

613. And you absolutely, Mr. Weber, say that you had no intention, if you took up this land, of parting with it until you had done the whole of the improvements required by law?—Yes.

614. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Had Mr. Baker acted as agent for you before?—He had acted in connection with our own property, belonging to the family, but not in connection with any Government land at all.

615. Had he not done work for you privately?—Yes, he had.

616. Was there any arrangement as to who should pay the money for the land—the deposit? Did Mr. Baker deposit?—Yes, Mr. Baker deposited it for me.

617. Was there any arrangement about payment? Did you settle the terms?—No.

FRIDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1890.

W. W. McARDLE, Member of the Wellington Land Board, examined.

*Witness:* I have read a leader in the *Pahiatua Star*, also an extract from a newspaper containing a letter signed by Mr. Howlett. Well, in explanation, I will inform you of the facts of the case: My daughter applied for a section of land about twelve months ago; she was then just past nineteen years of age. Since that time she became engaged to be married, and, owing to the fact that her intended, now her husband, was a property-owner, and did not wish to have anything to do with the land, she parted with her interest. Particulars were sent down to Mr. Marchant with the application. I never interviewed Mr. Marchant or any member of the Land Board with reference to the transfer. Mr. Marchant brought it up in the usual way, stating that he had no objections to offer to the transfer. The transfer was agreed to by the Board on the voices. As a member of the Land Board I took no part in the transfer, neither have I any interest whatever, nor did I ever have any interest, in the section. The facts as stated in the report by Mr. Marchant are correct. I might say that Mr. Black, the editor of the *Pahiatua* paper, stated to me that his reason for putting in the article was that people were under the impression that my daughter had been favoured in getting a transfer as compared with other applicants. I have explained in my letter to him that this was not so. Some time ago a very stringent rule was passed by the Land Board in order to prevent, as far as possible, dummyism. One of the conditions imposed by the Board was that, unless a person made a declaration that he was leaving the district, his transfer was not agreed to. I may say that all along I have been opposed to this course, because it induced a great number of people to make declarations which were not exactly true. A few meetings ago the Board resolved that in future every application should be considered on its merits, and if they were satisfied that a better class of settler was found in the new applicant than the present one who was parting with his interest, that would be the principal condition on which to agree to the transfer; and this course has been followed. This course might have a tendency to induce speculative applications in the first instance in the hope that transfers might be allowed afterwards. I do not believe that a great deal of this sort of thing has been going on; there may have been a little. In the bush districts there are a great many drawbacks to settlement; the men very often find that they have taken up land without sufficient capital to carry out improvements and to occupy the land. You must in these cases either transfer their interest or sacrifice the money they have put into the land. With reference to the question of dummyism and false declarations, I am very strongly of opinion that the ballot system is a mistake. Neither do I believe in the auction system. But I understand there is a system in vogue in Victoria where the applicant has to appear before a Commission and to make what statement he may think proper. Then, from the applicants, the Commissioners usually select the man they think most suitable. Of course this has its objections, as every system has, though it is said to work very well. A gentleman who is well aware of the way in which the Act is worked in Victoria has informed me that it had done a great deal towards stopping dummyism, as there is a searching inquiry into the character of every man's application. I think there may be a few cases in the Forty-mile Bush that might be looked upon as partly dummy cases, but I do not think there are many.

TUESDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 1890.

Mr. JAMES DANIEL CLIMIE examined.

618. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a District Surveyor. I have been lately surveying in the Puketoi district. I have surveyed these blocks referred to by Mr. Marchant.

619. Would you be kind enough to tell us anything you know about this question that will help this Committee in its inquiries?—I really know very little about it. It is understood that people wishing a section have sent in a number of applications to enhance their chances of getting that favourite section.

620. Do you know of these cases yourself?—Well, I have heard it in general conversation in my camp amongst the applicants. It has been done.

621. Is that for sections which are taken up on purchase, or other systems?—Perpetual lease and deferred payment.

622. Are they bush sections?—All bush—yes. Two blocks which I have surveyed have been especially sought after—namely, the Tiraumea-Makuri and the Makuri-Puketoi Blocks, inasmuch as for a single section in one case there were 100 applicants.

623. All these applications would come in to the Land Office, Wellington?—Yes.

624. Otherwise, I suppose you know nothing, except what you hear people talking about?—Just hearsay. I only know of two instances on my block of people being in occupation of more than their legal quantity. They may be really acting as agents for the other people.