

114. Is it not a policy of the Gold Fields Act, not to sell land for a period of three years, in order to decide whether it is auriferous or not?—I do not know that it is in order to decide that question.

115. Was not the sale of this block entirely opposed to that policy?—I am not aware which clause of the Act this policy is contained in. Mr. Reid.
7th August, 1872.

THURSDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1872.

Hon. Captain FRASER, M.L.C., in attendance, and examined.

116. In reply to the Chairman the witness said,—I am a Member of the Legislative Council of this Colony. I am interested in several runs situated in the Electoral District of Dunstan, Otago. I am very well acquainted with the gold fields of Otago. I know the Roxburgh district, as also Cargill and Anderson's runs. They are situated on both sides of the river. Hon. Captain
Fraser.
8th August, 1872.

117. Do you know the 20,000-acre block lately purchased by them from the Waste Lands Board?—I have never been upon the ground, but I have been within one or one mile and a half of it.

118. You are, however, acquainted with the locality of the purchase?—O, yes; I never pass through a country without observing it carefully, and I must say that I am astonished to learn that no part of the block sold has a less elevation than 1,000 feet, as the town of Roxburgh is little more than 300 feet above the level of the sea. [The latter part of the reply was made in allusion to a report from the "Geodesical and Inspecting" Surveyor, to the Department of "Lands and Survey, Otago," to which the attention of the witness had been called.] The witness continued—I am surprised to learn that the land outside the line indicated on the survey plan now produced occupies the elevated position set down in the report.

119. What is the character of the land between the line indicated (on the map) and the river?—It is of very little value indeed.

120. In your opinion, is it auriferous?—It may be auriferous, but for agricultural purposes I would not be inclined to give 5s. per acre for it.

121. Then, for agricultural purposes, you consider the land adjoining the river to be of very little use?—The land immediately adjoining the river is most decidedly inferior in quality.

122. What part of the block do you consider the best?—The best portion of the land is situated upon the slopes.

123. Do you consider that the sale of this 20,000-acre block is calculated to lock up the back country?—In as far as it is a frontage to a particular tract of land, I believe it will have that effect.

124. It will practically give possession of that country to the purchaser?—Yes, I believe it will have that effect.

125. Will it have the effect of preventing hundreds from being declared?—Yes. In my opinion it is a great mistake to sell blocks of land in zones parallel to large rivers; they should always be sold in vertical sections. I have all along held that the good land should be made to sell poor land.

126. What will be the result to the gold fields if the policy of selling land in 50,000-acre blocks is insisted upon?—It will have this effect: the gold miner will be required to pay a royalty to the purchaser.

127. Will it have the effect of checking mining enterprise?—I should say it would.

128. Would it not have the effect of preventing prospecting: do not the runholders object to holes being dug upon their runs, as the sheep are liable to be lost in them?—At present they cannot do so; a miner can prospect on any part of a run.

129. Apart from that, do not runholders object to their runs being broken up for prospecting purposes?—Most decidedly they do. Why, I know some runs in the Dunstan district that were perfectly honeycombed with prospectors' holes, and each hole contained the remains of one or two dead sheep.

130. Therefore it is the interest of the runholder to prevent prospecting on his run?—Certainly it is.

131. In selling the runs, then, the Government gives the runholder power to consult his interest in this respect, and prevent prospecting?—Certainly.

132. In that respect, then, these sales are calculated to check mining enterprise?—On the land sold, yes, of course.

133. What proportion of the pastoral country of Otago is included in the gold fields?—It comprises a very large portion of the gold fields.

134. In your opinion, is it not a dangerous power to place in the Waste Lands Board; I mean the sale of these blocks?—As at present constituted, it might be dangerous.

135. Is the Roxburgh district not considered a very warm, sunny valley?—I should say it is almost one of the best in that respect in New Zealand.

136. Are you aware that the people of the district are very anxious to get land thrown open for settlement?—Yes; that is my impression.

137. Are you aware that a great outcry was made by the inhabitants of the district against a large purchase made by Mr. Clarke at Etrick?—I believe there was.

138. Mr. Luckie.] What facilities do you consider are necessary for miners desirous of settling upon the land?—The agricultural lease system has been taken advantage of to a very large extent, and eventually, I believe, it will come to absorb every other system of settlement on the gold fields.

139. The Chairman.] Do you think the policy of selling large blocks of from 20,000 to 50,000 acres, without competition, an objectionable one?—I think all the land should be proclaimed for sale in small blocks.

140. If proclaimed under the present regulations for one month, and thrown open to public competition in smaller blocks, do you think that it would be likely to fetch a higher price?—I believe it would.

141. In reply to a question put by the Chairman, the witness said that he was not acquainted