

(g.) That as practically all the pastoral lands are now held under the existing tenures, in order to make our recommendations effective it is very desirable that these conditions should apply to all renewals of leases or licenses of pastoral lands.

(h.) In consideration of the period of pastoral leases having been extended to thirty-five years in the terms of our recommendation (a), we recommend that the conditions therein suggested apply to all renewals of present leases.

(i.) That, owing to the numerous amendments and re-amendments of the Land Acts—the last consolidation having been made in 1908—it is most necessary that a consolidation of all the Acts since that date be made.

(j.) That, with regard to recommendation (g), the whole of Part V and Part VI of the Land Act, 1908, and the amendments thereto, require remodelling, special attention being given to clauses 223, 225, 228, 237, 238, 244, and 245, which are either obsolete owing to the amendments of the Act made in the years 1912 to 1919, or are not suitable for the best administration and occupation of pastoral lands either in the interests of the State or the tenant.

2. CONCERNING THE OCCUPATION, CULTIVATION, STOCKING, AND IMPROVEMENTS OF PASTORAL CROWN LANDS.

(Part (3) of the Order of Reference.)

(1.) *Occupation.*

Under the term “occupation” we include all matters concerning pastoral Crown lands with regard to their acquisition, transferring, and other cognate matters. The following are our recommendations on this head:—

(a.) That the disposal of pastoral lands by auction is detrimental both to the State and the tenant, and that all sales by auction are recommended to be abolished and all conditions appertaining thereto, for the following reasons: It is found that when lands have been offered at public auction the rents obtained are frequently excessive, and in consequence the tenant overstocks his land in an endeavour to recoup himself for his outlay, which leads to the deterioration of the country. At present no restriction beyond the holding of another run is placed upon auction sales, consequently inexperienced and speculative competitors are eligible to acquire the said lands.

(b.) Also that recommendation (a) shall apply to all pastoral endowment lands, which are subject to the same causes of depreciation, and these should in the interests of settlement also be administered by the Land Boards.

(c.) That we consider the present system of examination of applicants by Land Boards is not altogether satisfactory, owing to the large number of applicants to be examined in a short time, which has led to a number of inexperienced settlers being placed on the land, thus frequently leading to its deterioration and the loss of the tenants' capital. To avoid this a system of examination by competent Boards should be held at stated times, and certificates of competency issued to prospective applicants for production to the Land Boards or Commissioners of Crown Lands when making application for land.

(d.) That it is not now necessary to divide the pastoral runs into two classes of tenures as provided in the present Land Act, but there should be one comprehensive tenure for the disposal of this class of country. The runs should contain sufficient winter and summer country to run a flock up to about five thousand sheep in country that carries a snow risk, and up to about two thousand where there is practically no snow risk. Where there is not sufficient winter country on a run for the purpose of subdivision, land suitable for this purpose should be acquired within a reasonable distance of the run in question. This important matter of acquiring winter country where required is strongly supported by the evidence before us.

(e.) That no pastoral lands be held by any public or private registered companies or absentees. It has been proved in practice that trafficking in company shares has been made, without reference to the Land Board, thus defeating the objects of the land laws. Personal residence where possible, as already embodied in a previous recommendation, is absolutely essential to true settlement, and also ensures better management and greater productivity of the pastoral holdings.