284. Have not the actual prices paid been fixed by the purchasers themselves?—Yes; under pressure.

285. What you wish to arrive at is that a fair price should be fixed for the land?—Yes.

286. You think it would be better for the Court to fix this, and to leave the applicant to pay the price fixed by the Court established in the manner you describe!—I think that would be much better than to leave the matter to one individual, which is the case at present.

287. You would, in fact, substitute the Court for the Land Department?—This or some other Court. I would like to see the land put up below its value, and the real value got out in the form of a land tax. One public officer raised the price of land from £1 to £1 10s.

288. You would prefer a low price, and that to adjust any difference a land tax should be passed? —I think that this should be the real payment to the State, and that it should apply universally. I think it would be much better when a price has to be fixed that it should be fixed in each locality by some Court or some other body.

289. Would you also advocate charging these districts with the price of this machinery?—If you make it so small that they are not put to great expense, I think that each district might pay the price of its own machinery for a measure of this kind. When I say this I am almost frightened when I think of the cost of the machinery for trying elections.

290. I might also direct your attention to the cost of the machinery for carrying out the provisions of the Licensing Bill?—Yes; I am aware that it has been very great. I think, however, if you have a proper system of local self-government, you will get rid of this.

291. Under such a system there might be several local centres which would involve the necessity of more Courts?—Yes; I believe it would, but I think the Courts would cost very little if they have to pay for themselves.

292. The cost of a District Judge and a staff of people to value the land will not be light?—Here will be machinery which is made.

293. Referring to the quarters whence these applications for relief have been made, will you not learn with surprise that there has not been a single complaint from any district in the North Island of over-valuation of land?—I shall not be surprised.

294. There have been no complaints?—I think the people may be hopeless of redress, but that remains to be seen. You spoke just now about the Licensing Act. A great many people have not availed themselves of the power given them under this Act to select licensing committees, because the necessity of this may not have arisen at the moment. I have no doubt that, now you have put weapons in the people's hands, they will use them. If I arm the volunteers of the country I do not expect them to go and shoot some one immediately as proof that their weapons are useful to them. They will wait until an enemy comes to invade the country.

295. In the case of the Licensing Act, the pleople who have been armed with these weapons are begging to be relieved from them?—Yes; on account of the expense. I think if you had a different system by which the expense would be reduced the people would be delighted to have this machinery.

296. If relief is to be extended, under your Bill, to the deferred-payment settlers, will you also be in favour of extending it to cash purchasers?—No; I do not think that is a difficulty that is likely to arise. If there is a foreshadowing of such a difficulty it will be time to think of it, and then I think you will get rid of it by a land tax. People who have got bad land under the cash puchase system will have less to pay than those who have good land.

297. Do you then advocate a tax on the value of land?—Yes, on the value of the land exclusive of improvements.

298. You think there should be various systems of land administration, rather than one uniform one?—I do not know what you mean. Do you refer to the price of land or the mode of buying it.

299. I mean the mode of acquiring it?—I think it would be best to have one mode, and that the price should be low.

300. Do you approve of the Homestead right?—Yes; I would rather see all the land sold at a low rate if it is to be sold.

301. At the lowest possible rate?—At a very low rate, No one should be allowed to acquire more than a certain quantity. I would, of course, rather see all the land belong to the nation; but, I think, this is a hopeless thing at present.

302. Do you anticipate under section 4 of your Bill lines 21 to 24, that the payment of the costs or the greater part of the costs in any proceedings shall be defrayed by the applicant?—I presume that the Court will order the costs exactly with reference to the nature of the application. Full power is left to the Court.

303. With your knowledge of the delay and costs which attend proceedings, do you think that this will be any measure of relief to the applicants?—I do not think the costs would amount to much.

304. Will there not be witnesses?—I should think there would be simply one or two men to attend, and some officer on behalf of the Government. The price at which land in the neighborhood had been sold for, generally would have to be shown.

305. Will not the land have to be viewed? I suppose this will be done in some cases.

306. That is always done in the Irish Courts, is it not?—In some cases. I know of cases in which it is not. In many cases the Crown will be glad to give the relief asked for, and to get rid of the difficulty.

307. Do you not suppose that if relief is once given in these cases, applications will pour in upon the Government?—That I cannot state. You will place a certain implement in the hands of the people, which they can use to remove themselves from difficulty; and I think many men, now working in a hopeless state, will take advantage of this.

308. *Mr. W. Rolleston.*] Did I understand you to say that you thought it a wrong thing to fix the price of deferred-payment land at £3, or to raise it from 30s.?—If the land had been offered at 30s. and had not been taken up on account of the inferior quality, it was a great pity to raise it to £3, for deferred-payment settlement.