

Mr. Anderson.

9th August, 1872. 222. Pastoral and agricultural country is not, I believe, very well defined in Otago?—A number of settlers look upon every piece of land as agricultural land, although they would not make use of it for that purpose.

223. Would it be possible to acquire large blocks of land without getting some agricultural land in it?—You could do such a thing; for instance, you might take land above a certain elevation.

224. It is not general to take up country above a certain elevation?—Very often the high lands have the best soil; for instance, in the case of the back of one of our runs, two or three thousand feet high, there is a flat of good country, but at that height it could not be farmed.

225. You have spoken of two or three thousand acres having been taken up on the opposite side of the river. How long has that been open for selection?—It has been open for selection since 1865 or 1866; at any rate parties have been settled since that time.

226. What area was opened at that time?—There was no area opened at that time. First one settled on it, and then another; and in 1867 arrangements were made with the runholder for the block.

227. What quantity of land did that arrangement with the runholder include; I mean the quantity for settlement?—From 2,000 to 2,500 acres.

228. Was it all taken up at once?—No. During the first two or three years not more than 400 acres were taken up; altogether about 7,000 acres on our runs have been open for selection, and I do not think there are above 2,000 acres of that taken up.

229. Then about four or five thousand acres are still unselected?—Yes, fully 4,000 acres.

230. What is the quality of this land that remains unselected. Is it good land?—Well, it is not good land at all. I consider it good pastoral country, but I do not consider it good agricultural country.

231. Is this 7,000 acres equal in quality to the 20,000 acres?—It is very similar.

232. Is it equally available?—It is equally available.

233. Is there any portion of the land not taken up equal to the best land in the 20,000-acre block?—I do not know.

234. Were the selections made of the 7,000 acres the best of the agricultural land in that block?—No. Some portions were taken up more on account of their position as regards the Teviot township than on account of the quality of the land.

235. Where do you usually reside?—I reside on the station.

236. Are you aware to what extent any demand for land exists which cannot be gratified; by the people in that district, I mean?—They are always asking for land, but when they get it they will not take it up. There is one man in particular who is always asking for land, and he has never taken up an acre yet, and I do not believe he ever will. If there were free selection, I am quite sure it would put an end to this demand.

237. Do you think there is sufficient land open to meet all the demands that really do exist for *bona fide* settlement?—I think there is quite sufficient for settlement, or for the people really wishing to settle.

238. Do you know Mr. Warden Borton?—Yes.

239. Do you think his opinion a reliable one?—Yes, I would consider it reliable.

240. In a report to the Under Secretary for the Gold Fields, he says,—“Some thousands of acres have been taken up under the Agricultural Leasing Regulations, and if an equal amount of good land were available, as much more would be taken up in the course of twelve months.” Do you think that opinion correct?—I do not interpret that as meaning land in the district. Were you to put up 10,000 acres, I do not believe you could find parties to take it up.

241. *The Chairman.*] Not find them if the land was suitable for agricultural purposes?—I think there is very little land in the place fit for agricultural purposes.

242. Are you agreeable to surrender any land in the block that may be proved to be suitable for agriculture?—No, we do not wish to surrender any land in the block we have purchased, as we bought the good land with the bad, and taking out the good pieces would destroy the entirety of the block, as well as render large portions of the block useless.

243. *The Chairman.*] In a report by Mr. Warden Robinson to the Under Secretary of Gold Fields, he says,—“To enable the miner to work poor ground, it is essential that he should be able to live cheaply; but, unfortunately, in most parts of the district, living is still expensive. This is mainly attributable to the fact of there being scarcely any cultivation of the soil. In this respect the Mount Ida district stands at a singular disadvantage as compared with other districts of the Otago Gold Fields. While Tuapeka, Wakatipu, and Mount Benger are almost as much agricultural as mining districts, and the Dunstan can show a considerable area of land occupied in farms, the Mount Ida district has as yet been denied the great advantage of agricultural settlement. From time to time efforts have been made to get land thrown open for settlement under the agricultural leasing system, but hitherto without success. I of course except the land obtained by holders of runs under agricultural lease, which amounts to 3,381 acres. In the meantime it is to be feared that many persons who would have formed homes in this country have gone elsewhere to invest their earnings.”

244. *Mr. Luckie.*] In that report you will observe that a great scarcity of land is complained of. Do you consider the statement to be a reliable one?—I know nothing about Mr. Warden Robinson's district, as I live 100 miles away from it.

245. Again, you will observe that Mr. Robinson says in his report that miners have been compelled to leave the district on account of not having been able to get land?—It may be the case in his district, but miners, as a rule, are not anxious to invest in land, as their occupation is that of gold mining, and if they cannot obtain gold in one district they leave it and try their luck in another.

246. *The Chairman.*] Is there not a class of miners who, having made a little money, wish to settle down?—As a rule, these parties would much rather settle away at a distance from the gold fields. When they retire from gold mining, I have observed that they do not care about settling down near to the gold fields.

247. In reply to another question, the witness said,—The area of agricultural land is so small that, in my opinion, continuous settlement is an impossibility. That, at all events, is my idea.