

25. But it is mainly freehold tenure in the Hawke's Bay District?—Yes; the Bill has but little reference to that district at all; there are only eleven squatters in Hawke's Bay.

26. The most valuable lands there still in the hands of the Crown would be the forest lands?—Yes.

27. And that is unfit for pastoral occupation?—Yes, until it is put in grass.

28. Do I understand you aright that you think there was an excessive division of the Otago runs?—I would say so.

29. And that tended rather to deter people from bidding than encouraging them to?—Yes; in a word it simply tended to give the country again to the present holders to a very large extent.

30. You think that under this Bill there would be inducements in some cases to apply the country to commonage purposes?—Yes; speaking from past experience I know if these clauses were passed there would be a continual clamour and pressure on the Minister to throw the land open for commonage.

31. That means free grass?—Yes.

32. Is it not within your observation that free grass sometimes means no grass?—That has been the operation of commonage over very considerable areas in Otago. The object in providing it has been to afford small settlers the opportunity of running a few cows, but the effect has been that two or three persons—a sort of incipient squatters—have simply kept the others out of it; in fact, they alone really have the ground.

33. And where there is an excessive depasturing of sheep, cattle will not exist?—No; there is a continual bickering among the people about these commonages.

34. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] In the case of the Hawke's Bay District, as proposed in the Government Land Bill, will there be any difficulty in affording facilities at Gisborne, through the District Survey Office, and at Wairoa in giving information by maps and otherwise as to any proposed sales and dealings with the lands?—There will not be the slightest difficulty at Gisborne, because there is a Land Office and Survey Office there; and as a matter of routine all published maps are sent there now. At Wairoa there is no Survey or Land Office, but the County Council are supplied with all maps and information relating to their district; and I know they put them up in their office for general information.

35. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Are sales very extensive in Wairoa?—There have been one or two considerable sales there.

36. These sales do not take place in Hawke's Bay?—No. I may inform the Committee there are extensive areas of Crown lands on the borders of the Auckland and Hawke's Bay Land Districts; but there are difficulties in the way of disposing of some of these lands. For instance, the Waitara Block of about 40,000 acres fronts to the Mohaka River and to the main road to Taupo from Napier. It has been surveyed, and there has been an expenditure of about £800 on roads. It has been offered once or twice, but will not sell because the Board cannot offer it under £1 an acre. It is open land, in blocks of 3,000 or 4,000 acres each.

37. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the position of the Ruaketuri Block?—It is being got ready for sale. It is the main block of Crown land in Wairoa County. It is being surveyed into sections of from 500 to 2,000 acres, according to the country.

38. *Mr. Pearson.*] Do you not think that for purely pastoral country in the North Island a longer term than twenty-one years should be given, because it takes ten years to get it into condition?—I think country like that had better be sold right off at once, because there is so much to do to it; the country has to be created, so to speak, and a man would not go in with so much spirit to create country when it is leasehold as he might if it were freehold, especially when the land is only worth about 7s. 6d. an acre to begin with.

39. *The Chairman.*] Then do you think it would be an improvement in the law to make the term for leasing pastoral lands twenty-one years instead of fourteen?—I think so.

40. *Mr. J. Green.*] Do you think in each run there should be a fair proportion of winter-country? and what winter-country is likely in many parts of Otago to be required for actual *bonâ fide* settlement within the next twenty-one years?—In apportioning the country and marking off the runs, if I had to do it, I would always leave enough winter-country to make the high country workable. If I may use a hackneyed term, I would not let what is called the interests of settlement take so much winter-country as would injure a lot of really good pastoral country.

41. *The Chairman.*] Might you not use a stronger word than injure, and say ruin?—Yes. You want to make the best average use of the whole country, of course.

42. *Mr. Driver.*] Do you think free selection before survey would satisfy settlement, and at the same time settle the runs?—I should be decidedly opposed to that.

43. Is there not in the majority of runs to be let a sufficient quantity of winter-country, and also enough to provide for the wants of agricultural settlement at the same time?—There is.

44. *Mr. J. Green.*] If a lengthened tenure were given, do you not think that, by past experience, we should have to pay compensation to runholders for land that was wanted for settlement?—No, I think not, because it is proposed in the Bill that the country shall be taken in such a manner as will not injure the run. It is to be taken on a year's notice without compensation. There is a good deal of land in Otago that can never be used for settlement, and yet is splendid sheep-country.