

143. The front sections are l.i.p.?—Yes, one or two.

144. Then the State would consider that they have an interest in it?—Yes, they have an interest in it.

145. And you consider the Land Board did the right thing?—I do, most decidedly.

146. Were these sections offered publicly for selection?—I believe so. It was before my time.

147. Are you aware whether my sons got this land from the Land Board in any other way than by the ordinary way of making application?—Only in the ordinary way as far as I know—the same as any other settler.

148. Do you consider, taking the average pastoral land there, that 100 or 200 acres would be sufficient to provide a permanent home for those taking it up?—Oh, no; in fact, they require 500 or 600 acres.

149. Are you surprised at what has taken place in that district in regard to increasing the area of the sections?—No, there is nothing to be surprised at.

150. Why?—Simply because a man must have a living-area.

151. Do you know any people there except those we have mentioned who are 'aggregating to any serious extent?—No, not to any serious extent.

152. Do you consider that the district is prosperous?—Yes, very much so.

153. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] What do you consider the value of the land within a radius of ten miles of Mangaweka, leaving out of consideration Mr. Guthrie's sections?—From £12 to £15 an acre.

154. What do you think is the carrying-capacity of those sections?—From two to two and a half sheep per acre.

155. Would you consider that two ewes were too much?—Some are doing two and a half ewes all the year round.

156. Roughly, what do you consider the profit off a ewe?—About 12s. I will give the Committee an illustration. I know sections in the Turakina Valley, and a settler I know very well told me confidentially his position. He has 600 acres of improved land, and his total receipts last year from all sources was £1,200. He is getting a gross income of £2 an acre off the land. It is the finest land in the district, and he is a practical man.

157. Would you consider that is the average?—Yes, it is above the average, because he is a thorough, capable fellow.

158. If you put that farm down at £2 an acre gross, what would the average farm return?—About £1 10s. an acre.

159. Assuming that one settler purchased another block of 200 acres, making a total of 400 acres, what would you consider would be the gross income that he should receive?—Something like £1 10s. an acre. That would be about £600 on 400 acres. His working-expenses would run into something like 8s. an acre, excluding the cost of living and interest on loans.

160. Would you consider that is just a reasonable living?—Yes, for a man and his family.

161. The net result from £600 of gross income?—Yes.

162. What do you consider would be the net results?—If you take 8s. per acre, which would be a fair amount for working-expenses, then you have to allow for living-expenses and interest on loans, and he would not have very much left after he has paid for his living. If he was a careful man he would have something over, but I do not think it could be done on less than that.

163. *Mr. Forbes.*] Do you think it is possible to make any more settlement in that district, or is it settled up to its full limit?—We have a few odd pieces of Crown land that could yet be settled near the mountains which are now in hand.

164. Could the settlers move up a little bit closer?—No. It is unoccupied Crown land.

165. Taking the district as a whole, freehold and everything else, is there any possibility of having more settlement there than exists at the present time?—How would you do it?

166. By purchase or other means?—It would simply drift back into the position it is in now. You have to come back to the living-area.

167. There is nothing held in that district except a living-area?—Excepting the few cases mentioned.

168. There are no persons holding more land than what would be looked upon as a reasonable think to make a living off?—No.

169. There are no larger areas?—No, I do not think so.

170. It has been classed as mostly second-class land?—No, the great bulk of this is first-class land; but near the mountain the land depreciates.

171. Do they get along all right?—Yes, they do very well. The land is more undulating there, and not so broken.

172. In your opinion the land is as closely settled as it is possible to settle it?—Yes, for settlers to make comfortable homes and a comfortable living for themselves.

173. *Mr. Guthrie.*] You know Stevens's sections outside the township?—Yes.

174. Did he sell them recently?—I know he bought the freehold of them recently. I heard he had sold, but I could not say for sure.

175. Do you know how much land he held there?—Something like 1,000 acres between himself and his wife.

176. Do you know if that is a case of aggregation?—I do not think so; it is rough country.

177. Who is there now?—I cannot tell you. It is not a thing which comes within our district at all; the land is freehold.

178. Could that in any way be attributable to the Land Act of 1912?—No. He had the right to turn it into freehold years ago under the o.r.p. tenure.

179. *The Chairman.*] You gave as your opinion that the average income of that land was £1 10s. an acre gross?—Yes, a fair average.