

the Government may require the consent of the licensee to sell, *without declaring them into hundreds.*" Thus, while the minute shows that the Provincial Government from the first never intended to abandon the right to declare Hundreds, it seems equally clear that it proposed to make an arrangement which would provide sufficient land for settlement or sale, without imposing on the Government the expense of paying compensation for the lands on the one hand, and without inflicting upon the runholder on the other the injury of the liability to have his run, or undetermined parts of it, at any time taken away for a Hundred.

In order to get some decisive evidence on the point, the Commissioners addressed a circular letter to all the runholders who had entered into these covenants, to ascertain what their understanding was at the time, and on what it was grounded. All the answers have not yet been received; but there is sufficient to show that in the majority of cases, although no express promise was given by the Government that the leased land, over and above the portions agreed to be given up, should not be included in Hundreds, yet that there was a very strong feeling entertained by the Government as well as the runholders, and amounting in many of the latter to a firm conviction, that the lands agreed to be given up would be sufficient for the wants of the public for probably as many years as the leases would have to run, and consequently that the right to declare Hundreds would never be required to be exercised. In several instances, however, it is most positively asserted, in statutory declarations, or on oath, that express assurance was given by Members of the Provincial Executive that no land should be taken on the runs concerned for Hundreds; and in one instance (Kyeburn Station, near Naseby,) a run is said to have been bought, and £20,000 paid for it, expressly on the faith, based on a letter from the Crown Lands Commissioner, that the lease of it was (excepting with respect to the portions in the covenant) indefeasible. The letter, however, appears only to have been one of the circulars to be found in the evidence.

Evid., No. 86-105.  
Vide also Part IX.

Evidence, No. 72  
and 75; and Part  
IX., No. 5.

Evidence, No. 101.

Mr. Driver, M.P.C., M.H.R., says: "As an instance of the impression produced upon the public generally of the increased security of tenure given by the leases, I may mention Run 137, close to Tuapeka. This run under the license, which had four or four and a half years to run, *could scarcely have been sold at all.* After the lease had been obtained *it became very much in request,* and was finally sold for about £6,500 *without the stock;* about four shillings per acre. This is the most striking instance, but there were many other similar cases."

It may also be asserted, as a general fact, that very many thousands of pounds have been expended in purchase of stock or improvements on the runs in the Province, which would not have been so expended but for the understanding existing when the outlay was made, that the runholders' possession would not be interfered with.

Increased rents.

Most of the runholders, as has been stated, consider that, independently of the covenants altogether, the increase of rental to which under the leases they are subjected gives them a right to expect their runs will not be declared into Hundreds for sale. This expectation is no doubt reasonable; and the equitable objection to fulfil it has acquired double force from the enormous depreciation in wool and run-property that has since taken place, and for which no reduction of rent (even had any been made) would be at all an equivalent.

The Commissioners have been obliged, in considering the covenant with runholders *outside* gold fields, to state some arguments and facts which apply equally to covenants with runholders *within* gold fields. But to return to the question of want of land for settlers in old Hundreds, two more difficulties in acquiring it may here be noticed.

#### (c.) *Other difficulties in the way of obtaining Land.*

When a run (not in a gold field) is made a Hundred, the runholder is entitled, after the original term of his license has expired, by the Waste Lands Act to compensation from the Government—to be settled by arbitration in case of difference—for improvements made on his run. The Government complains of the great demands on the revenue this compensation would require, were the power of making Hundreds more extensively used. They had taken already outside the gold fields one block of 32,000 acres for this pur-

Compensation  
and want of  
available land.