

hands of the run-holders and existing Crown tenants?—Yes; it simply requires that the existing policy should not be so very restricted. I would not give a capitalist the opportunity of purchasing 10,000 acres, but I would allow him the opportunity to buy together 500 or 1,000 acres of good land, as was done, for instance, on the Waimate Plains.

145. Then the administration has not been restricted in all parts of the colony?—No.

146. *Mr. Hurst.*] Has not "dummyism" been carried on under the deferred-payment system in Otago?—No; I do not think that "dummyism" has been prevalent in the colony at all. Every proposal for transfer is very carefully inquired into.

147. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] The effect of the Act has been to put money in the way of the land agencies?—Yes.

148. And that tends to increase the profits of those agencies?—Yes.

149. And those companies are composed mainly of English capitalists?—Yes; I believe so.

150. *Mr. J. Green.*] Is it not a fact that the Survey Department surveys the whole of the blocks before any reference is made to the Board?—Yes.

151. And that the department makes a recommendation to the Board as to the class in which each piece of land shall be put?—No, exactly the opposite is the case frequently; for instance, with regard to the 350,000 acres recently withheld from the Otago runs, Messrs. Clark and Green, two members of the Otago Land Board, inspected the land and made certain recommendations as to size of sections and its manner of disposal. The Minister approved, and instructed the surveys accordingly.

152. But is it not a fact that the whole of the instructions emanate from the Survey Department, and not from the Board—I mean the instructions as to the size of the sections, how the land should be surveyed, and how it should be classified?—Yes.

WEDNESDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 1882.

Mr. McKERROW, examined.

153. *The Chairman.*] There was a resolution passed by the Committee to ask you to supply certain information if you thought proper?—I have looked through those six petitions, five of which are from Otago, the sixth from the Seventy-Mile Bush, Hawke's Bay.

154. *Mr. Driver.*] Does the sixth ask for relief?—No; for an opportunity of making another selection. I looked through the names of the Otago petitioners, and those names that I happen to know—none of them are deferred-payment selectors—they are farmers, but not deferred-payment selectors. The petitions are identical copies of the petition upon which I have already given evidence, signed by 137 signatures. I have asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, at Dunedin, to supply, at the earliest date, which will probably be by the end of this week, a statement in regard to the deferred-payment selectors who seek relief, the areas taken up by them, the price paid, and any remarks he may proffer. Regarding the petition from the Ormondville settlers, Hawke's Bay. They ask that they may be allowed to make a further selection under the deferred-payment system, their present areas ranging from 40 to 150 acres each, being deemed by them too little. I would remark that they are located on very good land; that the railway is now open through the centre of their block; and that if the prayer of their petition is granted, in all likelihood they would make applications for land in an adjacent block which the Government is now in treaty for, viz., the Raikaia Block. I do not think it desirable that this opportunity should be afforded them, because it is exceedingly desirable to have as many settlers located in the bush, and all along the railway line, as it may be supposed the country is capable of maintaining in a thriving condition. Areas from forty to fifty acres may, in the circumstances just stated, be deemed sufficient for a family, because it takes a very long time to clear such an extent of land to bring it into cultivable condition.

155. *Mr. Hurst.*] It is heavy bush?—Yes. Also, the forest in that part of the country happens to be of a very valuable nature. There are sawmills established there now, and there will be more established in the future. Small settlers, therefore, have the opportunity of employment, should they require to avail themselves of it. On the other hand, any produce which they may prepare for market, can readily be got quit of through the extension of the railway to their district. There is another consideration. In the future of the colony, a less area of land will be sufficient for the settler than has been in the past, for the reason that hitherto settlers have had to depend more upon the grass than upon the other products of the land; but that condition is rapidly changing.

156. *Mr. Stevens.*] Is that with regard to the petition from the Forty-Mile Bush?—Yes; known as Ormondville.

157. Do you know the character of the country, and what its capabilities are?—Yes; you may say it is a level undulating country, well watered; the soil of a loamy sandy nature, but very good soil indeed. It grows grass, root, and grain crops well; and the timber, as I have already said, is very valuable, consisting of rimu and totara in great abundance. There are several sawmills at work.

158. That more particularly applies to the settlers near the townships, I think?—Yes; it also applies to the settlers on the Ngamoko Block, who are little more than 6 miles from the railway by road.

159. Are there a number of settlers who own rather an inferior quality of land overgrown with hawk-weed, the surface very hard, and clay underneath—along the railway line between the outer edge of the bush—between Ngamoko and Takapau?—The soil, no doubt, varies very considerably over the area you have named. But the whole of the bush, taking it in the general, is very fair. The grass is luxuriant, as you can see as you go along; they grow excellent root crops, also good crops of grain.

160. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Under what Act was that land settled?—Under "The Hawke's Bay Settlement Act, 1872." The particular block referred to was proclaimed in 1876.