

6. Whereas the run immediately adjoining, offered for a reasonable term, went well?—Yes; it was offered for ten years at £380, and Dalgetty and Co. gave £850 for it. The other is another of their runs I think, but being offered for one year they or their client would not bid for it at all.

7. *Mr. J. Green.*] Do you think clause 4 would be sufficient to prevent a man holding more than one run?—I think that is the intention of the clause. Of course it might be possible for a man to hold more through friends. I may mention that at the recent sale of the Otago runs the country at present occupied by Dalgetty and Co. has been all repurchased for the firm I believe. Under this new Bill buyers would have to make a declaration which would be rather binding I think.

8. Then you think it would prevent people taking up more than one run each?—I think so, unless they perjured themselves.

9. Do you think that is a desirable way to occupy our pastoral country?—I think not; I think whoever would give the highest price should have it. You may be sure that the person who gives the highest price will, as a rule, make the best use of the country.

10. *Mr. Pearson.*] Do you not think that it would insure the improvement of the country, and the payment of a higher rent for it, if a longer tenure were given for purely pastoral country?—Yes; that part of the Bill giving a tenure of twenty-one years is a part I highly approve of.

11. Under the ballot-system do you not think that the resident holders, the *bonâ fide* settlers, would be sufferers to a greater extent on the chance of getting a run again than the big holders?—They would all be sufferers, especially men who were sheepfarmers and nothing else. Under that system such a man might be thrown out of gear for life, and never get a run again. Under the deferred-payment agricultural ballot-system men tried over and over again and never got a section. Imagine a man with 10,000 sheep going about month after month trying to get a run by ballot, and in the meantime where are his sheep? I may say that among the most successful runholders in Otago are men admirable as sheepfarmers, having been at it from boyhood, but they could not probably get a living at anything else. The ballot would work awkwardly for them.

12. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Do you think a term of twenty-one years would be better than the proposal in the Government Bill—fourteen years?—I think so, for purely pastoral country. In the Government Bill you propose that a certain proportion of low country may be taken on giving a year's notice, but purely pastoral country will never be taken for settlement if it is only fit for pastoral purposes. If you gave a man twenty-one years' tenure it would be worth his while to do all he could to increase the carrying capacity by sowing grasses and fencing, and possibly some men might plant trees if a little encouragement were given. In other words, by increasing the carrying capacity they would be improving the public estate. At present, with the short tenure the rule is take all you can out of it while you are there. In fact, some of the hill country in Otago has depreciated very much through heavy stocking. Formerly the anise grew most luxuriantly there, but now you may look a long time before you would find it. It is still among the rocks where the sheep cannot get at it, but the country used to be covered with it.

13. *Mr. Driver.*] Do you not think that taking off the grass allows the surface-ground to be washed away when the snow melts? I have seen 5,000 acres washed into the gullies, and nothing but sowing grass-seed will ever make that land of any use again?—Yes.

14. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Under the Government Bill will there be any difficulty, through the department or otherwise, in determining by a species of classification the amount of land which will in all probability be taken out of the runs during the term of the leases?—No difficulty at all.

15. *Mr. Hurst.*] What is your opinion of the relative value of the auction- and the application-system?—I do not think application would be objectionable if you had along with it auction confined to the applicants, as in the deferred-payment system.

16. *Mr. Macandrew.*] How long would it be before the Bill would apply to runs in Auckland?—There are really no runs at all in Auckland. If you look at the Lands Report you will see about 100,000 acres set down as runs, but it is a misnomer in the pastoral sense, as the land is taken up for gum-digging.

17. Hawke's Bay?—There is comparatively little there. In the North Island there are very few runs on Crown lands. We have 12,000,000 odd acres of pastoral land in the colony; of that, more than half is in Otago, about a quarter in Canterbury, a million in Marlborough, and about half a million in Nelson.

18. Then, in point of fact, it would not operate anywhere for years, except in Otago?—No, and only there for 1,700,000 acres next year. Odd runs would be dropping in afterwards, occasionally, but not the great areas just mentioned.

19. Assuming it to be a good Bill, do you think any practical object would be gained by passing it at present?—But it is not a good Bill, I think.

20. But assuming it were?—There is this difficulty: I do not know what, if it were a good Bill, it would contain, and therefore I cannot say.

21. *Mr. Driver.*] By the operation of clause 6 do you not think it would enable the holder of a run to get the fee-simple of it, if he had friends on the Waste Lands Board, by getting them to take the run from him, offering it for sale all in one lump, and he buying it?—That could be done under the present law.

22. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Speaking generally, would you say that in the Hawke's Bay District we have gone beyond the squatting stage?—No, I think not, because there is a good deal of country in Hawke's Bay that is only fit for sheep-farming, and land that is not susceptible of any very great improvement. The law at present is such that we cannot either sell it or lease it. The land requires to be in the possession of a man who can afford to lie out of his money for two or three years. He has to stock it, and to go to a great outlay before he can get anything out of it.

23. That would apply mainly to the land on the boundary between the Hawke's Bay and Auckland Districts?—Yes, pre-eminently to that.

24. In the other portions of Hawke's Bay would you think we have gone beyond the squatting stage?—Yes; wherever you can put a plough in you have gone beyond that stage; but there is a very large area in the hill districts that I think will always be used for grazing sheep.