

103. Was that in any way due to the land legislation of last year?—I do not think so. The lease was taken up prior to the legislation being put on the statute-book.

104. How long have the Gorrings been there?—I should say, about ten or twelve years.

105. Have they ever been off their land?—Not to my knowledge.

106. Are they working their land?—Yes, they are permanent settlers. The two brothers and their families are there.

107. With regard to the question asked you about Mr. Hewitt: you know the land above the Pourangaki?—Yes.

108. How far is that from Mangaweka?—Nineteen miles.

109. How far can they go from this land till they reach the mountains?—From the end of the road, two miles.

110. How is Hewitt's land up there classed?—Second-class land.

111. What is the area that Hewitt holds there?—About 400 acres.

112. Do you know whether he is an original settler?—I cannot say. It is only sufficient for him to make a living off.

113. When any of the settlers turn their land into freehold have you any control over it?—No.

114. How many years' residence has to be put in under the o.r.p. tenure?—Six years.

115. Would any of them have been allowed to turn their land into freehold if they had not fulfilled their residential conditions?—There have been no cases of that kind. The Land Board would not have allowed it. They insist on the conditions having been fulfilled before granting the freehold.

116. Then Mr. Hewitt must have fulfilled his conditions?—In all probability he must have before he could get the freehold.

117. Would you consider a man was a practical man if he said that the land in Kawhatau would carry six sheep to the acre?—I should say he was spinning a fairy. It might carry six sheep to the acre on rape and turnips.

118. Would Tom Cooper's section carry anything like six sheep to the acre?—No, not half.

119. The Te Kapua district is also under your control?—Yes.

120. Can you tell the Committee under what conditions this district was originally settled?—A lot of it under the farm-settlement-association system.

121. How are they off for roads in that district?—Fairly well. They are now being considerably improved by burning papa and also metalling them. Murray's track is metalled now for something like twelve or thirteen miles from Mataroa.

122. Do you know how long it is since these sections were first opened up?—Something like eighteen years.

123. What was the nearest town at that time?—Hunterville, which was fifteen or twenty miles away.

124. That is the Knights of Labour Settlement?—Yes; 200-acre sections.

125. Would you consider that was a suitable place to go and establish a small settlement at that time?—The land is not suitable for cutting up into 200-acre lots. A man could not get a living off that—it is purely pastoral.

126. I want you to say whether in your opinion it was only to be expected that those sections would have to be increased in area?—Yes, a living-area.

127. What do you consider the carrying-capacity of that land?—The best it will do is from two to two and a half sheep to the acre.

128. Do you know the Martin No. 1 small-farm sections?—Yes, they were cut up into 200-acre sections.

129. Taking the whole block, do you consider 200 acres was sufficient for a man and his family to make a living off?—No.

130. Do you consider that the aggregation that has been talked about, which includes increasing the area of these small sections, is against the best interests of the district?—It is in favour of the best interests of the district.

131. Then can the Committee understand from you that this increase in area is not the serious aggregation that we hear of?—Yes.

132. Do you know the places that my sons have?—Yes.

133. Do you know what they originally took up?—Yes, they have about 600 acres each, which is only sufficient for them to make a living off.

134. And they are living there and got homes there?—Yes, and wives and families; and good settlers they are, too.

135. It has been said that they have aggregated ten sections?—No; they have only three sections each, and there are three families.

136. The portion that they took up at the back, was that land taken up under the Martin small-farm settlement?—It lay unoccupied for years before they took it up.

137. What did the Land Board do then?—They could get no one to take it up until your sons did so.

138. What was it cut up into?—200-acre sections; and now there are three sections knocked into one. It is very rough land, too.

139. You know their back block?—Yes, I have been all over it.

140. Could you find any homestead-sites on it?—No, except where the homestead is.

141. Is there any access to the back block?—No, except through their land.

142. Do you consider the Land Board did anything against the interests of the district in giving them the extra section in front?—No; what they did was in favour of the interests of the country.