

*Mr. Macandrew.*] Do I understand you to say that the Board acts on its own responsibility in the interests of the country?

*Mr. Kelly.*] Yes.

*Mr. Macandrew.*] If the case of the petitioner had gone before the Waste Lands Board, you think that the prayer of his petition would have been granted?

*Mr. Kelly.*] It would never have arrived at this stage. It would have been dealt with by the Board.

*Mr. Stevens.*] What was Mr. Courtney's business when he took up these 200 acres of land in 1876?—He was an auctioneer.

Have you any idea of the amount of land which was held by Mr. Courtney in 1876?

*Mr. Kelly.*] I could not tell without referring to the books in Taranaki.

*Mr. Stevens.*] I presume these sections were taken up for the purpose of *bonâ fide* settlement?

*Mr. Kelly.*] The Board has nothing to do with that. It has only to see that the selector fulfils the conditions of his contract. The Board assumes that the selector takes up the land for settlement.

*Mr. Green.*] If the applicant had applied to the Board of the district, it would have been granted?

*Mr. Kelly.*] Yes.

*Mr. Macandrew.*] Are you of opinion that this application can be granted under the terms of the Act?

*Mr. Kelly.*] I think it can by a Waste Lands Board; but not, perhaps, by an officer who has not the powers of the Waste Lands Board. This officer, however, could have done it with the sanction of the Government.

*The Chairman.*] Can he decide if he thinks proper?

*Mr. Kelly.*] He could recommend, but he did not.

*Mr. Pearson.*] The fact of a man's owning land in other parts of the country does not, in your opinion, disable him from taking up land in another part under the deferred-payment system?

*Mr. Kelly.*] No man must own more than 600 acres altogether who selects under the deferred-payment system.

*Mr. Green.*] Are you of opinion that a man can take up a second selection?

*Mr. Kelly.*] I hold that a man may take up 320 acres in Taranaki. That, I believe to have been the intention of the Legislature, though the Board has decided that the second selection must join.

*Mr. Pearson.*] Supposing a man who owned 50 acres in Southland, and went up to Taranaki, would you give him the remainder of his 320 acres there?

*Mr. Kelly.*] Yes; after he had made a declaration that he was no longer in possession of the land. It was decided by the Act of 1879 that that could be done. We had a Provincial Act, which was passed in 1874, and which was much more liberal than this. The land was cut up into small allotments of 50 acres and upwards, and a person could select up to 200 acres, in separate lots, at any time.

*Mr. Stevens.*] Was it not a part of the conditions that the selector should erect a house of a certain value on the land?

*Mr. Kelly.*] No; there is no condition of such a nature in our district. The selector had simply to make certain improvements on the land within a given time.

*Mr. Courtney.*] Mr. Wray said he was very sorry he had to take the course he was taking; but he had to abide by the law. He said he thought mine was a very hard case. He said, also, that he thought I was acting rightly in applying to the House for compensation. I am certain that Mr. Wray would recommend my application.

*Mr. Macandrew.*] What amount of money is involved in this question?

*Mr. Courtney.*] My expenses amount to £33. It is hard to say what the value of the land is, because it has been run up to a fictitious price. If put up to auction now, the land would fetch £30 an acre, the improvements that we have made being so many. There are only 11 acres of land altogether; but it is the only piece of ground that can be got there which is not swamp.

*Mr. Macandrew.*] What is the amount that has to be paid to the Government on account of it?

*Mr. Courtney.*] £13 has been paid, and £50 has yet to be paid. I have done more than any other two men in the district to further settlement; and I have been there for seven or eight years.

*The Chairman.*] When you were the holder of the original selection, were you the holder of any other deferred-payment land?—No.

*Mr. Pearson.*] Were you the holder of any freehold land?—Yes; I owned a large quantity. When I made the second application, I may say that I was only the owner of about 100 acres.

*Mr. Macandrew.*] It is your intention to occupy this land if you get it?—Yes; and I will give a bond to show that I will carry out all the conditions.

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COLONEL TRIMBLE: There is not a more *bonâ fide* settler in the district than Mr. Courtney, and I, myself, would have no hesitation in guaranteeing that he would carry out all the conditions of his contract. This piece of land is of particular value to him. He is a large dealer in land, but he is not a land speculator in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Land speculating in Taranaki is very different to what it is in other parts of the colony. It is on a very small scale indeed, and is confined to buying and selling the small farms which are there the rule.