309. Are you not aware that this was done under the Crown Land Sales Act?—I have not looked into the law to see it. One cannot carry a great many statutes in one's head at once. If I was at home, I could tell you in a moment. Unless I had passed a law examination and crammed for the occasion, I could not answer a question of this kind. I have stated before that I considered it my duty to interfere in this matter.

310. *The Chairman.*] Have you studied the proposals of Mr. Connell and those contained in the Government Bills for the relief of the deferred payment settlers?—I have not gone carefully into them. I have no objection to my suggestions running concurrently with them. I think the Government proposals are in part not bad, but I do not think they meet every case.

311. Do you see any difference between affording relief to persons who have purchased land at too high a rate at auction, and those who have bought land outright at too high a rate?—I do see a difference. I do not think the same quantity of good land has been thrown open to the deferred-payment settlers. The offering of land on deferred payments is an enormous inducement to a man to take it up. I think very many persons not accustomed to deal with such matters, are quite unable to judge of what they will be able to pay in future years. You have a comparatively uneducated population dealing with the subject of finance. Under such circumstances, I think I might be tempted myself to undertake obligations which I might find I could not meet.

312. You think the deferred-payment system has a tendency to induce persons to give extravagant prices?—Yes; I think the Government should take care to open the best land; and, also, take care that the price is such that an industrious man can well pay.

313. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] I infer from what I have heard you say, that your opinion is that a fixed price for land will be better than the system of auction or tender?—Yes.

314. You think that both auction and tender are likely to induce people who are anxious to get land to give too much for it?—I have lived in two other communities as Governor, in both of which the original law was that there should be one fixed price. In both those communities the fixed price worked well, and that which worked best was where the price was lowest.

315. Would you adopt a uniform price?—I do not know whether the country has come to such a state that a uniform fixed price would answer. Where you have good land a fixed price is best, if it is low.

316. *Mr. W. Rolleston.*] Would you have free selection before survey or not?—In both places I have referred to there was selection with survey. If you can keep to this, I think it is best. It is better to have survey, but sometimes selection must be allowed without.

317. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Will it be advantageous to take defined areas surveyed into defined blocks, and offer the land to the people at the upset price of £1 per acre?—I would not say £1 per acre, for in some cases that would be monstrously high.

318. Are you aware that the surveying and defining the lots by pegs costs from 1s. 6d. to 6s. 6d. per acre?—Of course this is a difficult country to survey. In South Australia, I believe the cost was reduced to 1s. 6d. per acre.

319. Suppose areas were defined in the way I stated, fixing the price at £1 and leaving the first applicant to obtain the good land by priority of choice?—That was done in South Australia.

320. Will this be a system applicable to this country?—I think £1 per acre too high.

321. Irrespective of price, you approve of free selection at a definite price, giving a right of homestead, and compelling residence?—If I compelled residence I should give the land at a very low rate indeed, and only allow a certain quantity to be acquired.

322. The object of any law of this kind is to settle people and keep them on the land?—That is the view I have myself.

323. Are you aware that improvements made upon homesteads of this character are very often as ascribable to the labour of the wife and family as to the husband?—Yes; I think the law should put husband and wife in partnership in this matter, and give them equal rights.

324. Will you make this land not-touchable for the man's debts?—My view is that nothing should be touchable for debt. I think that nothing should be recoverable for debt. If that were the case, I believe we should have a much honester people than we have now.

MONDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1882. (Mr. J. FULTON in the Chair.)

Mr. J. C. BROWN, M.H.R., examined.

325. *The Chairman.*] I understand that you wish to give some evidence in reference to this petition?—Yes, but what I have to say relates only to lands within the Tuapeka district. What the petitioners in my district require, is either that the price of the land should be reduced to 30s per acre, or that the payment should be made to extend over 20 years. These people bought the land under the Crown Land Sales Act, 1877, and there was an understanding that the Act would be repealed the next session of Parliament. They took up what I may call the "refuse" of the Dalhousie Hundred, and the following is Mr. Arthur's (the Chief Surveyor) report on this land:—Otago District, Survey Office, November 14th, 1877. Herewith are the four blocks, 8, 9, 10, and 11, forming the Dalhousie Hundred (Run 123.) The whole of the country is rough and scrubby, and unfit for deferred-payment settlement. I would recommend that it be opened for immediate sale. Ample reserves for mining and bush, have been made all over the Hundred. I will forward list of valuations for improvements in a day or two. This is the land which was taken up under the Crown Lands Sales Act, and the people in taking it up were under the impression that the Act would be repealed, and that they would not be called upon to pay more than 30s. an acre. The best parts of the land were set aside as reserves for the municipalities of Balclutha and Lawrence.

326. Do you think that the Government scheme, of permitting them to change their prospective freehold into a leasehold, would meet their wants?—No.