

319. In your opinion; these very choice sections, if offered by auction instead of by ballot, would be got fairer?—The land would fall to the men with the most money. It might not fall into the hands of the genuine settler.

320. Then, have you any remedy to propose as to the duplication of applications—anything to suggest?—This: decide to limit the applications. It might be limited to the father and the sons of age; not to allow wives and daughters to come in at all.

321. With reference to age, is that not specified in the Act?—Yes. The remedy really would be to enforce residence in certain cases, and to withhold transfers and titles for a specific time.

322. And you have stated that applications for transfers are few in this district?—Under the Act of 1887, comparatively few considering the number of applications for land received. They are very extensive, no doubt, under the special-settlement clauses of the Act, which comprise very small areas (100 acres each).

323. Does that fact not lead to one conclusion—that dummyism cannot be very rampant?—It is another argument in favour of my contention that it is not rampant in this district. I think we have had about twenty or twenty-five approved applications to transfer out of six or seven hundred under the Act of 1887.

324. *Mr. Reeves.*] You stated that you did not think it would be advisable to enforce residence—immediate residence—on the part of purchasers on most of the land in this district. To what time would you extend that term of non-residence?—At least two years, all being bush-land in course of preparation for homes.

325. But you would withhold the title or right to transfer?—I would do so.

326. That, you think, would prevent dummyism while allowing occupation of bush-land?—If you withhold the right sufficient time, yes. It increases the danger to those meddling in such matters.

327. Then, I presume there is no particular proportion of people who have paid for bush-land under the Act of 1887 who are yet residing on it here?—There is a fair proportion of residence on the lands considering the short time the Act has been in operation, because a genuine class of settlers have taken up the lands.

328. Does that fact check a settler going on the land within two years of the time he buys it?—Yes, no doubt. He waits for roads sometimes two or three years. The want of roads keeps men with families back; but unmarried men go on to the land.

329. Then, it largely depends on the question of roads as to enforced residence?—It is certainly a very important element.

330. You stated that you had taken steps to try to discover whether any dummyism was going on in the province: what are those steps?—Inquiry of the Ranger, who visits each selection to see the people occupied on it; and inquiries by myself as I go round the country. Nothing systematic or defined.

331. What occurs when the land is not resided upon?—As I explained before, residence is not compulsory.

332. But I mean, in the way of compelling your Ranger to report where the land is not resided upon?—We can do nothing. We have got so far ahead with our sales that it is beyond one man's capabilities. We have got behind in our inspections to a great extent.

333. Now, you stated that undoubtedly there was a proportion of speculators among the men who took up land. What is the probable proportion of speculators relatively to the whole of the purchasers?—It is purely an opinion, and it is limited to the rural holdings. I should say, not more than one in ten, if I had to give that opinion—that is, of those who secure the land.

334. Do you attempt to ascertain the occupation or profession of the successful applicants for the land in cases where afterwards they do not reside upon it at all?—No; it is no part of our duty. In one large sale I went into that question, and out of about seventy people I came to the conclusion that there were not more than four who were not genuine settlers.

335. Do you not think it is advisable that there should be some examination into the occupations or professions or positions of the purchasers? Do you not think that that would be valuable information in judging of the *bona fides* of the land-purchasers?—I think it would be very proper to have an opportunity of judging the occupation of intending settlers before allowing them to become purchasers.

336. Do you not think that if we had power to obtain that information it would help you and us to judge of their fitness?—It would.

337. Because it seems to me to discount your opinion as to the *bona fides*, from this fact: that you said you do not know in many of these cases who these people are. That is why I put the question. You have told us, I think, already that a proportion of these purchasers were clerks in towns, and that sort of thing?—It must be so.

338. Do you not think that an examination should be made into their character, position, and occupation?—With regard to that, I think every one should be examined on oath as to his *bona fides* and means.

339. Then, have you known of cases in which *bona fide* settlers of a good class have come up from the South Island trying to get land here, and who have had great difficulty in getting it?—Yes, I have known some who were not successful in the ballot when the lands thrown open for selection were surveyed lands only.

340. Do you think that if speculative purchase was stopped as soon as could be there would be quite enough *bona fide* settlers to take the land up?—Yes, I do, certainly.

341. Do you not think that would check the disposal of land?—It would check it to a very limited amount.

342. *Mr. Thompson.*] Do you think that if the Land Act was altered so as to compel a certain period of residence on each section before the title is issued to the selector, that it would be a means of checking any of these abuses spoken of?—I do,