

that his statement was wrong I told the Committee this morning that I had it on the very best authority that one of the Wilsons wanted £15 an acre for his land. I am prepared to say that Gorrings's land with the homestead would not be sold for £20 an acre. That land is thoroughly improved, and is worth £25 an acre.

244. Are you aware of the fact that this land had been sold for £9 an acre?—That is so, but then it is hardly a fair way to put it. Although that land was sold for £9 an acre, I would sooner give £15 an acre for this land than £9 for that nearer the ranges.

245. You referred to the Marshalls as having plenty of land, and you referred to aggregation. Are you aware that he has four children without land?—Yes, but I know the Marshall family also possess something like 20,000 acres of good land in one block.

246. The land that has been referred to in this inquiry is mostly held by Gorringses, Stuckeys, Wilsons, and Guthrie Brothers?—That is so.

247. Have any of those people acquired land since the passing of the Act of 1912?—Yes, the Gorringses.

248. How much of theirs has been acquired since?—The portions coloured brown on the plan—1,700 acres and 200 acres.

249. You know that the 1,700 acres is a leasehold with the right of purchase?—Yes.

250. So that it comes to this: that the only piece they have acquired as freehold since 1912 is the 200 acres?—Yes, and that purchased on the Manawatu line.

251. Then Wilsons, Stuckeys, Masons, and Guthrie Brothers acquired their land previous to the Act?—Yes.

252. With regard to the Guthrie Brothers, are you aware they hold 1,600 acres and that it is divided amongst three men with wives and families?—That is so.

253. With regard to Te Kapua land, you say that land would carry three sheep to the acre?—From two and a half to three dry sheep to the acre.

254. You consider that the temporary set-back to Mangaweka has been caused by the aggregation of country lands in the vicinity of Mangaweka?—Yes.

255. And you suggested that the only way to overcome that was either to get back the lands or to increase the graduated land-tax so as to prevent it?—Yes.

256. Are you aware provision is being made under the new Bill to prevent aggregation?—Yes.

257. Being an experienced man, does that meet with your approval?—No, I differ with some of the clauses of the Bill.

258. *Mr. Anderson.*] You said that there had been non-residence on some sections in the district, and that you had complained to the Land Board?—No, I did not complain directly to the Land Board. I had written in the newspaper commenting on the fact. I have commented on those things for years in my ordinary business as a journalist.

259. Did that come under the notice of the Land Board?—I could not say. They may have seen a copy of the papers.

260. Then you have not personally brought it under their notice?—No.

261. And did some of this non-residence take place before the passing of the Act of last year?—Oh, yes; it has been going on for the last ten or twelve years.

262. Have you drawn attention to it since the passing of last year's Act?—No, not in connection with non-residence. Most of my time has been taken up in connection with aggregation.

263. *Mr. Guthrie.*] You said Mangaweka had gone back?—Yes.

264. Is it not a fact that one reason for that is that the expenditure on public works is now no longer necessary?—No, I cannot say that, because we have not received any great benefit out of public works in Mangaweka for the last seven or eight years.

265. The sections and huts were occupied by working-men?—Yes. Eleven or twelve years ago there was a population of about eleven hundred, but the population has now fallen down to about four or five hundred.

266. Mangaweka was very prosperous at the time the railway-works were being carried out?—Yes, and should be now.

WEDNESDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 1913.

JOHN STRAUCHON examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Under-Secretary for Lands?—Yes.

2. There have been statements made by Mr. Hornblow in evidence before this Committee more or less reflecting on the Department. In one statement he says, "I think it is in the interests of the country only right that the Lands Department when they issue information of that kind should issue information that is correct"?—We have taken every precaution to see that the information we supplied is correct.

3. Then, further he says, "I have the statements in front of me, and I have no hesitation in saying that the official reports are a misrepresentation." He is referring to the report dealing with aggregation?—He has only rumour to go upon. I do not suppose he ever went to the Registry Office to search as we did. We took every precaution in regard to our reports and the information contained therein, and as far as we have gone I am sure the statements are correct.

4. In your opinion the statements made by the Department are correct?—Yes. We took every precaution to see that they were correct.