

would be perhaps 300 or 400 acres where the runholder would grow a little oats, to feed his horses in winter.

80. I want to have it stated as clearly as possible why the witness thinks it so absolutely necessary there should be residence enforced on smaller areas, and why there should be none at all on larger areas. Is it not necessary the occupier or owner should reside on 30,000 acres as on 3,000?—The question that Mr. Pyke really wishes to bring out, I think, is this: why should residence be permitted by deputy on a larger area, but made compulsory on the owner of a smaller area? I explain that the object of residence on a smaller area is to have the country improved, where a portion is arable. The larger country is unimprovable in that way. The danger to be guarded against is this: that if we allow improvable country to be taken up in smaller areas by deputy, some capitalists, or association of capitalists, can take the whole side of a valley and work the country as it now is done.

81. You stated that about 150,000 acres were all that would remain of agricultural lands, after providing for working the hill country?—About that much might be set apart for future extension of settlement on a small scale.

82. Will you be surprised to learn that the evidence taken by the County Railway Commissioners showed that there were about half a million acres of excellent agricultural land, fit for settlement, in the County of Vincent alone?—I am very much surprised to hear it.

83. The population, you say, is a mere handful; are you aware there are no facilities for settlement?—I do not think the sparseness is from that reason entirely.

84. Has not every block of agricultural land opened been taken up?—Not all. Some of them are hanging still. For instance, there is a block close to Clyde, open upon agricultural lease, which was never taken up.

85. Is it not an effort, generally of years, to get a few thousand acres thrown open in that part of the country, in consequence of the amount of compensation payable?—It generally takes two or three months.

86. From the first application of the people till the time they get possession of it?—Probably a year sometimes.

87. *Mr. Bastings.*] Are you acquainted with the leases that have fallen in during the last few years?—Yes, generally.

88. What is the character of that land?—Chiefly very inferior.

89. And the way in which it has been relet you think has been judicious?—I think so.

90. Has the upset price fixed by the Board been a fair one, in the interest of the Crown?—I think so, generally. The Land Board have put up lands for which they received no offer; they had then to lower the upset. I think the better way is to offer land at a moderate upset, advertise it well, and leave its highest value to be fixed by competition.

91. *Mr. Shrimski.*] Do you think the Maerewhenua Run of 45,000 acres, at £500 per annum, is let at a reasonable figure?—I do.

92. With the railway running near?—The railway does not come within miles, and the Crown has the right of resumption, on giving twelve months' notice. The most of the country is high.

93. *Mr. Ballance.*] Should persons be allowed to lease more than one run?—I think a man should be allowed to take up as many runs as he likes.

94. Then what is the use of the survey?—The use of the survey is to bring the land within reach of the means of the average population of the country. If you surveyed it in large blocks it would only be within the reach of a few capitalists in Dunedin, but, surveyed in lots of 2,000 or 3,000 acres, you bring it within the reach of every one in the colony. A man cannot take up as much as he likes of improvable land; the memorandum provides for different kinds of settlement, according to the nature of the country.

95. *Mr. Shanks.*] This 150,000 acres, that you say is fit for agriculture, how much of it should be reserved for purposes of gold fields?—In opening the country for sale, or for settlement with contingent freehold rights, the utmost care will have to be taken to conserve the mining interests. Mining areas will have to be reserved here and there, and outlets must be carefully reserved for allowing tailings to pass. It is extremely likely that we will err in putting more land in freehold than will be beneficial to mining. It often happens on the gold fields that, when you sell or propose to sell a piece of land, it is discovered you are on the top of some mining lead, or it may be on the line where a future sludge-channel or tail-race is likely to come through. At this moment there are two important matters of this kind before Government; at Maerewhenua the miners are completely hemmed in; and there is trouble at Waikerikeri.

96. *Mr. Oliver.*] What is the intention of Government regarding the declaration of hundreds?—The various little agricultural blocks scattered over the country are to be included in a hundred, so that the people there, and those to follow, may have the right of pasturage.

97. But will you have 150,000 acres, after setting aside the areas for mining?—I think there may be, as necessarily, in some hundreds there will be, some grazing hilly land included so as to have suitable boundaries.

98. After making sufficient allowance of land for working higher country, how much can be excised for purely agricultural farms?—150,000 acres can be excised from the runs, and of that only 75,000 acres will probably be good agricultural land.

99. *Mr. Ballance.*] Allowing men to take up an unlimited number of leases gives a great monopoly to present runholders?—It has the effect of enabling them to hold the country in large blocks, as they do now; and in one notable case it is absolutely necessary it should be so. That is the Morven Hills country. Under the 2,000 feet line the strip of valley is very narrow, relative to the enormous block of country over 3,000 or 4,000 feet, and for several days during each winter it is all white with snow. We will cut this up into runs of 30,000 or 40,000 acres. The wisest course probably would be to cut it up in lots of 100,000 acres each, but I think it can be offered in 30,000 acre lots. But, observe well, if you had the absurd restriction in force that a man could only hold one run, you would very likely in this country have one or two men holding the lower country on lease, with the back country for nothing.