

(In the case of small blocks or estates being offered, there the Land Board may restrict the application district to a small area around those lands; and in the cases of large blocks or extensive estates, the application area might be noted as extending to the whole Island or colony. In some instances old residents, who have been the pioneers of a district, and who have been looking forward for years to obtaining a section either for themselves or to settle their sons close to the old home—I say, these old settlers have frequently seen men from other districts, new arrivals from other colonies, by the haphazard of a mechanical ballot, obtain the cherished and hoped-for allotments, and these old colonists or their sons have been compelled to leave the old locality and seek their fortunes elsewhere.)

2. That, in the case of settlement estates, no relatives or the immediate connections of the person or persons from whom the estate was purchased shall be eligible for the first ballot, but that any of these may be allowed to make subsequent application.

(In a recent ballot four sections out of seven were obtained by the sons-in-law, &c., of the man from whom the estate was bought. We have had experience of cases where several members of a family have swamped a ballot and excluded many other applicants. In one particular case lately, three brothers and one sister were all successful in drawing sections, whilst other individuals were thrown out. In another case several members of a family put in applications specially against another single applicant, and obtained the coveted allotment.)

3. That married men having a family should have preference at the first ballot over single men or men without family.

4. If any applicant is unsuccessful at the first ballot, then such applicant shall have two chances at any subsequent first ballot; and, failing for the second time, the applicant shall ballot with others of the same class only at any following first ballot, the intervals between each ballot being not more than six months.

5. That any male applicant of the age of seventeen and upwards under the optional system, and of nineteen and upwards under the Land for Settlements Acts, be allowed to apply, provided that some person who is "landless" be responsible for such applicant until he comes of age—depositing security, &c. That such under-age applicant reside continually on the land, and be not allowed to transfer until he is twenty-six years of age and the conditions have been fully complied with, &c.

(We have had several applications for sections on estates by applicants under twenty-one years of age. Some of these applicants were educated at Lincoln College; their fathers and brothers were storekeepers who were "landless," and were most anxious to have these young men settled on the land, but were debarred by the present regulations.)

6. That power be given to the Land Board, after due examination of applicants in committee, to reject any applicant without giving any reason for so doing, and that their decision be final and without appeal.

(In our experience it has happened that, after due and searching examination of an applicant, the Land Board was reluctantly obliged to accept him as an "approved applicant," although we were all morally certain that he was propped up and supported by—in fact, was simply acting for—another man; yet we could not actually prove this. Again, an applicant might for other reasons be a very undesirable person to thrust amongst respectable, well-doing settlers, and it would be very commendable that the Board should have power to shunt such a character without further complications such as appeal or giving reasons, &c.)

7. That the system of the "grouping" of sections be abolished, so that any applicant may have the right to select any section he chooses.

8. That only one member of any family be allowed at the first ballot for any lands whatever.

(This is to prevent a monopoly of sections by a family to the exclusion of others. For instance, an application is made to have lands thrown open in certain localities—say, out of a run, &c.—and forthwith all the members possible of an interested family send in separate applications, and often completely overwhelm isolated applications. See also note to suggestion No. 2.)

NOTE.—The foregoing suggestions have reference only to the first ballot for any sections whatever, and all remaining lands should be open to the general public immediately after the declaration of the first ballot, or the day after allotments have been declared open for selection.

G. J. ROBERTS,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

CANTERBURY.

REPORT from THOMAS HUMPHRIES, Esq., Commissioner of Crown Lands, Canterbury.

Department of Lands and Survey,
District Office, Christchurch, 21st July, 1903.

IN compliance with the direction contained in your circular of the 9th instant, at the instance of the Right Hon. the Premier, to give the result of my experience chiefly on the question of the inefficiency of the present system of ballot in preventing the introduction of very undesirable elements, and also to suggest a more effective method, I have the honour to forward herewith some comments based upon my experience of its workings, and suggestions as to alterations in the method which, in my opinion, would in a very great measure, if not completely, remove the anomalies and objections that now prevail.

I have ventured to traverse several points in the existing statutory procedure. My excuse for doing so is the belief that the Right Hon. the Premier desires to elicit the candid opinion of officers who have for years been brought into daily contact with its working, and whose opportunities of detecting weaknesses, if any, are in consequence particularly favourable for doing so.

The Surveyor-General, Wellington.

THOS. HUMPHRIES,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.