

236. Do you mean the valley where Mr. Thomson has his pre-emptive-right selection in? I went up that valley. Is it not about fourteen miles long and three miles wide? The valley I mean has splendid crops, and land down in clover. You cross the Motutapu River, going from Pembroke, and go near the road to Mount Aspiring?—That is the place I refer to. The good land is after you cross the Motutapu; it is on the opposite side of Matukituki from Russell's saw-mill. There are about three thousand acres in that flat. You may allow me to mention that it is a mistake most amateur surveyors make to over-estimate the area of a long narrow valley. They say, in riding up a valley, "What a fine country before and behind;" but they forget that it is very narrow. Put the surveyor's chain upon it, and the area shrinks into less dimensions than you would suppose it to have. I refer to this point the more because I have heard the flat at Carmelburn estimated to contain 15,000 acres. But what really is the case is, that by going up the flanks of the hills you may get 5,000 acres of good agricultural land, but there is no more than 3,000 fit for farming on the flat.

237. *Mr. Thomson.*] I should like you to continue about the Upper Clutha Valley. What land is there that is good for settlement?—Down the Clutha Valley, after leaving the Luggate, the farming land is pretty well taken up now. It is marked off in blocks. There is a block known as Anderson's Block which takes up a considerable portion. Then there is another block on the other side of the river, and which is rather dry for agriculture. Then at Cromwell the whole of the flat, an area of 14,000 acres, is a commonage, and can be taken up under agricultural lease. In the gorge of the river, between Cromwell and Clyde, there is no room for settlement, except for a very few gardens. Then, at Clyde from six to seven thousand acres have been surveyed, but no one cares for this land, as it is too dry, but, if water is brought to bear upon it, it grows crops well. At the Manuherikia it is all thirsty land till you come to Black's or Ophir. At Spottis Creek all the land has been taken up. Wherever the land on the Manuherikia Plain is moist it is of splendid quality. There is a piece of very good land at Lauder Creek, and I think we may reserve eight or ten thousand acres there. Application is now being made to have this Lauder Creek land opened for settlement. Further up the valley we get to Beck's and Rolland's, parts of the country which I have already described.

238. *The Chairman.*] Would you indicate upon the map the land which has been reserved for the railway?—I could not from recollection, but I may tell you that the rule in making the railway reserves was to make every second run a reserve. The total area reserved amounted to about four hundred thousand acres. Coming to the Ida Valley, I think it would be no detriment to the gold fields if the land was reserved for agricultural purposes on the flat and well towards the base of the hill, provided reserves were made of two or three chains in width for tailings. I repeat again that under no consideration should ground in which gold exists be dealt with otherwise than by being re-leased.

239. For a short time?—On the usual terms, because you can always take the land at a year's notice. The gold-miner and the leaseholder get on very well, but the gold-miner and the freeholder do not agree. There are continual difficulties arising out of their conflicting interests. Even with the diminution in the yield of gold in Otago, the produce of an industry which yields £400,000 or £500,000 per annum is not to be thrown away.

240. *Mr. Thomson.*] Could you not indicate any country suitable for deferred-payment pastoral settlement?—The country on both sides of Ida Valley is suitable for that form of settlement; but the objection arises that under pastoral deferred payments you are making freeholds.

241. Then you think there is scarcely any portion of Vincent County that could be opened under that system?—No. At Criffel, along the end of Mount Pisa, there could be several runs offered on the pastoral deferred-payment system. Members of the Otago Land Board have recommended to that effect, and I quite concur with them.

242. *Mr. Bastings.*] Do you not think that the run held by Mr. Henry Campbell, at Wanaka, the Forks Run, is good land for settlement?—The gentlemen I have referred to recommend that three or four thousand acres of that land be sold. After that is taken out of it you must leave some of the low country, to work the hill country. There is some very high country in that locality.

243. *Mr. Shrimski.*] I understood you to say that you would not advise the cutting up of deferred-payment pastoral lands on the gold fields; because if you disposed of land in that way you would interfere with the miners?—Yes.

244. But you would lease it for pastoral purposes?—Yes.

245. But would that not be playing into the hands of the pastoral tenants—when times became bad, would not the pastoral tenants buy the whole of the land?—I do not think so. The land must be sold publicly.

246. But take the case of the Otekaike Block?—The circumstances under which it was sold do not now exist. It was disposed of under a system differing from the present. As the law now stands the Government cannot sell land privately.

247. *Mr. De Lautour.*] You say that Government can always resume possession of the land at a year's notice—you mentioned this when referring to the leasing of the country containing those auriferous belts? I want to remind you of this: that you cannot do that unless you require the land for sale. That is the wording of the Act; the lease is for ten years, and Government can resume the land at a year's notice only if they want it for sale. I should like an answer from you after having reminded you of that point?—But, as regards the auriferous belts of country, the Government will never want to exercise this right of resumption upon a year's notice. I say, give the land upon the usual ten years' lease, and, if you want any of it for settlement, you can take it at a year's notice, for though it may be said, as a general rule, that the flanks of the ranges are auriferous, yet minute and careful search will show that there are regions of, perhaps, one or two thousand acres that are well proved to be quite barren of gold. It is perfectly safe to cut out such pieces from the pastoral leases from time to time as wanted, and so enable the miners or others to settle down as farmers or miners, or partly as both.

248. I want to bring it out distinctly that in re-leasing any auriferous land you are practically giving a ten years' lease?—Yes; Government is giving a lease for that term, because Government can resume land only as it is wanted for sale; and I agree that Government can resume it for no other