

71. How many were there formerly?—Between thirty and forty.

72. I think you said that the attendance at the school in Mr. Guthrie's old district has gone down 30 per cent.?—Yes.

73. There are times in a district when children pass the school age and there are no young ones coming on: is it through that, or because the people are leaving the district?—People leaving the district.

74. Have you seen the blocks on the map that have been aggregated?—I just saw the Wilsons'.

75. Are those correctly stated on the map?—They are correct with the exception of 1,700 acres not coloured and not included. It was originally leased by Brown.

76. To whose block should it be added?—To Gorrings'.

77. You stated that land agents are travelling around. Are they travelling round to buy up for aggregation purposes?—Yes, to buy up for settlers who already have land there. In the presence of the representative of the *Auckland Star* we had cases and names mentioned of people outside this district as far back as the Forty-mile Bush where agents had written to buy sections to be aggregated, and I think in that connection I was quite justified in making a statement of that kind in the Press that land agents were out and speculation was rife. I think I have proved that in connection with transactions that have taken place with regard to absentees, people who hold land for a few months and then sell it again, and never reside on it.

78. I think you said the clause in the Land Bill would be detrimental to Mangaweka: in what way?—By aggregating all the small village holdings and by purchasing the fee-simple of all l.i.p. lands. Of course, in connection with these sections we have the Land Board, which is supposed to be the watch-dog in connection with land transactions of this kind, but the Board is now a nonentity, because a person comes along and goes outside the Land Board and can buy the fee-simple of the land without consulting them.

79. Therefore it has not been in the interest of the small districts that this Land Bill was passed?—I do not think it has.

80. You said that the reason the Land Department provided for small sections of 8 and 10 acres at Mangaweka was because occupiers were able to work for others outside?—Yes, that is so.

81. And is there still enough work?—Yes, those residing on the sections get plenty of work.

82. *Mr. Anderson.*] When did this aggregation take place—prior to the 1st January, 1913?—Yes, and since the 1st January.

83. And is Gorrings' land aggregation?—Yes. That has been going on periodically ever since they took up the sections over ten years ago. My point was this: that the statements made by my opponents that there was no land speculation going on were misleading. Take Gorrings' case: I look upon them as land-grabbers and land speculators, and to prove what I say I will give you this information: Prior to Frank Gorrings coming into the Mangaweka district he held first two small sections of 200 acres in the Pohangina Valley. He then bought out Brown Bros.' section of 640 acres, he also held Lewis's section of several hundred acres, and then 600 acres at Komako. Later on he sold his interest in those properties at an enormous profit. He then came to Mangaweka, and was joined in further land transactions by his brother, and they are still speculating. Now they are going down to the Manawatu line and buying up farms there, and before long you will have a repetition of aggregation in the Manawatu district. It is reported they can get money from Home at 3 per cent., and with this they can buy up their neighbours, and eventually you will have sheep-runs instead of dairying in the Manawatu district. In addition to the land marked on the plan, they have a block of 1,700 acres which is not coloured on the plan adjoining their own property at Kawhatau, and also 200 acres purchased from Mr. Phyn last April.

84. Then the passing of the Land Act of last year had nothing to do with the aggregation of Gorrings' land?—As far as the 200 acres purchased from Phyn is concerned, because they bought that last April, with the addition of the Native lease of 1,700 acres.

85. Had they any power to purchase that under the old law?—I could not say.

86. Was the 200-acre section a leasehold?—Yes, it was on the o.r.p. tenure.

87. They had not power to purchase that section under the old law?—I could not say positively whether they had power or not.

88. Had the occupier turned it into freehold?—No.

89. But the Gorrings have?—Yes.

90. Do the same remarks you made about the Gorrings apply to the Wilsons?—No, not to the same extent. The Wilsons have owned their properties all along. Soon after they went there they acquired 200 acres, and then a lease of several hundred acres.

91. Have they acquired any land since the passing of last year's Act?—No.

92. I am talking about the big holders. Have any others but the Gorrings?—Not those I have mentioned.

93. So that there was power under the old law to aggregate?—Yes.

94. Has the only aggregation in your district been in connection with the village settlements?—No. In connection with the Masons and Stevens and others mentioned, that was under the Act of last year.

95. Were the Masons' and Stevens's farming lands?—There are two families of Stevens. The one I am referring to is Archie Stevens in connection with village allotments, but Masons had purchased land outside that altogether. Although they aggregated they had power under the old Act. It was not done under the new Act.

96. The only aggregation that has taken place has been in connection with the village settlements?—Yes, in Mangaweka, that is so.