

interest in the land? You seem to assume that, because sections are worked together, therefore applications have been put in for one person under various names. May those persons not still have their interests, only agreeing to co-operate in the management?—I know that both in Tuapeka and Wakatipu there are estates very large—relatively so, that is, of a thousand or two thousand acres—which are held by one individual. I do not know private business; but when you are travelling through the country the fact is notorious, that such a property is A.B.'s farm, and that is C.D.'s. And in the case which you refer to, of people still having an interest in the land, it is extremely likely if they have it nominally that really their holding is not very great.

65. What time would be necessary for selling stock upon runs?—I think about six months would be enough.

66. Would not that in some measure govern the time when this country should be offered for sale?—Certainly; the present runholders would like it to be settled twelve months before; but it would not be in the interest of those going in for pastoral deferred payments, or smaller runs, to do so so soon. The people who will take up these two classes of small runs are mostly sons of settlers. They make their money by hard work, and they would not care to pay their money to Government so long before obtaining possession. When the run is sold the purchaser has to pay down the first six months' instalment, if on pastoral deferred payment, and at least six months' rent if on lease. I think from three to six months would be a long enough interval in these smaller runs, to elapse between day of sale and day of possession.

67. Enough at any time of the year?—The leases fall in in March. The shearing on the runs will be in November. If you dispose of the run six months before, you give time for the present lessee to shear his sheep; and when he has them shorn, he can look about for a purchaser. If he gets the country again he needs not trouble; if he does not get it, he has six months to treat with the incoming holder for the transfer of his stock.

68. *Mr. Shanks.*] What amount of land adapted for agricultural settlement is contained in this two and a half million acres?—It is rather difficult to state approximately, without a little explanation, how much is land that is likely to be used for agriculture. 1,288,000 acres in the centre of the province are under 2,000 feet. One-third of that is flat land.

69. Is all this flat land fitted for agriculture?—The great bulk of the Upper Taieri Plain is; but I should not say that it is all agricultural land. It is all land that can be ploughed, but it is very thin. Without irrigation it is very uncertain whether a crop can be grown in some places. There is good land in the Ida Valley, and it can be ploughed easily. In the Manuhierikia it is very shingly, improving as it goes back to the skirts of the hills.

70. In round numbers, what acreage do you think there would be of agricultural land—that is, how much arable land can be spared from the hill farms without destroying the value of the hills?—I have not taken the question up so minutely as to be able to state definitely; but I should say about 150,000 acres.

71. That would include some of these gravel-beds?—There are lines of this gravel running all through the plains, so you necessarily include some of the gravel-beds in any large block you may select. It is all fitted for agriculture, if you bring water on it. Without water these shingly flats, such as the Dunstan flats, are simply barren sandy wastes. With water it is extremely fertile.

72. We will come to the Maniototo Plain?—Pieces of it are very fine; but there, also, it is generally too dry. One block, the Sowburn, is naturally very dry and poor, but it happens to be taken up by miners who know how to bring water in. The finest crops of wheat and oats I ever saw were upon this ground, two years ago.

73. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What extent of land will be affected by the Naseby Water-race, on the Maniototo, when that water is available for irrigation purposes?—It would command fully half of the plain, and could be utilized over the intervening country between the base of the hills at Mount Ida and Naseby to the Taieri River.

74. *Mr. Pyke.*] Can you give to the Committee any information as to the effect of the running of stock upon the natural grasses of the lands of Otago, and the effect of that upon the stock-bearing capacity of the country?—It is twenty years ago since I first went over the country. Then it was remarkable for its variety of plants, that were appreciated by horses, cattle, and sheep. In particular, there was the anise plant, which stock were extremely fond of. It is very rare now; you find it in the mountain side where it is well protected; but the running of stock in a rough, indiscriminate way has eaten or trodden it out, and fires have further destroyed it. It is an annual, but is not now allowed to seed. One thing to be gained by having people in the country who will occupy it, in the future, is that they will fence the land properly, and give the country a rest, allowing the natural grasses to come up again. These grasses are not exterminated, they are only held in check. Another thing, very injurious in this roaming of stock, is that a great flock of sheep going along a steep hillside so damages the vegetation that it will take a year or two to recover.

75. Of the 100,000 acres surveyed for pastoral deferred-payment lands, how much has been offered for sale?—About 60,000 acres.

76. You spoke just now about the disadvantage to the country of having only a few individuals, such as shepherds, upon a large station. How do you reconcile your views of the necessity of residence upon land in smaller areas without insisting upon residence in larger areas?—The smaller areas are improvable. The larger areas are in the interior, where the mountains are 5,000 or 6,000 feet high: they are unimprovable by cultivation, but they are by careful shepherding, by studying the best time to keep the sheep on particular localities.

77. You speak of blocks twice the depth to the width. Some of this land would be improvable for agriculture?—You might mention any particular piece that is.

78. Surely some of the ten-miles depth country is capable of improvements?—It was the Lindis country I had in view, when I wrote about ten-mile depths.

79. Putting aside improvement of grazing capacity secured by fixity of tenure, surely some of it would be valuable for cultivation?—None of it would be. In a run of 30,000 or 40,000 acres, there