

according to the present state of knowledge. In short, our aim is to suggest what appears to us the very best both for the tenant and the State.

Further, as in our opinion the present Land Acts in many respects fall short of achieving the foregoing results, we endeavour in the following suggestions to point out those means by which we are of opinion that the laws relating to the pastoral Crown lands can be improved, and give that satisfaction to all concerned which alone can enable the desired goal to be reached.

#### THE PRESENT TENURES AND THEIR AMENDING.

##### (Parts (2) and (4) of the Order of Reference.)

We have most carefully considered all those sections of the Land Act of 1908, and of the subsequent amending Acts, which deal with runs held under pastoral tenures. This has led us to the conclusion that in many particulars the Acts need reconstruction, especially as, in their present form, they indirectly lead to deterioration of the pastures, to the detriment of both the State and the lessees.

Coming now to details, we strongly suggest that the following alterations be made in the Land Act :—

(*a.*) That, as twenty-one years, the longest tenure provided by the Act, is, in our opinion and according to much of the evidence given, too short to induce a tenant to improve and develop the lands contained in his lease, or to give him satisfactory security thereof, the term should be increased to thirty-five years, with a right of renewal, provided the land comprised in the lease or license is not suitable for subdivision, in which case the outgoing lessee shall have a right to a new lease over the subdivision he selects.

(*b.*) That when pastoral lands have been subdivided into areas that will only provide a sufficient living for the maintenance of one settler and his family, as provided in paragraph (*f*), page 9, of this report, and all the conditions of the lease have been complied with, then, after seven years of the term of the lease the lessee may have the option of acquiring the fee-simple, either for cash or on deferred payment. The value of such lands shall be the unimproved value determined by arbitration, but in no case of a less value than the value placed upon the subdivisions at the time of their disposal for lease.

(*c.*) When such subdivisions as are mentioned in recommendation (*b*) form a part of the lands set aside as national endowment, no rights to acquire the fee-simple shall be given or implied until an area of land equal in value is substituted, which may be either Crown land, freehold land (urban or suburban), land purchased for settlement purposes, or Native land acquired by the Crown or obtained by exchange.

(*d.*) That all leases of pastoral lands shall hereafter be offered for selection by ballot, subject to a condition that the lessee shall be required to reside continuously on the run in the discretion of the Land Board, as provided for in section 161 (*d*) of the Land Act, 1908. The object of this recommendation is to put the residential obligations of a pastoral run on the same basis as a small grazing-run. It is hoped by this means to lead to better management of pastoral runs.

(*e.*) That in dealing with pastoral leases or licenses it is necessary to decide two years before the expiry whether the run is suitable for subdivision or not. When the run is not suitable for subdivision the outgoing licensee or lessee shall be entitled to receive a renewal of his lease or license in accordance with the provisions of the Act, but the rental, terms, and conditions of the lease shall be decided upon twelve months before the expiry.

(*f.*) In the case of subdivision mentioned in recommendation (*e*) the method of subdivision shall be decided upon two years before expiry, to enable the survey to be made, so that the outgoing lessee or licensee will be enabled to exercise his right to select a subdivision twelve months before expiry, in order to regulate the disposal of his surplus stock and give the incoming tenant an opportunity of acquiring stock bred on the country. (We have been led to make this recommendation through the well-known fact that sheep bred on a run thrive far better than strange sheep.)