

Will you mention the applications?—Mr. Hughes first applied for a Block of 6,000 acres in a Block for us in Pomahaka Hundred, Block No. 1. We had not seen the ground when we applied for it. The Block was advertised for sale about three months in the papers. Before the day of sale came on, we went to look at the ground, and ascertained that Messrs. Douglas and Alderson wished to get it. We also found that Block No. 2 was better ground. We did not attend the sale of Block No. 1 in consequence. It was sold, and realised 35s per acre. We sent one of the partners to town to apply for Block No. 2, and when he applied at the Office, he found it was sold. This was within a fortnight of the first sale. On going to Mr. Hughes, a member of the Waste Lands Board, he said, "it was not sold; it could not be; it was a mistake." Mr. Hughes went with my partner to the Land Office, and found it *was* sold. Mr. Hughes could not explain how it was, but confessed it *was* sold. That was two and a half years ago. A month afterwards, at the election for Superintendent, I enquired of Mr. Dick what was the reason of the land being sold. He said he knew nothing about it (of the land being sold.) Mr. Hughes got up, and stated that he knew it was a loss to the Province of about £8,000, but he could not tell how it happened. He (Mr. Hughes) was not a member of the Waste Lands Board at the time. The land was sold for £1 per acre. Block No. 1 was scrubby and steep over a considerable part, while Block No. 2 was the finest land, I believe, I have seen in the Province. We told Mr. Hughes before we put in the application that we would have given from £2 to £3 per acre. In fact, we did not expect to get it under £2 10s an acre. At that price we would have bought, at the very least, 1,000 acres. The purchaser was Mr. Bullen, formerly a draper in Dunedin, now in business in Melbourne. I was treated worse in Southland, where I had authorised two guineas per acre for a Block of land, which had been put up for sale, but it was withdrawn, and sold to somebody else. Mr. Fenton, one of my partners, applied to the Warden for some land on the Goldfields, at the Beaumont (Tuapeka Goldfields) several times, and he was told that the application was forwarded to Dunedin. He waited from eight to ten months, and at last they wrote from Dunedin that they had not got the application, which was afterwards found in the Warden's Office. Mr. Fenton tried all he could to get land, but failing, went off to the Fijis. The fact is, we have tried so often to get land that we got disgusted. The attempt cost me over £50 to get that I have spoken of, and I got none. What we would like would be to get even as little as 150 or 200 acres each (five of us), and settle down upon, as the nature of our mining work is such that we cannot continuously carry it on, as it requires standing in water so much. But we could not without commonage work even 200 acres each profitably. Perhaps 2,000 acres, in addition to the 1,000, would be sufficient. We should require less and less as the freehold land was brought more and more into cultivation.

Do you know of other persons similarly situated to yourself in respect of acquirement of land? There are several others. I have been asked by miners to express their views to the same effect. With respect to the Tuapeka Agricultural Reserve, the part marked 52, the northern portion taken from Lee's Run, is, with the exception of 4,000 acres, unfit for pastoral purposes, except in the summer season. None of it is agricultural land. I have lived there, and tried to cultivate even a garden, and could not. I have sheep and a few cattle on that ground at the present time. From the Blue Spur northward you could not find half a dozen Blocks of 100 acres each that could be ploughed. The Blocks on the tops of the ranges might be good enough, but would be too elevated. That portion of it is fully stocked. There are about 2,000 sheep of mine on it, and others have cattle. I don't know how many head. Two other parts have been mined upon, and are unsuitable for stock, as they fall into holes and water-races.

Are you acquainted with Runs 123 and 137?—I am. There is some pretty fair agricultural land upon it. I think there is sufficient demand to justify the Government in opening up those two Runs; but I do not think so much as there was two years or even one ago. I believe this opening up would have been the means of retaining a great many in the Colony who have gone away. I believe as many as 20 have left the Blue Spur within the last 12 months, many of whom have endeavoured to get land. All of them had capital, say in the aggregate as much as £10,000. As far as I know there are about 4,000 head of cattle upon the Reserve, and the head-money is, I have been informed, about £1,400.

## No. 5.

Mr. Jas. R. Gascoigne, being duly sworn, examined.

I am a farmer and tradesman at Tuapeka, formerly a Miner and owner of Water Races at Weatherston's. I was very successful at mining. I am also a member of the Board of Wardens for managing the Agricultural Reserve. Most of those on the Agricultural Reserve are actually cultivating the land. The majority run cattle on the land. A few do not. A great many who have no land at all, run cattle on the Reserve. They have a right under the Miners' Right to do so. They can run as many as they like to pay for, so that one man might demand the whole of the Reserve if he came first. One has 100 head of cattle, and another, an adjoining runholder, (Mr. James Smith) runs on the Agricultural Reserve 8000 sheep. Mr. Millar, another runholder, has about 2,500 sheep running on the Reserve. Poulson and Sutherland (not runholders, but Agricultural Lessees,) run on the Reserve about 9,000 sheep. Mr. William Murray, living on the Waitahuna Hundred, has running on the reserve 1,500 sheep. A Mr. Mathieson has 2,000 sheep running on the Reserve; he does not farm, but has a 10-acre enclosed for horse-feed. We (Board of Wardens) refused for some time to grant licenses because the land was overstocked. They are only now granted conditionally, that a large proportion of the sheep will be removed by 31st March next, subject to the approval of the Provincial Government. We have had great differences with the Government. Government approved of nothing else but taking the money. We could not get

No. 4.  
Mr. Cormack.  
Continued.

No. 5.  
Mr. Gascoigne.  
20th Feb., 1869.