

248. Is not that a reason, then, that all the available agricultural land should be retained for settlement?—If it could be got continuous, but then it cannot. Fifty acres may be got here, and then you require to go a mile further on, and then perhaps you will get 100 acres more, and so on in that way.

249. A question having been put respecting grazing rights, the witness said,—That if plenty of grazing rights were provided, he did not think that the settlers would farm. Parties had told him that the hundreds system had done more damage than anything else.

250. *Mr. Sheehan.*] You have told us that these parties merely mine during certain seasons of the year. Would it not be wise to give them facilities for following agricultural pursuits during the remainder of the year?—During the time the river is up, we do not object to any one of them cultivating the land.

251. In answer to another question, witness said,—We charge 10s. a head for running cattle, out of which we pay the Government 3s. 6d.

252. In reply to *Mr. Sheehan*, witness said,—In Otago there was no such thing as free selection.

253. If greater facilities existed, would these parties take up large areas of ground?—I do not think so. It is not the miners who take up the largest proportion of the land; it is the hotel and shanty-keepers who take up the largest proportion of it.

254. *The Chairman.*] You say that at present the miners and others get the land so long as they do not interfere with the station?—Yes.

255. Do you think that there is sufficient permanency of title in that holding to induce them to erect fences and make other necessary improvements?—If you ask me to mention the best system for settling the gold fields, I will say at once free selection. By that means, all demands would be satisfied at once.

256. Would you have free selection as regards 20,000-acre blocks?—No; it might be limited to blocks of 500 acres.

257. Do you consider the sale of land in 50,000-acre blocks to be clearly in the interest of settlement?—It is more in the interest of settlement than by continuing it in the hands of the Government. It is better in the hands of men who understand settlement than remaining in the hands of the Government.

258. In reply to other questions, the witness said that these lands may yet be cut into small farms by the purchasers. In the case of the Island Block, a sum of £10 per acre was being spent by the runholder, and witness had no doubt but that the ultimate intention was the letting of it out to small holders.

259. *Mr. Brown.*] If this block had been open for selection as in the case of Tuapeka, to what extent do you think it would have been taken up?—Not more than 3,000 acres, and that not by people in the district. The remainder of the land, 17,000 acres, would have been used for grazing purposes.

260. *Mr. Sheehan.*] If this 3,000 acres had been taken up for settlement, what likelihood would there be of the remaining 17,000 acres being taken up by the runholder?—No likelihood at all. Where parties are dotted over a tract of country, sheep will not thrive on it.

261. *To Mr. Sheehan.*] In free selection, I would be in favour of limiting the acreage for the first three years, say, to 500 acres; afterwards they might be enlarged year by year.

Mr. W. A. FRASER in attendance, and examined.

262. *The Chairman.*] You are a runholder in the Dunstan district of Otago, and you have resided on the gold fields for many years?—I have been on the gold fields for the last ten years.

263. Do you think that it is to the interest of the gold fields to sell large blocks of land to one party; I mean blocks of say twenty to fifty thousand acres?—It depends altogether upon the character of the country.

264. Country similar to that of Cargill and Anderson?—If the country contains any considerable portion of agricultural land, I should say not.

265. What would the effect of such sales be on the mining interest?—As regards the mining interest, it depends altogether whether the land be auriferous or not. I do not think that it is good policy to sell the land if it is actually known to be auriferous.

266. *Mr. Sheehan.*] If a reasonable portion of the land was proved to be agricultural land, would it be wise to sell it in large blocks?—No; I hardly think it would.

267. *The Chairman.*] If only a reasonable portion of the land was fit for agricultural pursuits, say one-third or one-fourth, is there not a greater necessity that it should be kept for agricultural settlement?—Yes. I think that all the agricultural land in the country should be marked off upon the maps, and retained for the purpose of agricultural settlement.

268. *The Chairman.*] Are not the miners in the Dunstan district opposed to the sale of large blocks of pastoral land to the runholder, because they consider it to be against their interest?—We have got two classes of miners in the Dunstan district. One class follows mining only; the other takes up land and settles upon it. When the land is sold, it prevents them getting the facilities for settlement.

269. But the pure miner, is he not opposed to such sales?—For this reason, that it may be the means of preventing him mining on private property.

270. In answer to *Mr. Sheehan*, the witness said,—The sale to Messrs. Cargill and Anderson was of such a nature as to give them the absolute right to prevent mining on the land. He was of opinion that some reservation should be made, so that, in the event of such lands afterwards proving to be auriferous, the Crown might, on payment of compensation, resume possession of the land. The law should be so stated that, as far as practicable, both the mining and agricultural industries might be enabled to go hand in hand. In the event of a sale taking place, it should be concluded so as not to prejudice the mining interest.

J. C. BROWN, Esq., M.H.R., in attendance, and examined.

271. I am well acquainted with the block of land under offer to Messrs. Cargill and Anderson. I consider the quality of the land to be on an average equal to other lands in that district. Similar

*Mr. Anderson.*

9th August, 1872.

*Mr. W. A. Fraser.*

9th August, 1872.

*Mr. J. C. Brown.*

9th August, 1872.