

12. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the number of settlers who ought to have taken up allotments, and have been on the ground in January?—I cannot answer that question immediately; the agreement will show. We have some years to make up the full number. I think we were to have introduced 200 adults by the 1st January, 1886. At the present time a little short of 5,000 acres is being taken up. A good many of the adults are living at Tauranga till they can get the roads made and houses built, when they can settle comfortably.

13. What is the price charged per acre to the settlers themselves?—£3.

14. For good and bad?—No; they have got the best of the land. That land was valued by Mr. Percy Smith at £2 per acre, and we sold it at £3. He valued the bush land and swamp land at £1 per acre, which reduced the average of the whole area to £1 6s. 6d. per acre. We buy wholesale and sell retail. That is how we manage our business. I do not pretend to be a philanthropist.

15. You alluded, Mr. Stewart, to the New Zealand Land Corporation?—Yes.

16. Will you tell the Committee what will be your relations to that company in the event of fresh blocks of land being taken up?—I have been appointed sole resident director in New Zealand for the company. I felt when I went to England, knowing the amount of swamp and bush land there was on Te Puke, that, personally, I was perfectly unable to carry out the conditions of the agreement for want of sufficient capital. The New Zealand Land Corporation was formed; this new company consists of friends of mine; the directors have intrusted me with the entire management of affairs in New Zealand, and I am here to carry out the arrangements that are made with the Government.

17. Are you in a position to say that the terms of agreement, so far as money payments are concerned, will be completed in January?—Before January. I have a cablegram to that effect. In fact, I should not be surprised if the balance payable of the purchase-money next January should be received by the next mail. I am now speaking of No. 3 Block, Te Puke. I shall have no direct pecuniary interest in special settlement No. 4, whether the land is granted or not. The land fit for settlement in the vicinity of No. 3 is reserved for deferred-payment settlers, and the forest reserve. The deferred-payment sections are in the middle of my block; they cut it in two, and have the best land.

18. I would like you to state, for the information of the Committee, how much money has been expended by Government in opening up communication with this land?—Government has acted very well indeed. The expenditure upon the bridge at Hairini will be close up to £6,000; that work is as good as done. In the formation of the road between Tauranga and Maketu, close upon £3,000, to my recollection, has been spent; but, on the other hand, in the payments which myself and the deferred-payment settlers have to make, Government will receive close upon £30,000. I have to pay about £19,000 altogether of that sum. In all, between what has been paid and what will be paid before the roads are got into good order, about £5,000 will be expended. I have no complaint to make against Government for want of liberality. The coach-road is now being made through to Rotorua; we spent £600 on it last year; it will be the main road to the Lakes. The other road through the block is the road to Opotiki; it will open up a lot of land.

19. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What proportion of those 370 signatures are those of people who have been introduced by you?—I think nearly every one who signed has been brought into the colony by me. I have not heard of a single case of a man refusing to sign when asked. I may say the requisition was got up without my knowledge. After it was started, I was asked if there was any objection to it, and I replied "No." Katikati is not nearly such good land as I could wish. Pukeroa is not so good as Te Puke, but it is fair average farming land. Te Puke land is far superior to Katikati.

20. You said you considered the last agreement exceedingly stringent?—Yes; but I do not think there is anything unfair in it.

21. Would you be prepared to acquire this block you now seek for under conditions equally stringent?—Yes.

22. How many settlers do you expect will be introduced into the colony if you succeed in getting this land?—Our object will be to settle the whole block, and get as many settlers as we can. The agreement will provide that we must erect a certain number of houses, and cultivate portion of the ground—say, one-fifth—within a specified time. I think the present holdings are on an average about 150 acres each. The swamp land will have to be drained in the block we are now applying for—about 5,000 acres there is of it—and till then we cannot put settlers upon it.

23. How many are on Te Puke?—We have introduced to Te Puke fully 200 souls, but they are not all on their land yet; they are living at Tauranga.

24. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You are asking for another block of land. Could you not apply when this land would be put up for sale; go in like any ordinary settler, and buy for your people whom you wish to bring out from England?—Well, then, I ask, where would be the profit? Supposing the land was put up by the Waste Lands Board in blocks of 100 or 200 acres, as that Board puts it up, why the land would be spotted here and there by speculators. We do not want speculators, we want settlement—we want people to come and live there.

25. Does not your experience show you that it would be better to establish a kind of agency at Home by which you would be buying here for settlers. Do you see any objection to an agency being established here, by which an agent would deal for purchasers, in connection with an agency at Home?

We do act as agents, but the returns do not pay the company for the trouble. Besides, this block at Pukeroa is swamp land. Supposing it were offered by the Land Board, speculators might buy patches here and there, and leave the remainder worthless. The object in these special settlements is to get people of congenial feelings and tastes together. One man at Home says to another, "If you go out, I will go out," and so people have some sort of neighbourhood.

26. How much did you pay for Te Puke?—£1 6s. 3d. We are selling the best of it at £3. What we are selling at £3 was valued at £2 by Mr. Percy Smith, who was agent for Government.

27. After the best is sold you have to reduce the price?—I will clear the bush, sow it down in grass, and sell it as improved land ready for occupation.

28. Then, what does your company do for the purchaser—what, beside the land, does he get from you—what advantage does the settler get from the company?—He gets no assistance, except that we make all arrangements for his transit, survey the land and cut it up. Surveying and cutting it up would cost £2,000. We bring them together in parties, and we find them ships. We want to have, if possible, two ships direct to Tauranga every year. We help them to make by-roads. Supposing