of Sutherland, and they were allowing him so much a year, but Robert's name was not in the lot, and when the father died Robert went to the factor for the lot, and the factor told him he would never be tenant of it. Robert spoke to the Duke of Westminster and the ladies, and went a second time to apply to the factor for the lot, and he said, 'You applied soon enough; you applied to the Duke of Westminster and the ladies, and what will that help you? Try now if the sun and moon will help you.' He applied then for seed in the spring of the year, but as his name was not in the rent roll, he would get no seed, and none was given him.

26541. This circumstance about Robert Macleod occurred this last year?—Yes, and this year also.

26542. Did you get the information from Robert himself?—Yes.

26543. And the end of it was that he got his father's croft upon payment of 17s. more?—Yes. And he is there now, and he is here now; at least he was here to-day.

26544. What was the 17s. put on for?—I don't know unless it was for his father's grave, or paying a clerk for keeping accounts.

26545. What was Robert Macleod's total rent before?—I think £3.

26546. It is a small rent?—Yes.

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26547. Has Mr M'Iver got a large farm?—Pretty large; not very large. He has what was allotted as Scourie farm, which includes Foindale, Finnachmore, Finnachbeg, Trantlemore, Trantlebeg, Clashmore, Clashfearn, and Island Handa.

26548. You are an old man of seventy-four, and speaking under a great deal of responsibility. Do you say Mr M'Iver, while factor for the Duke of Sutherland, has been the means of turning out a number of small people in order to increase his own farm?—I do not say that.

26549. What became of these people?—One went to Badcall and another to Achnaskail. When the tenant left to go to America he was put into that lot with the promise of being water bailiff at the head of Loch Inchard.

26550. How long has Mr M'Iver been factor?—About thirty-eight years, I suppose.

26551. You mentioned particularly about Island Handa; there were ten crofters on that island, were there not?—Yes.

26552. Why were they put away?—I am not sure why they were put away there, because when these farms we are speaking of were laid in sheep the people were huddled together in Scourie.

26553. Did these families go away?—They wanted to go to America, and one of them was willing to remain and take Island Handa himself.

26554. Would he have given the same rent?—Yes, the same rent.

26555. What were you doing most of your life; have you been out of the country?—Only a short time.

26556. Have you been a fisherman?—I have been fishing, but I was not a real fisherman.

26557. Where did you receive your education?—In Scourie.

26558. You are now making a very serious charge here?—I cannot help it. I don't think there is any charge in it.

26559. At all events you declare now publicly that all the statements drawn out in this paper are to the best of your belief correct?—Yes.

26560. And you don't wish to withdraw them?—Not an item of them.

26561. *Mr Cameron.*—How did the 17s. come to be added to Robert Macleod's rent on account of his father's grave?—It became a practice in this parish since Mr M'Iver came to office, when parents died to add so much rent on the son or daughter getting their croft, and when Robert Macleod got the croft 17s. was added to the rent.

26562. It was added to the rent when his father died?—Yes.

26563. How were you elected a delegate?—I was elected a delegate in the parish of Eddrachillis. There was a meeting called, and I was elected, and Angus Macaskill and Donald Mackintosh too.

26564. Did you ask the people to elect you?—No.

26565. How came these people who are crofters to wish to be represented by one who is not a crofter?—They knew that the one who had management of his father's and mother's croft for twenty years knew the state of the parish as well as any one, and one who was dealt with in such a harsh way; and they wanted the condition of the parish to be stated.

26566. You think they considered you would represent their views better than one of themselves?—Yes, I do believe they did.

26567. You say in this paper that one of the characteristics of the management in the district is that widows are not likely to be chosen as delegates, and come in for a special share of hardship; what do you mean?—Because there are no women chosen as delegates by any parish or any one.

26568. When did you first hear that delegates were to be chosen?—

When the Royal Commission came to the Isle of Skye I heard it, and when the commissioners were at the Lews I saw it in the papers.

26569. But the management of the estate in which these widows were concerned must have gone on a long time before there was any question of a Royal Commission?—Yes.

