

146. Could he not perform the duties of your secretary?—He might do it; but our secretary has just as much as he can do.

147. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Are you aware of the circumstances in connection with Mr. James Gall, of Switzers, obtaining a run?—Yes.

148. Are you aware that he obtained it illegally?—Yes, I believe so; but that was the only mistake the Commissioners have made.

149. Are you aware that he got that before the termination of his lease, and without competition?—Both of the Government Crown Lands Commissioners who are on the Board made the mistake, and the rest of us concurred in it. We have all admitted that it was a mistake.

150. On the face of it, was it right to let a man, without competition, obtain a section before the termination of his lease?—I do not say it was right. If we erred at all it was an error of judgment, because it was not done to favour Mr. Gall. In the interests of the trust we considered at the time that it was a good arrangement to make. We thought we were acting in the best interests of the trust, but afterwards we had reason to doubt whether we had acted prudently. I think a Commissioner of Crown Lands—or even a Minister—is likely to make a mistake occasionally.

151. *Mr. Fulton.*] As to the expenses of the Education Commissioners. Does the High School Board give anything at all in travelling expenses or allowances?—No. The travelling expenses are only paid to the Government appointee, Mr. Pearson, the Commissioner of Crown Lands for Southland. Of course, if the Government appoint a person in Southland, it is not likely that he can attend meetings of the Board without expense. This expenditure for the most part comes out of one pocket and goes into the other: some of it is paid for the railway fare.

152. *Mr. J. McKenzie.*] With regard to the land you could not get 1d. an acre for, is it not covered with rabbits?—No.

153. Are you aware that the pastoral country has depreciated in value owing to the rabbits?—I am aware of that.

FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 1885.

HON. MR. MENZIES examined.

154. *The Chairman.*] Dr. Menzies, you are aware of the object of asking your attendance?—I have not been told.

155. It has been proposed to transfer the administration of the primary- and high-school reserves of Otago to the Waste Lands Board, on the ground that the reserves would be better administered by that Board. You are one of the Commissioners, and have taken an interest in the matter; and some of the members of the Committee who are opposed to the proposed changes think it is desirable that you should be heard with a view of obtaining information as to the validity of the grounds for the changes—whether they may or may not be desirable, in as far as making the most of the endowments in the interests of education, and with a view to promoting the interests of settlement. Will you give an expression of opinion on the subject?—Upon what particular subject does the Committee wish me to speak?

156. As to the desirability of making these changes—whether they would be advantageous to the interests of settlement and for the benefit of education generally?—[*Mr. Macandrew*: For the interests of settlement and of revenue.]—Well, I suppose as a Commissioner I should abstain from giving an opinion on that point; but I may say this: that the Board of Commissioners have endeavoured to administer these reserves mainly in the interest of beneficial occupation of the land, as well as the increase of revenue received from those lands.

157. And do you prefer not to express an opinion as to the advisability of the changes?—I am not able to see any reason for it.

158. You do not see any good object to be gained?—No; I do not see any good object.

159. Not in the shape of reducing expenditure?—It is possible that the expenditure might be reduced.

160. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Dr. Menzies has said that there might possibly be a gain in the cost of administration by the transfer. Have you any idea to what extent that could be effected?—I suppose the principal saving would be in the salaries of the secretary and the clerks.

161. What do they amount to?—Very small amounts.

162. Do you think that the Land Department would be able to perform the duties without extra assistance in addition to the present duties of the department?—No doubt additional duties would be thrown on the department. I think there would be additional expense in the way of salaries.

163. But the Commissioners pay the salaries now, do they not?—Yes.

164. So that it is as broad as it is long—there will be no saving there?—I do not see that there could be any saving to them.

165. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] From what you have observed of the management of lands by the Waste Lands Board, do you think the change would be for the worse to hand the administration over to them?—I do not think the change would necessarily be for the better. The Committee is aware that the Commissioners have power to lease under the Act of 1877, and they also have the power to recommend sales under the amended Act of 1882. The power under the Act of 1877 the Commissioners have exercised without reference to the Land Board; but the power of sale they cannot exercise. They can simply recommend, and, in the event of the Governor agreeing, the Waste Lands Board sells.

166. ~~But I~~ just wanted you to give an opinion, as a settler, whether the Waste Lands Board would be likely to deal more wisely with the reserves?—I should decline to give an opinion.

167. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Great stress has been laid on a sale at Waikaia, where your Commissioners, among other inducements, stated that there would be no limit to the number of sections