

50. Since the improvement of land is the object, for which it is insisted personal residence shall take place on pastoral deferred-payment blocks, would not the same end be attained by insisting on a certain portion of improvements without residence?—Possibly it would.

51. And would not that enforced residence, if not of the owner, of other persons, be possibly of as great use to the country?—I do not think it would. I have a decided feeling that the owner of the land should live upon it and make it his home. If the young people growing up and living upon the land are but mere shepherds, or the children of such, the whole thing is too commercial altogether. They can have but little feeling of attachment to the soil, with their miserable little bit of a hut of sods, and rations served out to them like people in gaol. If they could look round and say, "These are our cows and sheep," it would be different. In the one case you would have a home, with comfort gathering around it; with its possessors proud of it: in the other you have a makeshift, cold and cheerless.

52. Your answer comes to this: that if you could bring about the settlement of a yeomanry, it would be a very desirable thing. That we can all see. But as to dummyism—the illegal getting hold of land, particularly in the neighbourhood of the diggings—is it not the fact that this dummyism, or occupation of a larger area than the law permits, has been beneficial to the country?—Yes. In many cases a large amount of capital has been put upon the land, and great improvements made.

53. Then your objection is to a system which obliges you to go to the expense of subdivisional surveys?—The proposition is to lay off in Strath Taieri, Blackstone Hill, and Ida Valley, areas larger than those now allowed by law. We prevent all this dummyism and illegality by giving the opportunity of acquiring a sufficiently large area for an arable stock farm at once; but always keeping in view the occupation of the country by a resident proprietary.

54. *Mr. De Lautour.* I wish to bring out your views more clearly upon one point: you are referring to the uncertainty of the tenure of leases let under the present Act, and you state that the occupier may at any time get notice that his run is required for settlement?—Or for the sale of either agricultural or pastoral land.

55. But the actual wording of the Act is that the land is required for sale, so that such a case can take place only when it is actually wished to sell the land?—Yes.

56. You cannot deal with this 2,681,000 acres at once?—It can be dealt with at once. If, say, about one-third of it was surveyed into runs under 5,000 acres; the rest would be in larger runs, of twice the depth to the width.

57. Do you not think it will be necessary to take a limited area, which must be given up for settlement next year—not to lock up all the country in the larger runs for ten years; but to reserve the right of taking areas from year to year?—I do not think it would be advisable to keep anything hanging in abeyance. I would deal with all the country at once, under one or other or all of the three systems—of leasing, of cash, and of pastoral deferred payments. But as the population now in the district is only a mere handful, they cannot take up all this land. The Crown Lands Department, with the sanction of Government, will, as soon as the scheme of dealing with the country is finally decided on, have an account of it drawn up and published, with an explanatory map. This will be sent to the Agent-General and other people at Home, and I believe will be the best immigration scheme devised for a long time.

58. You have to deal with them in March, 1882?—No, in March, 1883.

59. The wording of the Act is that you must sell the present runs before the expiration of the lease?—But it is not the intention of the Government to sell the runs in their present size. The runholders on the lower country will likely be informed that it is not the intention to have that country re-leased. The lands will then be selected for deferred payments, for mining, agriculture, and other reserves, and the intermediate parts will be available for disposal in small runs. The sales and re-leasing can be deferred till within six months, or to six days, of March, 1883, if the Government think fit. As a matter of wisdom it will, no doubt, be done six months before, to allow of time to arrange for the placing of sheep between the outgoing and incoming people.

60. But is it not the wording of the Act that the leases must be sold twelve months before the expiration of the present term?—The Act is a little mixed. At one place it states what you say: at another it seems to imply something different. The Land Board and Government concurring, have the management of the Crown lands, and, in effect, have it at their discretion when and how to offer these runs to public selection.

61. Has any opinion been obtained from the Law Advisers, as to what time the leases of the runs do expire?—No. I may say they were referred to in one or two cases. It was in this way: A pastoral lessee desired to throw up his lease; the Government would not accept surrender. The lessee refused to continue paying rent, but the Solicitor-General decided that he had not only to pay, up to December, 1882, but—and my impression was that it was very hard—he was liable up to the extended period of March, 1883, as fixed by the Legislature in "The Land Act, 1877." That opinion was obtained only incidentally; still, there it is, and it will apply to all alike, I presume.

62. It has been held as a matter of doubt whether the leases do not terminate in September, 1882, the runholder having the right of occupancy to March, 1883; and, therefore, should not notice be given in September?—That point has been before the Land Board; but I think it is busying itself about a matter that it need not bother about. Supposing that the Board failed to give notice, I do not see how the leaseholder could demand to get the country on another lease without competition. It would be simply this: Government would go on and deal with the country, irrespective of any proposals to the contrary.

63. In regard to the collusion by which one person obtained adjoining holdings: was not the greatest portion of these obtained under the system of 200 acres or less, the 320-acre provision only coming into force at a much later stage, so that the sections amalgamated in this way were of 200 acres or under?—They were mostly so, but not in all cases. The most recent development of this collusion was upon 320-acre holdings, which shows that the evil still exists.

64. How do you know that in all these cases the original applicants do not still retain their