26570. Then how can the management of the estate be affected by the election or non-election of delegates, when it was only known since the appointment of the Royal Commission?—I did not say the management was affected by the election of delegates.

26571. Then why do you put in anything about the delegates?—Because women were not to be chosen as delegates.

26572. Then you are the representative of widows as well as crofters?—Yes, I represent the parish, whether women or widows or crofters.

26573. *The Chairman.*—You state the case of your own mother. What reason was given for removing your mother from her holding?—The reason was, we had grazing at Achlighness, and that was taken from us, and I was claiming the grazing along with other tenants for my mother; and then the factor let that grazing a second time to another sheep farmer, and I was turned out, and would not be allowed to remain in the country for claiming that and keeping my mother's stock on that ground.

26574. You intended to put your mother's stock on a certain piece of ground, and you were forbidden to do that?—Yes.

26575. And because you continued to keep the stock on, you were removed?—Yes.

26576. Was your mother removed too, or would she have been allowed to remain in the house if she had pleased?—She would not be allowed to remain if I remained with her; and she would not be allowed to remain if my child eight years' old were to stay with her; and she would not be allowed to remain at last on any condition.

26577. Would she have been allowed to remain on any condition herself?—I don't believe it.

26578. Was she ever summoned personally to go away?—Yes.

26579. Was she in arrear for her rent?—Well, she was in arrear for one year's rent, but there was a sort of clearing account made up of arrears before then.

26580. Was any offer made to your mother of another place?—I don't know if any offer was made to her of another place.

26581. Was any offer made to you of another place?—No.

26582. When your mother left this place where did she go to?—One of the neighbours took her into their house at night, but there was no place she could go to.

26583. Where did she go afterwards before her death?—She went with another brother of mine, who was in Foindale. There was some application to get up a hut or room for her, and Mr M'Iver allowed that to be done.

26584. Was your brother a crofter?—Yes.

26585. Your mother was supported after that by your brother?—Not by that brother.

26586. Was she supported by you?—In a measure. My mother had means herself for a time to support her.

26587. How long did she live after she removed?—She lived about five years, I think.

26588. Where did you go to after you were turned out?—I went to Wick; I have a brother a seafaring man there.

26589. And you gained your livelihood in Wick?—Yes, for a short time.

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26590. You stated that your mother was in arrear with the rent for one year?—Yes.

26591. Did the factor forgive her rent for that year?—He did'nt take the stock for the rent. He put in an account for something before then, but it was forgiven by the Duke of Sutherland fourteen years' before.

26592. I ask you whether your mother was obliged to pay the year's rent or not?—No.

26593. Here is a letter addressed to Mrs Caroline Ross:—'After the 'arrangement entered into here with you, in the presence of Mr Donald 'Macdonald, merchant in Scourie village, and the manner in which you 'have since departed from that arrangement, by declining on the 26th, in 'presence of so many people, to quit your holding, I have been 'unwillingly compelled to apply to the sheriff for a warrant to eject your 'family and stock from Achlighness. This will be carried out 'immediately. I regret the necessity of it, but there is no alternative. 'Had you acted up to the terms of our agreement to give quiet and 'peaceable admission to the incoming tenant, my intention was to give 'you a present of the year's rent; but that is now out of the question. 'You will not cut any peats, and my advice to you and your son is to 'quit Achlighness on receipt of this letter.' What was the arrangement?—I don't know of any arrangement. I don't know of my mother speaking to the factor at any time, but it was arranged that the shepherd should be put at one end of the house and she would be allowed to remain in the other. That was said, but I don't know if it was true.

26594. You state that she was in the 78th year of her age?—Yes, she was.

COLIN MORISON, Merchant, Old Shore More (63)—examined.

Colin Morison.

26595. *The Chairman.*—Are you a delegate?—Yes.

26596. How long have you been settled as a merchant in your place?—Seven or eight years.

26597. How were you employed previously?—As a fisherman or crofter in the place.

26598. What is the nature of your trade?—Meal, tea and sugar.

26599. Are you a fish-curer?—No.

26600. Is your trade increasing at present?—It varies; I deal chiefly in meal, and I have to give that away to the poor people, who can ill afford to pay for it.

