

23. Do you know anything of Stuckey's case?—No, except what I saw in the papers.

24. You know he is set down as owning 600 acres?—Yes.

25. And another Stuckey as owning 511 acres?—Yes.

26. It was originally an l.i.p. lease—an education lease?—I do not know.

27. Do you know that those two people are not connected with each other?—I was told so.

28. One is a nephew of the other, but they are working different farms and are absolutely distinct?—That is what I understood.

29. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] I want to read this paragraph which appeared in a number of papers, as follows: "All through this district" (Mangaweka) "there are agents out, their pockets lined with gold, in order to tempt the small farmer to take advantage of the Reform Government's legislation to convert his leasehold into a freehold and hand it over to the man possessed of capital. In this manner our best dairying lands are being converted into sheep-runs, families are leaving the country and the townships impoverished." I want to know whether you can say from your own inquiries or from any other source if there is any truth in that statement I have just quoted?—No truth whatever.

30. Do you know whether there has been any aggregation as the result of last year's legislation?—No, not as a result of it, but some took place just afterwards, of two or three 10-acre sections about Mangaweka.

31. Will you explain what took place?—It was transferred to other people who held 5-acre or 10-acre sections alongside.

32. But even though that aggregation took place so far as those 5-acre or 10-acre sections were concerned, there may have been nothing objectionable in it?—Yes.

33. I have no doubt you know of a number of instances where it was not prejudicial to the interests of the country that a man should be allowed to take an adjoining section?—I know of hundreds of them: they go through almost every day. It is the Land Board's place to search them and then send them on to you for your approval.

34. That is a pretty common form?—Yes, as long as they keep within the limits.

35. And you think it justifiable?—Yes. Those lands that are questioned beyond Masterton were cut up into areas of too small a size in the original time. They wasted a lot of money in making roads, and that has been remedied by one neighbour buying out another, but still keeping within the limit.

36. I suppose you know of many cases where this so-called aggregation took place where the tenure was Government leasehold?—Yes, within the limits, of course.

37. Always within the limit provided by the Land Act of 1907?—Yes.

38. Is it your experience that there is more aggregation in this way in the case of leaseholds than in the case of freeholds?—It comes under my notice more, but I could not say it was a fact. I do not see the aggregations under the freehold, but I see them under the leasehold.

39. You would see the aggregations of freeholds since the Act of 1907?—Yes.

40. *Mr. Witty.*] In regard to the taking up of these 5-acre and 10-acre sections, has any individual to your knowledge taken up more than one area?—Under the Village Settlements Act they cannot—they are limited to one lot, unless the regulations are altered.

41. You say that you know of cases since the Act was passed where one person has bought out another who already held one section?—I think there are three cases of small sections, but they could not aggregate unless they first of all acquired the freehold.

42. I am talking about the freehold. Do you know of any cases of a man already holding one section who has taken up more than one other section in addition?—No, I cannot recollect any. There were three sections, but they are in different parts of the district referred to, as far as I recollect. There were three in the Mangaweka and Taihape districts—one near the Mataroa Tunnel, one near the township, and one at Mangaweka.

43. They were not taken up by one man?—No, not by one man—they were many miles apart.

44. *The Chairman.*] Have these aggregations to be approved by the Land Board before they go to the Minister?—Yes.

45. Does the Land Board give the approval after inquiry or before?—After inquiry.

THOMAS NOEL BRODRICK examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wellington.

2. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] The point the Committee is interested in is as to whether these blocks of land belong to families, or whether the holders are relatives or in any way connected. How many of the holders of the lands in the case of the Wilsons are working together?—I know they are widely separated. I supplied plans showing the positions of the various holdings of the Wilsons, and I am quite aware they do not belong to the one family at all. I did not inquire about that, and was not prepared to give evidence about it. After I sent in my report I met some of the Wilsons and asked them about it, and they told me that the other people were not related to them in any way. I know that there are two families of the Wilsons, and I believed that there were three, and that is all I can say about it. I would like to mention this point: that it may be perfectly lawful for various members of one family to hold separate holdings without it being aggregation. That is the difficulty we find in carrying out the law. We may know that a man's father may hold land, and he comes to us and declares that he is landless and we know he is. We cannot refuse him the land because we do not know what he is going to do with it.

3. Nothing that you have in the way of legal power ever affects these particular holdings?—No.