

217. But, if the department so adjusts the quantities of these sections, taking into consideration their quality, do you not think it would be unfair that, irrespective of quality, people should be allowed to take up the 320 acres?—I do not think the department has any right to go outside the law.

218. Supposing that the law says that the maximum shall be 320 acres, and the department lay it out with that as a maximum, do you not consider that the department is bound to take the question of quality into their consideration in the size of the sections?—I believe it would be better if the department did do so. I hold strongly that a small farm of good soil is very much better than a big farm of bad or inferior land.

219. *Mr. J. Green.*] Are not the smaller-sized sections a better quality of land than the larger ones?—As far as I personally am acquainted, I know very little about it. I only know of a very few cases where people got less land than they were entitled to, and that was just as I said it was, exceptional.

220. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] If the system was devised for the sake of establishing people permanently on the land, they should not be permitted to wander?—I do not believe the system was intended to establish people permanently on the land, the system was intended to distribute the land. There is no such thing as establishing people permanently on the land.

221. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Would not that be better effected by creating a larger number of sections?—It might be so if you could get men to take them, you might have a man for each acre in the country, but I should not like to see anything of that kind attempted.

222. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Was not the object of the deferred-payment system to advance the occupation of the country?—Yes; I imagine that from the fact, that the deferred-payment settler was allowed by law to purchase the freehold after three years.

223. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] The object of the deferred-payment system was to distribute the land, not to settle the land?—It is the same thing, to distribute the land and prevent it getting into a few hands. I have no doubt the object of the framers of the Act was to distribute the land, to ensure its beneficial occupation. That was the object, and that has been the effect too. Whether it will continue, or whether the land will go into the hands of fewer people by and by, that we cannot tell. I may say this, I do not consider that the duty of the State is ended when these people are put on the land, because they may not possibly continue and prosper, they needs must take the produce to the market. And it is quite as important if we desire these people to do well, and continue to possess that land and beneficially occupy it, as it is to distribute the land; because, if people are put on remote parts of the country, where there are no means of access to the ports, they cannot possibly continue to hold the land. The reason why the people on the Toitoto prospered so well, is this, that they had a port there, they were independent of the Public Works scheme.

224. Does the beneficial occupation involve the absolute settlement of the land?—Yes; I think that is the most beneficial way of occupying the land.

225. Do not you think that rather contrary to your view that the deferred-payment system was merely for the distribution of the lands?—No; not at all.

226. *The Chairman.*] In your district are many of the settlers seriously distressed?—I should not like to give my opinion on that subject, because people are very easily offended, and I do not think it right of me to speak of the private affairs of other people.

227. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Did you indicate any plan as to how these people should be relieved?—No; I only made a general statement.

228. I think you have already made some remarks about the evils of the auction system. Do you not think the same evils would exist in the tender system?—Yes; but not to such a great extent. I have been to several auctions of deferred-payment lands, and I know that men come in perhaps wet, and after a long journey,—and take a good many “nips” before going to the auction,—get excited, and get taken in over it, paying far more than they ever intended. If any person not desiring to become a settler at all, but anxious to get possession of a piece of land, he can get possession by out-bidding the others, and after three years get the fee-simple. I have seen that done frequently. That is called “dummyism.” It is no use asking any Government officer about “dummyism,” it is because they do not know about it that it goes on.

229. *Mr. J. Green.*] Did you never hear of complaints of dummyism under the ballot system?—Never; I never knew of it. It is too expensive and too risky. I have heard of it in Victoria, where it is systematically carried on.

230. You never heard of men putting in an application for land, and really being bought off?—I have no doubt they would get up to that, but I do not think they got up to it before the ballot system was abolished.

231. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] But there is an old law on the statute book to prevent that?—But it can be done easily enough. I believe that they used sometimes to ballot amongst themselves in the public house before the auction came off. Each man put down so much into a hat, and then they drew for it. They have recourse to the ballot in this way: Each man puts, say £10, into the hat. There are, perhaps, five or six competitors: each man puts so much into the hat, and then they draw. They divide the money amongst the unsuccessful ones to pay the expenses.

232. *Mr. J. Green.*] You have known this occur?—Yes; I have heard of it.

233. *The Chairman.*] You have read Mr. Connell's proposals for the relief of the deferred-payment settlers?—I have not read them. I have read his Bill, but not his letters; but I have a general knowledge.

234. And you know what the Government proposals are in their Relief Bill? Have you formed any opinion as to which is the best, or whether any other system in your own estimation is better than either of them?—There is a great deal of good in Mr. Connell's proposals, but they seem to me to be very cumbersome. As to the Government proposals, I do not think anything of them. I do not think they meet the case at all.

235. Have you any proposal for relief?—It is a very difficult question, because I think, as a rule, it is a bad system to go back on these things. The only system of relief, I would suggest, is that the