26601. Do you find that the people are less able to pay for what you sell than they formerly were when you began business?—Yes, the profits are worse and the crofts are smaller, and we depend chiefly on the fishing.

26602. What kind of meal do the people buy?—Oat meal and barley-meal.

26603. They don't buy any wheat-meal?—Very little.

26604. Do you sell cloth?—Yes, a little.

26605. Do you find that you have been selling less cloth recently than you did before? are the people able to buy less than they were before?—Yes, I sell less cloth now; the people can less afford to buy it. The fishing has been getting worse and the people have no means.

26606. Do you find general evidence in your trade that the people have grown poor of late years?—Yes.

26607. Is it only since the bad season last year that the people have been less able to purchase from you, or has there been a material

deterioration in their circumstances?—Yes, discounting last year, the people have been gradually deteriorating in their circumstances of late years.

26608. *Sir Kenneth Mackenzie.*—Is that very much owing to the fishing getting worse?—Not altogether, there is the scarcity of land; there is no land out of which they can make a livelihood.

26609. Have you any particular statement to make in coming here to-day?—I have no particular statement; it is the scarcity of land especially that has brought me here.

26610. What size of a croft have you?—The crofts generally are about two acres; I have one acre.

26611. What amount of stock do they keep?—I have a horse and three cows, but the croft won't support them; I have to buy provender for them.

26612. What stock do the tenants keep who don't buy provender?—Two cows and a horse is about the average of what I think the crofts could support.

26613. Do the tenants generally keep a horse?—Some do, but the majority don't.

26614. What size of holding do you think would be sufficient to keep you comfortably?—There is no land on our place that could be made to keep a family comfortably. It is all stones and sand.

26615. Is there land in the neighbourhood?—Yes.

26616. In whose possession is that land?—It is under sheep.

26617. In whose occupation is it?—Alexander Munro's.

26618. What is the name of the farm?—Jusheigra.

26619. Have the tenants in your place the hill ground?—Yes, they have some hill pasture, but they are not in a condition to stock it.

26620. How would they be able, if they are so poor, to stock larger crofts?—Very few could take larger holdings without getting money that might be paid back out of the produce of the place afterwards.

26621. What rent do you pay for the crofts of two acres?—From £2 to £4.

26622. Have you good houses?—Very bad, most of them.

26623. Does the proprietor give materials to erect better houses?—Yes, he gives wood, lime and slate now, but we have to pay it back by instalments.

26624. Not the wood?—I am not able to say with respect to the wood. We don't pay the lime. I cannot speak with respect to the wood. We pay the slate back.

26625. How long have you been doing this?—I built a house twelve years' ago. I would not at that time get the wood. I could have got wood and slate for re-paying them, but I did not take them.

26626. Did you build your house as a shop or a crofter's house?—I built the two. I went into a house formerly occupied by a woman who emigrated, and I re-built it, and then I built a small house for a shop.

26627. What reforms do you want?—To get more of the land.

26628. Would it be any advantage to have a fish-curing establishment in your place?—Yes.

26629. Why don't you undertake the fish-curing trade?—How can a poor man set up a thing of that kind without assistance.

26630. What was your new rent?—£3.

26631. Have you any sheep on the hill?—Eight.

26632. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you obliged to buy any food for the beasts?—Yes.

26633. And the croft is not able in point of fact to winter what you

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have on it?—We have a little out-run upon which some sheep might be kept, but the crofts are too poor to winter the stock.

26634. Have you been present all the day?—Yes.

26635. Did you hear all the previous delegates examined?—Yes.

26636. Do you concur generally in the statements that they made, that they are very poor?—Yes, I certainly concur in that.

26637. That they want more land?—Yes.

26638. And that there is plenty of land in the parish for you?—Yes.

26639. Are you, from your dealings, well acquainted with all the people, or most of the people, within a considerable circuit?—Yes, I was born here.

26640. But I mean in consequence of the nature of your occupation?—Yes.

26641. Do you consider you represent, therefore, all the crofters in the statements you have now made, although these crofters are not now present, or may not have been at the meeting at which you were appointed?—Yes.

