

to such an extent that there are now only eighteen. Of the original settlers Messrs. Davane, Munro, Mickelson, and McCarthy are said to be the only ones who have not disposed of their holdings. The extent to which the holdings have been aggregated may be gauged from the following facts, which are the result of a careful investigation: There are now six settlers who, between them, are in possession of no less than twenty-one of the original holdings. One settler who originally held 100 acres has absorbed the holdings of six other one-time settlers, and he now has 1,400 acres. Another settler purchased four of the original holdings, and the area held by him now totals 1,200 acres. Another holds 1,800 acres, having acquired the holdings of several of his neighbours. Another who bought out three of his neighbours now holds about 1,100 acres; and still another settler who bought out three others is now the possessor of 1,000 acres. Other settlers have acquired either one or two of the original holdings, and aggregation is still going on. Of course, the effect on the district is apparent, and the settlers now find that they are minus a good many of the advantages that were theirs when the number of settlers was greater. The store delivery-carts at one time made regular visits to the block, but the number of settlers now does not warrant a continuance of this boon, and a big order now has to be made up and sent in before the storekeepers will undertake delivery. The settlers who are still in possession of small holdings are feeling the effects of this, and are bearing the brunt of the aggregation evil. It has been alleged in certain quarters that land-aggregation in this district was due to the passing of an Act whereby holders of land under the lease-in-perpetuity system are enabled to acquire the freehold by paying the original capital value of the land, plus 1 per cent. for each year that the land has been held under the leasehold system. The facts are that aggregation has been going on for a number of years, and a number of cases have occurred since the Act stated came into force in November last. It is stated, however, that some of the sections at the present time are being freeholded with the object of selling them to adjoining settlers, and there does not appear to be any legal means of checking the evil. It is claimed that the chief cause of land-aggregation in the Te Kapua district is that the holdings were originally too small for the settlers to make a living on; but presumably a good number of them made enough out of their original holdings to enable them to buy out their neighbours, and this may be taken as proof enough that the land was yielding a good return. It is all good land and is carrying an average of two and a half sheep to the acre, and the carrying-capacity will be largely increased when the area under cultivation is increased. A holding of 100 acres may be too small to provide a decent living, but 200 acres of this land may be made to yield a satisfactory return. There may be some excuse for aggregation within reasonable limit, but that limit has been greatly exceeded by those who now hold over 500 acres of this land. The farmer of 100 acres must of necessity make his land yield more profit per acre than the holder of 500 acres, or he could not make a living off it." I am not so narrow-minded as to lead you to infer that it is not right that some people should not have 500 acres. There is some country where it would be impossible for a man to get a living out of 500 acres; but those sections I am referring to in the Kawhatau Valley, there are some men who went there eighteen or twenty years ago who have reared families and made a living on 100 acres of land, and to turn round and say that this land I refer to of Gorrings', Wilsons', and Stuckeys' is not capable of keeping numerous families is contrary to fact.

6. *Mr. Anderson.*] Are there many of them?—There are several families there who came from Timaru in the South Island. They evidently came from very good stock, and I know in all those cases they had large families. This information I am now giving is what I obtained when travelling round the district. The article further states, "Aggregation simply means that land which is capable of producing £3 or £4 per acre when farmed in small holdings will produce only about half the amount when used merely for grazing purposes, and little or no attention is paid to cultivation." I believe I am well within the mark when I say that the Kawhatau Valley through aggregation has lost over one hundred and fifty souls during the last few years. On the blocks of land possessed by the Gorringe family there are eight individuals employed, and it originally kept some dozens of people. "Apart from the aspect presented from the viewpoint of a political economist, there is to be considered the baneful effect of reaggregation on the business life of the towns." Those who visited Mangaweka would be shocked to see the number of empty houses and shops as compared with what we had eight or nine years ago. The attendance at our school has fallen off, and business people complain bitterly of the loss due to aggregation, and this curse is accentuated by the insertion of the clause in the Land Bill of 1912, and the evil effects of that legislation is going to be disastrous to this country before another five years have passed. "It is, however, a serious matter for the townspeople, as every reduction in the number of settlers has a retarding influence on the progress of the town, as well as on the general prosperity of the country as a whole." We find the present Government and previous Governments did the same, spending thousands of pounds in repurchasing blocks of land while they are allowing aggregation to go on, and you will have to pay exorbitant prices for the land to get it back again. I contend it is time that the representatives of the people of this Dominion brought in legislation to stop the speculation and aggregation that is going on in different parts of the country. I know the newspapers made certain remarks and denied the truth of what I said about the aggregation going on round about Utiku. The following is an illustration in regard to Utiku: "Some years ago a block of Native land, containing about 2,000 acres, and covering the whole area between the main road south of Utiku and the Ridge Road, was subdivided into nine sections by the owners, but for some reason or other these sections were leased to only two persons working as partners. The passing of these nine 222-acre sections into the hands of one firm was bad enough, but in a recent transaction the same firm has acquired an additional 1,200 acres of first-class land, comprising five sections, in the Awarua 1A No. 2 Block, which were owned by three Natives. This firm is now in possession of about 4,000 acres in all,