

Minister should have power to deal with these cases as they come before him. If each case could be dealt with by the Minister, I think he might succeed in doing justice. I do not see that people are likely to take a lease of land paying perhaps three times the amount they should have to pay, when by paying double the amount they will in ten years acquire the fee simple. I think they will take the straight course—go to Connell, borrow the money, acquire the fee simple, and pay the interest. That is what they are now doing.

236. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What difference in point of principle would there be, in your opinion, between the relief of the deferred-payment settler and the unfortunate cash-payment settler, assuming the man to have made a bad bargain by cash or at auction?—The same difference in relieving a grown up man or a child. I look upon the deferred-payment settlers as children of the State, and the others I suppose to be able to take care of themselves.

237. *Mr. J. Green.*] If the time of the payment of the instalments was extended, say for five or ten years, would that give them sufficient relief?—That would, to a certain extent, relieve those who have not paid, but it would not be placing them all in the same position; it would be, in my opinion, doing an injustice. A vast number of them have borrowed money, and paid under fear of being dispossessed—have borrowed money, and paid what they consider an exorbitant price.

238. You are of opinion we should grant relief to those who purchased the freeholds under the deferred-payments system?—Yes, certainly; I would put them all on the same footing. I know one man who worked hard and paid his money, paid it up for years, and another man paid only one instalment, and they were both treated on the same footing by the State. I forgot to say that in my district they complain, that owing to the way the cash land was made to intervene between the deferred-payment sections, that they now find that they are too scattered to send their children to school. That is one thing I wish to say, I have also to say this: it is not the case that the best land was selected for deferred-payment selections in my district. In many cases the worst land was selected. That was at the first go off. There is one matter I wish to mention. There is a very strong feeling throughout the district that persons who have embarked in business, and have settled occupations, and are thereby permanently settled on the land, would like to be allowed to take up land for their growing families, if possible.

Sir GEORGE GREY examined.

239. *The Chairman.*] Will you be good enough to make such statements as you think proper in support of the Deferred-payment Settlers Relief Bill?—I have nothing to say but that it was the best measure I could advise. I believe the deferred-payment settlers were unfairly treated in consequence of sufficient land not being opened to meet the demands of those who came forward. I have observed that the number of sections opened always appeared to fall short of the demand.

240. *Mr. W. Rolleston.*] Always?—Where my observation has gone I have observed this. The supply of land never appeared to be equal to the demand.

241. Are you aware that there have been deferred-payment sections lying open and not taken up in different parts of the colony?—I am aware that this has been the case in various places.

242. Do you know in which part of the colony?—I have heard in the North Island, but I cannot say whether this was land suitable for occupation or not. I cannot state whether the best land has been opened anywhere for occupation on deferred-payments, but from what I have heard I think not. The impression on my mind was that the best land had not been opened.

243. Had you any positive representations made to you on this matter, which led you to form this impression?—Only such general information as satisfied me that some action was necessary, and I believed it was a matter which the Government should have taken up themselves, and that it should have been mentioned in the speech from the throne.

244. *Mr. J. Stevens.*] Have you any idea how many deferred-payment settlers there are in New Zealand, who have complained that the land has been insufficient for their requirements for settlement?—I have never made any computation, I believed them to be so numerous, that it was my duty to try and get aid for them.

245. Do you think there are two hundred of them?—I do not think I could venture to state the number. If I said I thought there were two hundred, it might be understood that I thought that was all. I believed I was only doing my duty in trying to get justice done.

246. You have acted upon your long and general knowledge of the colony, and your information is not based on complaints that have been made?—I have seen complaints in many cases, I did not think it my business to search into the details of the grievances. I thought if I was right, as I believed I was, that a large number of persons were suffering, and that the moment I moved their complaints would be heard. This was before I knew that any steps had been taken in Otago. I prepared this Bill during the recess at Home. I lead an isolated life, and I have time to reflect on these matters. I was satisfied from what I knew, and from my knowledge of the circumstances that the case of these settlers was one which required some interference. There are very many cases in the country of this kind, and I therefore turned my mind to the subject of the fairest means of giving relief. You will find that I have copied some of the provisions of the Irish Land Acts. This was the result of long consideration of the matter, for these provisions seemed to me to exactly meet the case. I believe I have used almost the identical words. I have not absolutely copied them, but so far as they ran in my mind I have put those words in.

247. *Mr. W. J. Hurst.*] Do you not consider, sir, that some responsibility attaches to a person bringing in a Bill of this kind, to ascertain that there is really a necessity for relief to be granted?—A very great responsibility.

248. Yet you say you brought in this Bill simply because it was your impression that these settlers required relief. Is not that so?—I brought in the Bill simply because I thought it was my duty.

249. You had an impression that there was a necessity for relief being granted?—Exactly, that was the impression on my mind. A man under a strong impression conducts himself in a certain way. The impression on my mind on the subject was very strong.