26642. Every one of that class?—Yes, all my own particular township.

26643. Do you believe, as far as your knowledge goes, that the same feeling pervades others outside of the township?—Yes, I believe their circumstances are the same.

JOHN ROSS, Crofter, Achresgil (75)—examined.

John Ross.

26644. *Mr Cameron.*—What is the size of your croft?—My lot is about two acres; some are smaller and some larger than mine.

26645. How many beasts do you keep on it?—One horse, two cows and about twenty sheep.

26646. What is the rent?—£5, I have only two cows now, but I used to have more formerly.

26647. Have you any observations to make?—Nothing, except that the rent is increased at a change of the tenure of both father and son. There are eight widows in the place and their time is near about out like mine, and when an increase of rent is put on, the crofts will be too dear.

26648. How long have you paid that rent?—I have been in the township for sixty-eight years, and I have paid this rent for fifty-four years' altogether; and my father paid it before me.

26649. It is the future rent you are alarmed about, and not the past?—We don't say it is too dear just now; we complain of the smallness of the holdings. When the potatoes fail, our crofts don't support us for three months. They would be too small supposing we had twice the amount of land we have.

26650. Do you know anything about fishing?—I used to fish as long as I was able, but now I can neither fish nor till the land.

26651. Do the people earn as much money at the fishing as will support them during nine months?—Some make it out of their stock and some make it out of their fishing.

26652. Are they in general in poor circumstances in your village?—In general they are very poor.

26653. Are they worse off than they were twenty years ago?—They are getting worse. Last year was an exceptional year, and the crofts would not keep them a month.

26654. Putting out of account last year, to what do you attribute the fact that the people are worse off now than they were twenty years ago?

—That they have nothing in the world to support them, and the smallness of the holding.

26655. Were the holdings not of the same size twenty years ago as they are now?—The lots were the same, but there are more people on them now; the people are more crowded than they were then.

26656. But if each person has the same lot, how can that person be worse off than he was twenty years ago?—The crofts are getting worse; the croft cannot yield as good crop. The crofts are not sufficiently large to enable us to leave out some of the land to give it a rest.

26657. Has a croft been sub-divided so as to be of smaller size than it was twenty years ago?—No, not by the proprietor, but there are some lots with two families upon them, all the same.

26658. Have these two families been allowed to remain there with the consent of the proprietor?—At that time the proprietor was not opposed to there being two families upon one lot.

26659. Do you think it a good thing yourself?—No. One family would require three of the lots.

26660. We have heard it stated to-day, that the people consider it a hardship that the rules of the estate prevent the dividing of crofts and marrying; do you agree in that?—I don't think it right that the lots should be sub-divided; there too many upon them as it is.

26661. Is the price of stock higher now, or the same, or less than it was twenty years ago?—The price of stock is higher now, but there are some of the people without any stock.

26662. Under these circumstances can you account for the greater poverty of the people now compared with their condition twenty years ago?—What benefit would that be to a man who has no stock at all; there are some without stock.

26663. If the lots are the same and the rents are the same and the price of produce is higher, why are the people poorer now than they were twenty years ago?—The people are very much poorer, and if it was not for gentlemen sending us money, the merchant in Thurso and the merchant in Wick, there would be famine in the land some years.

26664. The Royal Commission are very anxious to find a remedy for the present state of matters, but unless we can find out first the cause of the poverty, it will be difficult for them to recommend anything which can remedy the condition of the people?—The cause of the poverty is that the people have so little land to support them.

26665. Have you any observations to make about the condition of people's houses?—There are some of the houses very bad. I have myself built a house that would suit, if the other things were all right. I got from Mr M'Iver £3 to assist in building a house.

26666. Are the rules of your district the same as those we have heard from other delegates?—He offered me also slate, but I would not undertake the repayment of it in three years. I could not buy wood either, for £3 would go but a little way in buying wood.

