

161. Is it the case that the settlers on this block had the option of framing their own regulations?—Yes.

162. The Waste Lands Board only carries out the regulations framed by themselves?—That is so.

163. *Mr. Hurst.*] And there is valuable timber upon the land?—Yes.

164. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] On some of the sections probably the timber will be the best crop they will ever have?—Yes; especially where it is clay land.

165. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Clause 55 of the proposed Act will not apply to these people?—Only to one or two.

166. As a rule it will not apply to them?—No.

167. *Mr. Stevens.*] Is there any considerable portion of that land upon which no person could make a reasonable living on 50 acres—that is to say, without it was thickly studded with valuable timber?—Now that there is the railway, a thrifty man with a thrifty wife could make a very good living.

168. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] If a man were to cultivate more than fifty acres he could not possibly, as I understand it, be relying upon his industry and cultivation, but would retain the land to speculate upon afterwards?—That is so; because he could not get land adjacent to his present holding, he would require to go two, or three, or more miles to get it.

169. To give him more land would be enabling him to speculate in land, and not be for the purpose of beneficial settlement?—He would probably sell out to a neighbour and make a fresh start.

170. It means sales, not settlement?—Yes.

171. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Are you aware that Ormondville is a speculative township—that it was founded upon one of these free-selection blocks?—Yes; it was known, and is referred to in the *Gazette* as the Waipukurau Small Farm Association.

172. And were not one or more of those deferred payment selections cut up and made into townships?—I am not aware of that.

173. *Mr. Hurst.*] Have you seen the Deferred Payment Settlers' Relief Bill—have you read it?—At the time it came out I did. The second clause would be, I think, an exceedingly objectionable one.

174. You think it would be exceedingly objectionable?—Yes.

175. Supposing the Committee determined to grant relief, what in your opinion should be the way, what would you suggest?—My evidence previously given was to this effect, that there should be no revaluation, that the value of the land in every case should remain at the amount fixed by the settler himself, and the relief should take the form of extending the time for the payments, either by making the holding a perpetual lease or by capitalising unpaid instalments; letting him pay the interest thereon every six months, and the principal as he is able within a given time.

176. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Capitalising at the cash value?—Yes; the same would apply to leases too. I think if these two options were given to the selectors, the whole difficulty would vanish.

177. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] That is, the option of making a perpetual lease, of capitalising, and paying off from time to time?—Yes.

*The Chairman* read *Mr. Connel's* letter as follows:—

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st July, 1882.

I had intended to have explained personally to the Committee, in reference to the petition of deferred-payment settlers and other farmers of Otago, that the first copy which was laid before the House by *Mr. Macandrew* contained a comparatively small percentage of deferred-payment settlers and other agriculturists, for this reason, that the Committee of Selectors desired to have the substance of their prayer before the House as soon as possible, and that particular copy was circulated only throughout the Tuapeka District, which, though an important agricultural district, yet contains comparatively few deferred-payment settlers, nearly all of whom, I think, signed the petition.

The other copies subsequently presented were signed by a very much larger proportion of deferred-payment settlers, situated, however, at a greater distance from Dunedin.

The signatures to the petitions already presented number over 400, and there are others (some of which have apparently gone astray) yet to be presented. In all at present I estimate over 600 farmers have signed the petition, of which number, I think, between 200 and 300 are deferred-payment settlers.

I have, &c.,

J. ATTKEN CONNELL.

*The Chairman* Waste Lands Committee.

178. *The Chairman.*] As far as you can judge from going through the petitions, without, of course, specific information from the various districts, can you say whether there are anything like two or three hundred deferred payment settlers signed the petitions, presented to the House?—I think not.

Mr. W. C. SMITH, M.H.R., examined.

179. *The Chairman.*] The Seventy-Mile Bush deferred-payment settlers have sent in two petitions; this second one asking that those who had fulfilled the conditions should be allowed to take up a second lease of land under the deferred-payment system, in all not to exceed in each case 320 acres as is now allowed by law?—In some cases, more especially at Ormondville, the land turned out very poor, and they find it impossible to make a living on the small pieces they have, ranging from 40 to 110 acres. They, having fulfilled all the conditions and paid up everything required by law, wish to be allowed to take up another piece. They took up the land under special arrangements, and could only take up one section whatever size it was.

180. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Was there any specific area?—It did not exceed 110 acres; they had no chance of taking up more.

181. They want to enlarge their holdings—not to exceed 320 acres in extent?—Yes; the blocks are small. I know cases where they have not taken up anything like 320 acres.

182. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Could they take up land adjoining their present holdings, or would they have to go further afield?—They would not have to go very far away. In some cases it would be very close. There is fresh land now being opened up near them.