

except when a satisfactory reason is given that applications for transfers were made before there were any conditions other than the payment of the first six months' rent required. If applications were made within that time the Board took steps to satisfy itself that the applicant had some good reason for desiring the transfer.

106. Then, the practice was for the Board to satisfy itself that there were sound reasons for such a transfer?—Yes.

107. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Do I understand generally, Mr. Maitland, that the Board always did, and still has to, keep a watchful eye upon the conditions under which land is taken up?—Oh! distinctly; the supervision is the key to the whole thing really—to the systems being carried out as they ought to be.

108. And if it were not for the sharp attention of the Rangers, the Commissioner, and the Board to these matters, there would be considerable evasion of these conditions?—There would be a very slipshod observance of the conditions if they were not the subject of supervision.

109. Do you find, as time goes on, that there is any greater endeavour to evade the conditions now than there was formerly?—No; generally the conditions of settlement are very fairly complied with throughout Otago.

110. To the full extent, with regard to improvements, without pressure being brought to bear upon them?—Yes; as far as regards improvements, there has been less trouble than with anything else. Very often the improvements are rather too heavy for the land. When the land comes to be forfeited or surrendered, where the improvements are too heavy, it is often difficult to find a purchaser.

111. *The Chairman.*] At any rate, the fact remains that numerous applications come in which are in the interest of the same people?—Yes; as when a family endeavours to secure a section through different members applying for it.

112. Therefore, it follows that the people make false declarations?—Yes, strictly speaking, if they are not made entirely in their own interests; but in the case of a man's son making an application, you cannot say he has made a false declaration until you find out how far he is himself going to occupy the land. There is nothing on the face of the application to show that he has made a false declaration.

113. Then, the only check you have upon that is when his application for transfer comes in?—Yes; or when he takes up land under settlement conditions. Whenever the time comes for his having to go into occupation of the land, or put improvements on it, then the Ranger reports him as doing so or not. If he is not doing so, that would be evidence in support of the opinion that he did not take up the land for his own use or benefit. If the Ranger finds other people occupying the land, that would be evidence that the applicant did not take it up for occupation by himself. You have got to wait to see what he does.

114. The only check then is that you can refuse the transfer?—If he applied for a transfer you could refuse it, if you were not satisfied with the position of matters.

115. It also follows, therefore, that that process could be used for speculative purposes—I mean this system of duplicate and triplicate application could?—In regard to land purchased on settlement conditions, this entails upon the purchaser the necessity of living on the land, and making improvements, which is a very effectual check to speculation. The license might be forfeited and payments as well.

116. In practice it has been found effective?—Yes; as I have said, in reply to Mr. Richardson; but in order to make the regulations effective you want to have strict supervision—strict and sufficient supervision and inspection.

117. *Mr. J. McKenzie.*] What supervision have you got under section 16 of the Act of 1887?—A report from the Ranger when an application is made to purchase.

118. In that case no residence is required?—The man must have resided on the land and complied with the conditions. This section gives the owner of a deferred-payment section or perpetual leasehold a right to buy his land when he has complied with the whole conditions of license or lease.

119. What are these conditions?—Different conditions as to substantial improvements on the land, which are spread over the full term of his lease or license. This section gives a man the right to buy land at any time, supposing he has put on it the whole of the required improvements—that is, the whole improvements required to be put on by him during the full term of his lease or license.

120. He can buy within a year if he puts on all the improvements?—If he puts on the whole improvements required under the Act to be put on the land during the currency of his license or lease, and also has complied with the residential condition, he can then buy the land.

121. In twelve months a man can purchase the land, and he can sell it; you cannot prevent him: is not that so?—He is not exempt from any of the original conditions of his license.

122. Within twelve months the man who has complied with the improvement clause of the Act can come and ask his Crown grant from you?—Yes; if he has complied with the improvement conditions to the full extent required by his license or lease to be made during the full term of same.

122A. At the end of twelve months the man who has made all required improvements you have nothing further to do with, as far as residence on the land is concerned?—No; not after he buys.

123. Then, a man is entirely free from the control of the Board when he becomes a freeholder?—Yes; he is like any other freeholder.

124. In answer to a question from some other member you said that the conditions have been well complied with?—Generally so, I said.

125. Does that apply to original purchasers or purchasers extending over many years?—Yes; a number of years.