26667. What would you like done?—To give the people more land.

26668. But about houses?—We are so poor we cannot build houses.

26669. What you want is, that the proprietor should re-build the houses for you entirely at his own cost?—That would be a great matter to do, and the people would need it; but I don't want such an arrangement.

26670. Have you anything else to say on the general subject?—No.

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William Hugh Mackay.

WILLIAM HUGH MACKAY, Tailor, formerly Fisherman, Insheigra (61)—examined.

26671. *The Chairman.*—Have you got any statement to make?—I would like to speak of the condition of the poor fishermen in the district. In the first place they have bad boats; and they have no lines nor herring nets, so as to pursue the fishing with success. The harbour is bad and the land is bad. Many a time the people could work perfectly at sea when they could not come ashore, the coast is so rocky. If we had a ready market for the fish, the people could get a little money, which they cannot get at the present time, for their families and themselves. If the railway was extended to the head of Loch Laxford, it would form an admirable centre for the districts of Durness, and this parish of Eddrachillis, and so the people would be able to send their fresh fish to the market. That is about all I have got to say.

26672. If some fish-curer from the east country would send a good decked boat over here, would you be able to supply a crew?—Yes, as good a crew as is to be had in the north of Scotland.

26673. Have your ever thought of sending one of your own number over to ask one of the fish-curers to begin a business here of that kind?—There was a curer who came here different times, but because there was no suitable landing place and no suitable boats that could pursue the fishing with success, the scheme did not succeed.

26674. But do the crew themselves not hire the boats?—Some do. I tried myself the fishing in that way, but when I got into the curer's debt, then the price of the fish was reduced, and having to get supplies all the same, that put an end to that state of matters.

26675. If a curer brought round a large decked boat to this country, would it not be able to lie quite safely in this place?—Yes it would, within the loch; but the loch is very far inshore and distant from the fishing ground.

26676. Where would you propose to make a shelter for such a boat on the coast here?—At Old Shore; but it would be very expensive. A very suitable place could be erected at Kinlochbervie for a moderate amount of money.

26677. Who were your partners in the boat when you were in debt to the curer?—Three or four of my neighbours.

26678. What size of boat was it?—A boat of thirty feet keel.

26679. Was she a decked boat?—No.

26680. What was the number of her crew?—Five.

26681. Was she fit to go outside to the banks?—At times she was; but of course a decked boat could go oftener to the banks than she was able to go.

26682. You said that when you were in debt to the curer the prices fell. Do you mean that the curer made his prices lower than the market price?—He used to give less for fish to those who were in his debt than to those who were not.

26683. Was he an east coast curer?—Yes, from Wick and Stornoway.

26684. Is it not common for the men on the east coast and the Orkney and Shetland Islands to start as fishermen in debt to the curer?—Yes, but herein is the difference; the people upon the east coast get their supplies for perhaps about half the price that we pay for them.

26685. What supplies do you refer to?—Our lines and nets and every thing we need; it is so difficult to bring things here.

26686. But when the boat would go to Stornoway and Wick fishing? could they not supply themselves?—Yes. It was there we used to buy

them, but we only bought them upon the curer's line—by the curer giving us an order—and so advantage was taken of us by means of this line that the curer gave us.

26687. Does not the same difficulty meet the east country man who has to get his supplies by means of the curer's line?—No, because there is a moderate number of wealthy people round about him, who would give him assistance to buy his boat and material may be with ready cash.

26688. But is it not the case that the east coast people succeed who do not pay with ready cash, but start in debt to the curer?—Yes; but we have not the boats. They were not fishing with the same kind of boats when I went to the east coast fishing that they have now; they are much larger now. Again, they go further out fishing, and they require a bigger class of boat.

26689. *Mr Fraser-Mackintosh.*—Are you the only tailor named Mackay in this district?—There is one in Scourie, but none in this place.

26690. You live in Kinlochbervie?—Between here and the end of the loch.

26691. Have you been here all your days?—No, not altogether.

26692. Where have you been?—Caithness.

26693. Carrying on your business?—At times.

26694. Did you know that a great number of people from Kinlochbervie district were sent away by a former Duke of Sutherland after the potato famine?—I could not say if they were sent away, but I knew they went away.

