

37. And if a man acquired by lease or purchase a block adjacent he would not be in too good a position—he would be weak on the side of not having sufficient land?—That has been the cause of a good deal of the trouble at Cheviot, and there has been a tendency for the last fifteen years to increase the areas, especially amongst the smaller ones.

38. Whereas some sections at Cheviot would stand subdivision, others would stand adding more to to make them a safe proposition?—Yes, especially with regard to the smaller ones.

39. And where land is sold at auctions and happens to be acquired by the adjacent owner you do not think it is any detriment to the settlement of the country, and is an advantage to the holders of those sections?—I think it is to their advantage. I think it is a great mistake putting people on too small sections. There are some people who will take anything so long as it is a Government section, and it is detrimental to the State's interest that a section like that should be set apart.

40. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Mr. Witty asked you if you were a relative of Mr. Holton's?—Yes.

41. Are you also a relative of Mr. Forbes's?—Yes, a brother-in-law. I think until Mr. Forbes brought the matter up hardly any one knew about it.

42. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You said you thought it was detrimental to the State that such small sections should be open for settlement. What would be your objection to this section being held by an individual owner instead of being merged in the adjoining property?—Well, it is out of the way. Had it been in some other part of Cheviot where there was employment to be got it would be different. I look upon this section as only possible for a residential site.

43. Is it not a fact that there is a fruitgrower in the immediate vicinity of this section doing remarkably well?—I do not know whether he is doing remarkably well, but there is one there. You cannot compare the two sections. One is a good section and well sheltered—lies in a valley—but I do not know whether the man is doing well. He was supposed to start there with money. His wife earns £2 a week teaching, and I think if a man was making a good living he would not expect his wife to go out and work as well.

44. You would not see any other objection to a small settlement there on the 7½ acres than what you have just stated?—The only objection is from a residential point of view: that is the only man who I think would be likely to take it up, and he would have to travel into the heart of Cheviot or into Mackenzie before he would be able to reach his employment. I take it a man occupying a section like that would prefer to be surrounded by farmers.

45. You will admit, of course, that the section would have been open to the public by advertisement to settle on, would it not?—Yes. In any case it will be now—it is still open to the public.

46. Well, if a man used to farming occupations had drawn that section, do you not think there is a likelihood of his being able to supplement his income among the neighbouring farmers there?—He could only work inland; he has the seashore on one side; and if I was going to take up a section and was looking for work and dependent upon outside work I would have the farmers all round me. Lady Campbell holds the bulk of the land between the section and the township, and that is five miles away. A man would then have to travel five miles or more every morning to his work, and I think he would be likely to want a section in the vicinity of his work.

47. You would not like all the small settlers to come into the township?—No. The township is the nearest place any one would be likely to get work at from this section.

48. You think it would be a mistake to settle a small section of 5 acres there where a farmer could work on the section and add to his income?—Yes, the tendency has been to merge these sections. There have been too many of these small sections. There are many cases where they have been enlarged.

49. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] Therefore you do not think this is a particularly suitable section for a working-man?—I do not see how it is possible to make a living off it.

50. You do not think it is suitable for a residence?—No.

51. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] Only that it is near the seashore?—Yes. There are plenty of small sections at Cheviot.

JOHN STRAUCHON further examined. (No. 8.)

1. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] It has been stated before the Committee that it is very unusual for the Minister and the Department in Wellington to disagree with the recommendations of the Land Board. I want to know from your experience whether the statement is correct or not, or whether it is quite common for the Minister and the Department to refer recommendations of the Land Board back for alteration?—It is quite common. It has occurred many times.

2. Can you think of any instances?—Yes. I picked out a few examples in regard to the question asked me the other day. I took out a list of a few, but if you could only give me the names in order to trace them we could hunt them up in ten minutes. We have no special index record of such cases.

3. Would you mind reading the list you have prepared?—Yes. Land Board recommendations disapproved by Minister of Lands:—January, 1912: Auckland Land Board recommended that Section 5, Block III, Rotorua Survey District, 175 acres, be disposed of to Ellen Head without competition. Recommendation declined by Minister. February, 1912: Otago Land Board recommended that Moutere runs be not withdrawn from sale. Minister disagreed, and runs were withdrawn. May, 1912: Auckland Land Board recommended that 200 acres of Crown land in Block X, Pakaumanu Survey District, be granted to M. S. Baker, the holder of 1,092 acres of adjoining freehold land. Minister refused. This case was reconsidered in November, 1912, and