

Policy of these sales.

* Evidence, 88, 92, 93, 112.

† Evidence, 103, 110.

The arguments both against and in favour of these sales are many and forcible. The former will be found ably summarized or stated in the evidence especially of Major Richardson and of Mr. Donald Reid;* and the latter in that of the Superintendent Mr. Macandrew, and Mr. Redmayne.† All the arguments in favour of the Hundred system may be adduced against the sale, because, as the lands were sold, the freeholders within the Hundred were of course deprived of the commonage they had previously enjoyed, and which, or an *equivalent* for which, it may be safely said, is absolutely necessary to successful farming on a small scale. Other reasons were, that the sales were injurious—

To the revenue—because the lands sold, being near the coast and centres of population, were rapidly increasing in value, and, if retained, would have realized a much larger amount.

To the small settlers—as these could only gradually acquire the means of adding, bit by bit, to their farms; and the lands were gone before they could acquire such means.

To the increase of population—because capitalists being tempted by the low price to buy up the land, none is left for immigrants who arrive gradually.

To freeholders generally—because the low price of this Government land has reduced the value of their own lands.

To the Province—because the injury done to a large body of small settlers, by depriving them of one of the main elements of their success—keeping cattle on common land—must affect the whole community; and because the sale of large blocks to capitalists must diminish the future tax-bearing power of the State, as the land will be in the hands of a small instead of a large population.

On the other hand, in favour of the sale, may be urged all the arguments against the Hundred system: that it encourages persons of insufficient means to engage in farming, to their own ultimate embarrassment or ruin; that it leads to slovenly and unskilful farming; that it tends to the deterioration of breeds of cattle, and affords temptations to cattle-stealing and other offences.

Moreover, it is asserted, with apparent truth, that the sales in question produced a considerable revenue when it was much wanted by the Province, when its powers of borrowing had been exhausted, and its funds derivable from other sources were diminished.

That it enabled the Government to carry out public works of the highest utility, roads, bridges, &c., which could not otherwise have been executed.

That these works gave employment to hundreds, and, of course, added to the general prosperity, and must have conduced to the real settlement of the country.

That the purchase and occupation of large blocks by capitalists has also given employment to many of the small proprietors, particularly in the northern parts of the Province, and thereby enabled them to carry on their own farms successfully.

That these sales are shown by Returns to have included many purchases of small blocks, and that an increase of 782 holdings has been made in the two years from 1867 to 1869.

And, lastly, that there is at this moment no less an amount than 415,651 acres of land unsold within existing Hundreds.

The *policy*, then, of these sales does not appear to call for any particular animadversion from the Commissioners. There can be little doubt, however, that to supply land for sale as it may be required, or in anticipation of its requirement, from time to time, by immigrants or others, is a wiser and more beneficial policy than to glut the market with land, and tempt speculators or persons who do not want to occupy it to purchase it, for the mere purpose of raising revenue, however to be spent. But as the lands in the present instance were sold after a deliberate decision of the Provincial Council to that effect, and in exercise of a power given, after much discussion, by the Legislature of the Colony, the sale did not appear to the Commissioners such an administration of the Act as called for any decided expression, either of approbation or condemnation, on their part.