26695. Were their passages paid for them?—I believe they were.

26696. What became of the lands from which they went; who got them?—I could not say exactly; I do not wish to interfere with the like of that.

26697. Do you wish to speak upon the fishing alone?—Nothing else but the fishing.

Rev. Duncan Finlayson, Free Church Minister, Kinlochbervie, Parish of Eddriachillis examined.

26698. *The Chairman.*—How long have you been settled in this parish?—Two years only.

26699. From what part of the country do you come?—Inverness-shire; I was born there.

26700. Had you a charge there?—No, this is my first charge.

26701. Have you a statement you wish to make in regard to the condition of your people generally?—No, but I want to make a few remarks about secondary education. We are at a disadvantage about that; boys that are getting up after thirteen, cannot be educated here. The teacher is willing to educate them if there was room to teach them, but the schoolroom seems to be too small. The boys last year wished to go for education during winter, and the teacher could not take them; he has enough to do to teach the children under thirteen.

26702. *Sheriff Nicolson.*—Will you explain exactly why he cannot teach them?—I heard it stated that the rooms are too small. Down here at Inshoigra there are a great many past age, but there is no room in the school for them.

26703. There is no room for them to sit in the school and be taught?—I was told so.

26704. How many scholars does the school house accommodate?—There are sixty-six scholars within school age in the district.

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Rev. Duncan Finlayson.

26705. And is the attendance generally large?—Yes, I think it is pretty large. I don't know as to the regularity of the attendance; I am not a member of the School Board, and have not been often in the school.

26706. But is the attendance so large that there is not room enough to teach any except those who come in for elementary education?—Yes, I was told so by the boys. They went to the other school in this end of the parish and the teacher there has more room; but the parents in that end objected to children from this end of the parish going to be educated there, and sent in a petition to the teacher, so that he had to dismiss them and not allow them into his school.

26707. What can these boys do in the way of prosecuting their education?—They must be self-taught, I suppose. We have a very clever boy here at present. He was the first in the examination of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. He used to attend school until now that he is over school age.

26708. And he cannot get the benefit of the schoolmaster's instruction except at the school?—He is past the age now. I am not aware if the teacher would take him in after this, and he is too delicate, his father considers, to send him from home. I don't know what he is to do in winter.

26709. Is the schoolmaster quite fit to carry on the education of this boy?—I think so, but I am not quite sure.

26710. So that, practically, secondary education is impossible in the school in this place?—Yes, I think that is the fact.

26711. You spoke about the school in this place?—There are two Board Schools in this district—one at Insheigra and the other at Old Shore.

26712. Which did you refer to?—I don't hear any complaints of one of them being too small, but I have heard it repeatedly said that it is the smallness of the schoolroom at Insheigra that is the difficulty. It is quite crowded with children within school age.

26713. Was it considered by the inhabitants from the beginning to be too small?—I am not aware. I was not here at the time it was built.

26714. Is there anything else you are aware of that the people have reason to complain of?—No, except the doctor. We would join to get a doctor. That is a general complaint, although we are not so far from him as the Durness people. The doctor is about nineteen miles from us. Another grievance is that we have not a smith in this place, and have to send for him seventeen miles to Scourie. I have heard it said that no smith could be had without a croft.

26715. Is there any reason why there should not be a smith?—I heard it stated that no one could be got—that he could not support himself with what he could earn at his trade without a croft.

26716. So the people have to go all the way to Scourie to get iron work done?—Yes, seventeen miles. As to the means of communication, if we could get the railway which the former delegate spoke of, it would be of the greatest benefit to this district; and also a telegraph line.

26717. How far are you from the nearest telegraph station?—Lairg, forty-six miles. I think the telegraph would benefit the fishing class. The telegraph and the railway would be the making of the place. The means of communication here are very bad. We have to get all our goods from Thurso by smack. The vessel goes round by Cape Wrath, and is often a long time by the way. Last winter the people sometimes ran out of meal, and had to use the seed they were keeping and turn it into meal.

26718. Is there no shop at all in this neighbourhood?—A good many