

4. *Mr. Guthrie.*] In regard to the Wilsons, the mistake was made in connecting them as all the one family?—Yes.

5. You do not know who the Wilsons are?—I know some of them belong to the J. G. Wilson family. Young Wilson told me that the other Wilsons were not related to him at all.

6. And that is no doubt because J. G. Wilson's name was mentioned, and the family is supposed to be big landowners, that all the other Wilsons were connected with them in the reports that appeared in the Press?—Yes, I think that was a mistake.

7. Do you know that there are four distinct Wilson families who are not connected in any way with each other?—No, I do not know that. I knew that there were at least two, and I believed there were more, and that the holdings were widely separated in some cases.

8. Do you know how the land they hold is classed?—I did not see it myself, but I think a good deal of it is pastoral land. You would probably be able to get that from Mr. Lundius.

9. I mean, first- or second-class land?—A good deal of it would be second-class land. Some years ago a lot of the land we would now class as first-class land was classed as second-class at that time.

10. *The Chairman.*] Is there any truth in the statement that this aggregation has been caused by the legislation of last year?—At the time that letter was published we had only sold 10 acres in the vicinity of Mangaweka that had been converted into freehold under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1912. I searched and have given particulars of every holding that had been sold in the district at that time under that Act.

11. You heard the statement read from the Press by Mr. Massey which really caused this inquiry to be made. The statement is "that the small farmer is being tempted 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." Is that statement, in your opinion, true or not?—I have no means of knowing anything about it.

12. Do you know whether aggregation has taken place as a result of last year's legislation?—Not so far as I am aware. It goes out of our hands when it is made freehold, but at the time I had that search made in March there had only been a few sections bought altogether. I know that did not refer to them. They mixed things up. Round about Mangaweka that land was sold years ago on the o.r.p. system, and that is what has been aggregated to a large extent. People acquire the freehold and then do what they like with it. They could do so with land sold prior to 1907.

13. I want to know whether, in your opinion, the legislation of last year caused this aggregation or not, or whether it was done previously?—No, it was done prior to that.

14. *Mr. Guthrie.*] In your experience as Commissioner of the Lands Department, do you find that originally sections have been cut up too small for people to make a living off under the different settlement tenures?—In some places, yes.

15. And the Land Board has always been willing, so far as the law allows, to permit the aggregating of these sections in a reasonable way to give a man a chance to make a living?—Yes.

HARRY LUNDIUS examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Crown Lands Ranger in the Wellington Land District.

2. *Mr. Forbes.*] You have made inquiries into this matter of the aggregation of land?—Yes, I reported to Mr. Brodrick, the Commissioner.

3. And this is your report that we have before us?—Yes.

4. And did you find that there was any warrant for the statements made in the Press about the aggregation of land going on in the district?—Well, to my mind, it is the thin end of the wedge; but, as far as I can say as to aggregation, I do not think the statements were warranted.

5. You think there is a certain amount of aggregation going on in the district?—I know in several places where a neighbour has been bought out, and thereby the district has been depleted of one settler.

6. That is going on, according to your observation and inquiry?—Yes.

7. Well, is there any method you can suggest to prevent that?—The trouble is that people can make it freehold, and in the case of land taken up before 1907 under the o.r.p. tenure there is no limit. You cannot prevent it under the law as at present.

8. Was the bulk of the land in that district taken up before 1907?—It has been going on for about fifteen years under the o.r.p. tenure, and the bulk of the land was taken up before 1907.

9. So that nothing can be done under the present law?—No.

10. *Mr. T. W. Rhodes.*] With regard to the specific cases mentioned of the Wilsons, Gorringes, Masons, and Stuckey, did they take place prior to the Act of 1907?—The lands were bought prior to the passing of the Act of 1907.

11. And any aggregation that went on in connection with them would be prior?—Yes.

12. Therefore it was not the result of the legislation of 1912?—No.

13. In the report it states that Wilsons' ranged from 1904 to 1911, Gorringes' from 1911, and Stuckey's from 1912: is that to your knowledge correct?—Yes, so far as I know.

14. Do you know whether in the Wilsons there are different families?—I think there are two or three different families. I have not been in touch with that district for the last five or six years, so I am not well acquainted with it.

15. Do you know whether the different holdings are adjoining or widely separated?—I think there is one section some distance apart and two or three close together, speaking from memory.

16. Do you know how many miles they are apart?—About four or five, roughly speaking. One is separate.