

district, and I cannot lay my hand on a single case of dummyism in the way it has been interpreted previously.

278. Do you think the ballot system is responsible for a great deal of this trouble?—I believe that families would combine in the same way if there was no ballot, provided there was competition for the lands.

279. *Mr. McKenzie.*] You say, according to your knowledge of dummyism, it does not exist at all?—As qualified. I have explained that if members of families are considered to be dummies it does not exist very largely in this district.

280. Do you not think that, if members of families could carry out dummyism, other people could do the same?—Yes, if they lent themselves to it; but it would be a scandalous abuse of the law.

281. Is it not a fact that the Crown Lands Commissioners are almost the last men to find out anything about dummyism?—They might be the last men excepting for the reports of the Rangers and their own inspection on going round the country. It is not likely that information would be imparted to them by others.

282. Is it not a fact that in a great many cases people look upon making the declarations as a mere matter of form?—I believe it is so to a great extent, unfortunately. I do not say it is right.

283. Is it not a fact that the reason for people looking on it as a matter of form is that no person considers it his duty or business to pull up any other person for making a false declaration, so as to punish him for it? There is no case where anybody has been called upon for making a false declaration. Have you known any case where a Crown Lands Commissioner has taken action?—We have in one case, but it failed. It was the only case in which an information had been laid, and the case broke down.

284. Is not that the reason why people look upon making the declaration as a mere matter of form?—Probably; although I told you before that the Ranger is carefully watching.

285. It is possible for dummyism to exist without you knowing of it?—Quite possible.

286. Is it not a fact that doing away with the residence clause assists people to make false declarations? Do you not think that has had as much to do with it as the ballot system? Has not the ballot system in some cases forced fathers of families to put in a number of applications so as to be able to secure a section?—It has enabled members of families to combine in order to get more chances.

287. It has been done because the ballot system was so uncertain that they had to multiply their chances in order to get a section?—No doubt that is so.

288. Do you not think it would be advisable in any new law the House may be called upon to pass to make provision whereby some person should be responsible for taking action in cases of false declaration, such as yourself, as Commissioner of Crown Lands, where a case came to your knowledge?—I apprehend that that is my duty now. I am bound to take action if a statement is made, and should have no hesitation in doing so.

289. There is nothing in the law at present to ask you to do so, or which enables you to do so at the present time?—Well, if it is thought that the Commissioners would fail to do it it would be better to put a clause in a new Act to that effect.

290. My reason for asking you is the fact that another Commissioner said he did not consider it is his duty to make inquiry as to whether a declaration was false or not?—I can assure you that I have always looked upon it as my duty to bring such a matter before the Board.

291. *Mr. Smith.*] Had your Land Board any suspicion of dummyism when they applied to the Victorian Government for particulars as to the means adopted there for preventing dummyism?—I think some of the members thought there was dummyism. I might add that I believe the application to Victoria was due to clamour in connection with a great sale held here last year. We had hundreds of applications put in, and the family combinations led to very unfair and unwarrantable statements being made about dummyism; and the Land Board was induced to take notice of those public statements.

292. Do you think that it is equally dummyism for members of a family to apply for sections for any other member of a family as it is for them to apply for outsiders? Is it not equally a false declaration on their part, as in the case of titles and transfers?—No; I consider that if a selection is made in the interests of another it is wrong. It need not necessarily follow that the members of a family wilfully declare that which is false: they may make the selection in their own interest.

293. But supposing they apply to your Board for a transfer?—Then that is false and wrong, no doubt.

294. Have there been a large number of applications soon after the sales?—I would not say a large number, but there have been some. Really there has been a very small proportion compared with the number of applications.

295. You have had an immense number of applications?—Many hundreds of applications, but for transfers there were very few.

296. I would ask you if, in the sale mentioned by you, there were a large number of applications for a few sections?—Yes; choice sections have always been applied for times over: they have been applied for by a great number of persons.

297. In your opinion, were they all genuine applications from persons wanting land for themselves, or was a number of the applications from persons wishing to make money by transferring the sections from themselves?—I think a certain proportion of speculators applied, such as clerks and others: it must be so when land is offered for sale.

298. Is not that dummyism?—No, speculation; it is not dummyism.

299. Is it not a bad thing for *bonâ fide* men wanting to settle themselves?—Yes, a bad thing for them; but a good thing for the man who makes the profit.