

I think it will be well to re-lease portions for one or two years, and so bring it gradually into the market. There are not sufficient people in the country now, nor enough of the right class, to take up and work all that land properly.

187. Then the Maniototo face, above Sowburn—it has great depth—how could that be worked?—Taking Run 204, it could only be divided into three pastoral leases. I think it would be unwise to dispose of any of this country in pastoral deferred-payment areas, because the extent of its auriferous tracts has not yet been developed. It would be a pity to lock it up until still further prospecting has been done.

188. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What size would run 204 give if divided into three?—About 10,000 acres each. That would leave all the lower portion of the run to be used as agricultural land.

189. *Mr. De Lautour.*] Run 248 is high country?—Yes.

190. What could be done with that?—It could be subdivided into not more than two leases. I think there will be great difficulty in dealing with that on account of the unusual extent of high country. The back is very much away from the sun: the aspect is very cold. It is known as Dr. Buchanan's old run.

191. I suppose that is a class of country that settlers in the district would not apply for?—No; I do not think they would.

192. They would take low-lying ground, like Blackstone Hill, first?—Yes.

193. Then, if Run 248 were cut up and offered in two or three blocks, there would be no applicant for it, in your opinion, except the present holder?—I think not.

194. *Mr. Shrimski.*] What is your opinion in regard to those runs on the Waitaki?—I think they will all have to be subdivided from the Waitaki side.

195. You are acquainted with the Maerewhenua or Livingstone gold field?—Yes.

196. What is your opinion of that gold field?—It might prove a payable gold field in the future, with sufficient water. The greatest difficulty is the want of water.

197. Do you think, if enough assistance were given to the mining industry, that it would be a prosperous field, and lead to the settlement of a number of people?—Yes; if they could possibly bring in some of those larger rivers it could be very profitably worked.

198. Can you assign any reason why the Maerewhenua Gold Field has not been so prosperous?—Yes; the want of water.

199. From what cause does this want arise?—The inability of the present population to bring in water. There is not sufficient capital in the district.

200. Does not the difficulty about outlets also impede the gold field?—To a certain extent it does.

201. *The Chairman.*] Is there any other matter to which you need refer?—One point I would like to mention: it is about those mining reserves. My object in doing so is this: there has always been great strife between runholder and miner as to allowing a few head of cattle for each miner to graze upon a run. I think if these reserves were laid off it would prevent this continual strife; the squatter would know exactly the extent of country he would have to work, and not be bothered by the miner, and the miner would know exactly on what area to run his few cattle. If from 6,000 acres to 800 acres were laid off around each centre of mining population, this area being excluded from the operations of any other mode of settlement, and if also within that area the miner could take up 50 or 100 acres under the fifty-ninth clause of the Mines Act—that is, to leave at any time on six months' notice, it would be of great advantage. I think it would be a very wise provision if these reserved areas were dealt with by the county. They would be of more benefit, and, if it were deemed necessary to endow the counties, they would form a very valuable endowment.

202. *Mr. Macandrew.*] The principle in your evidence, as I understand it, is that each deferred-payment pastoral area should have a modicum of agricultural land wherever practicable. That is the basis, the guiding line, of your policy?—Yes.

Mr. WILLIAM FRASER, examined.

203. *The Chairman.*] You are a runholder in Otago?—Yes.

204. We should be glad, Mr. Fraser, to hear your statement?—I wish to bring before this Committee one or two matters which it certainly, in my opinion, might well take into consideration in dealing with the waste lands. The one, I think, which is of most importance is the question of fencing. At present there is no fencing law affecting leaseholds at all, and unless a Fencing Bill is introduced, providing means whereby any leaseholder can compel his neighbour to pay half the cost of fencing, the cutting-up of the country into small leaseholds will be impossible—that is to say, impossible consistent with their profitable occupation. Any one who knows anything about stock-farming must know it is impossible to keep stock profitably unless they are fenced in; otherwise you may have your neighbour, through carelessness or ignorance, employing cheap rams or inferior rams, to the deterioration of the progeny of your sheep, and he would get the use of your first-class stud sheep, for which you had given perhaps £5 a piece. Unless a Fencing Bill is introduced in connection with the cutting-up of the country, not only will the flocks necessarily deteriorate in quality, but great hardship will ensue to owners in some instances. Men who desire to keep their flocks up to the proper standard will be compelled to fence not only their own land in, but their neighbours off. The Fencing Bill introduced into Parliament last session, but which was withdrawn, would, I think, in some of its provisions have met the difficulty referred to. The more the Committee look into this matter the more importance will they attach to it.

205. *Mr. Thomson.*] Will you state how it happens that the provincial ordinance does not meet this difficulty?—An ordinance was passed in the Otago Provincial Council, I think it was in 1868, enabling a runholder to call upon his neighbour to pay half the cost of dividing fencing, but the Governor disallowed it. It remains in the Statute-book, but has been disallowed—I suppose by the Governor.

206. I recollect there were two ordinances: the first was disallowed, was the second disallowed?—The second contained no reference to the fencing of leaseholds, and as the law now stands a man