

300. But bad for the colony?—Bad for the genuine settler.

301. Do you not think that that is a great drawback—a public drawback—as causing people who put in applications for sections to be dissatisfied?—Yes; I have indicated already that I disapprove of that.

302. I would ask you if there is much land taken up during the past year or two settled by persons who already own land, or by persons who own no land at all: what do you think is the proportion of land taken up where it has gone into the hands of people who already own land and that by persons who do not own land?—I am not in a position to say; there is no information given by applicants on this head.

303. I only expect you to give an opinion?—Well, in that case I can tell you that the class of persons who applied in my district during the last two years comprised: (1.) Farmers who were not barred by the limitation although already owning land. (2.) Farmers' sons who were old enough to take up land on their own account (these I take to be the best class of men taking up land); (3.) Men of means—young fellows from England; a very good class, who have money, or who have already been upon runs or estates in New Zealand, and want to obtain an estate for themselves: I think there has been a considerable proportion of this third class. (4.) There is also a fourth class, a very good type of settler or occupier—the improver—that is, the man in business in town, who has made sufficient money to take up land, with a view to improve it, for legitimate occupation by himself or his sons at a future time. Then, I presume, (5), the last class, is the speculator. I ought to have mentioned (6) the working-man—a very important class—and we want special provision made for him. I think we have had in the Wellington District a very satisfactory settlement of the country on the whole during the last two years.

304. But there is a large number of people who have taken up land who already own land in other parts of the colony?—There are a number of men in the South. I have not sufficient knowledge of them to say whether they had parted with their estates; but they are still able to make declarations. A great number of people who have already taken up land under the present Acts have applied and got new holdings.

305. Do you think some alteration should be made in the law similar to that of Victoria, where people owning a certain quantity of land should be barred in favour of those who own no land whatever?—Well, if the man who owned land was a suitable man, I should give it to him in preference to an unsuitable man. I mean, I would have preference shown to the man who knew what he was about in going on land.

306. Still, supposing there were two men, who, in your opinion, were likely to make equally good settlers, one owning 500 acres and the other owning no land whatever: which would you give the preference to?—I should give the preference to the man who owned no land.

307. *Mr. Rhodes.*] What instructions do you give to the Inspectors?—The Ranger? No specific instructions as regards dummyism; but in conversation and in discussing his reports I have repeatedly asked him questions as to dummyism, and he assures me that he knows of no case in which he can lay his hand on a dummy. He reports whether a man has resided or not.

308. What is your definition of a family—how wide?—The husband, wife, and sons and daughters are, I should say, a fair “combination.”

309. Is there much land in this province that it would be wrong to make residential qualification?—No, not to men of the right stamp. They would not hesitate in making selections. Our lands, as a rule, have homestead sites upon them, and are properly situated for occupation—after a time.

310. It would be impossible to compel immediate residence on any bush-land?—It would, certainly.

311. Your fourth- and fifth-class settlers—tradespeople and workmen—in their case, you would not compel residence at once?—I would not compel residence. I would give them special opportunities for acquiring land, with a view to future settlement and occupation.

312. And your idea of the difference between dummyism and speculation is that it depends entirely on the class of people. What is the difference?—A clerk or tradesman here in the town goes into the Land Office and sees a fine block of land for sale. He selects some sections, thinking he can make money out of them. That is the commonest class of speculator. A dummy I understand to be one who is employed to take up land for another.

313. *Mr. Cowan.*] You told us in the first portion of your evidence that dummyism, if it existed at all, was confined to members of families?—Any dummyism known was confined to members of families.

314. What possible objection can there be? Supposing the young men and young women members of families have made the necessary declarations, why should they not become occupiers of the land the same as other individuals?—I do not see any objection. I have explained that in New South Wales it is legal for them to combine and take up land alongside their father's holding.

315. You left the impression on my mind that you objected to members of families doing that here?—I am sorry to have given that impression; I never intended it. So long as the property to be worked is in the interest of the family I see no objection.

316. You are not in a position to say whether the declarations are true or otherwise?—No; we take them all in good faith.

317. And you do not see any reason why members of a family should reside on the sections any more than workpeople and tradespeople?—I do not say they should. It is a common thing for them to get a common estate for the maintenance of them all.

318. We have had evidence given before us here that the ballot system is responsible for a great deal of the duplication of applications?—I believe it is responsible for duplicating applications, because all go in together on the same day, and naturally family combination is resorted to,