

212. Did they buy that land?—I think they leased it. That is Phyn's section. They only bought the freehold in March or April last. I am only giving this information as an illustration and not out of any personal feeling.

213. With regard to the other Wilsons, there was no connection between those families?—None whatever.

214. The sections in the Te Kapua district were known as the Palmerston Knights of Labour block?—Yes.

215. And it was found to be cut up into areas of too small a size?—Some of it was, but some of the land there is far superior to that which we have at Te Kapua. Hintz has some of the finest blocks there.

216. This settlement was very badly off for roads?—Yes.

217. Do you not think that has had a great deal to do with the aggregating of land?—I cannot say that in every case. I know of men who I have been intimately acquainted with who have been dissatisfied with their bargain and who have had opportunities of acquiring larger sections in other parts of the country at considerably less than what they realised on their land. I know a man who sold his property of 200 acres there and he got sufficient out of the sale of the 200 acres to buy 850 acres up on the Main Trunk line.

218. You know the Cantons—they came from Palmerston?—Yes.

219. And they sold out there because they thought they were going to pick up more land?—Yes.

220. All this aggregation we have been alluding to has taken place in years gone by?—Yes, during the last ten years, and it is still going on.

221. You say there are six settlers holding twenty-one sections?—Yes.

222. The areas would be about 2,000 acres?—They would average about that.

223. In the district within ten or twelve miles radius at least sixty families have gone?—Yes, throughout the county I have mentioned.

224. That includes the Hawhaengo Settlement?—Yes, and out as far as Te Kapua.

225. You are of opinion that some of this aggregation was justifiable?—Oh, yes, in connection with those inferior small sections. In connection with the small sections in the Hawhaengo and Pemberton Settlements they were justified in aggregating.

226. The only objection you have is in regard to the large areas?—Yes, and also the township sections. It is a great mistake, and driving the people out of the country.

227. You say that Guthrie Brothers have aggregated ten sections?—Yes.

228. Do you know there were six or eight sections lying there for years that no one would take up?—Yes, I know there were some lying there.

229. And Munro gave up his section?—Yes.

230. Because there was no means of getting on to them and no homesteads?—It has turned out that those sections your sons have are among the most prolific of any sections in that district.

231. There is no aggregation about that—the two of them have the original holdings, one having 500 acres and the other 600 acres?—The information supplied to me was that there are ten sections. The County Council has it down as ten sections.

232. In order to work those sections are you aware that they had to buy a homestead, and with the sanction of the Land Board and approval of the Ranger after he came and inspected the thing they got the extra section?—There is no doubt access to some of the sections was difficult.

233. Are you aware that the Land Board approved of what the Guthrie Brothers have done for the purpose of true settlement?—Yes, that is apparent.

234. Do you admit there is no aggregation of ten sections seeing that was originally taken up in two holdings?—Yes, according to your statement.

235. And with the approval and after being advertised by the Board?—Yes, that is quite right.

236. What you say about the ten sections is not correct—your information is wrong—that those sections are on the valuation roll as separate sections?—I think the Council was quite right; but you had several sections there yourself, and I think in taking them they have also counted those sections you held.

237. You attribute only to the fact of last year's legislation the aggregation of the village settlements at Mangaweka?—Yes, and it also applies to all l.i.p. sections, because they will have the same opportunity of aggregating by converting them into freehold all round our district.

238. In regard to Stevens, he wanted to sell out?—Yes.

239. And Mason bought him out?—Yes.

240. And Stevens came back and wanted to buy the section back?—Yes; there are two or three absentees like that. All the country right up to the Makohine is in the same position. They put managers on and the owners are absentees. They have miles of country suitable for cutting up into dairy farms. In regard to the Masons, they took up three blocks of 1,000, 500, and 200 acres: the two former have been repurchased by Stevens, the other is uninhabited at the present time. This was purchased within the last twelve months, but not under the Act of 1912; but the Act would have made no difference.

241. *The Chairman.*] You are not an expert in regard to land for sheep-carrying?—No.

242. In regard to the price of land at Kawhatau, I understand from your evidence that the price was about £15 an acre?—Certain portions of it.

243. You also referred to property purchased by Mr. John Marshall from Mr. Wheeler: are you aware that that property was purchased for about £9 an acre?—Of course, now you are going right under the ranges. I am not referring to that—I am referring to the lower Kawhatau, not in the vicinity of the ranges. The statement was made by the Ranger that the lower and upper Kawhatau was improved property and only worth from £8 to £10 an acre. To prove