

duced, for purchases, to the institution by the Commissioners than if sold by the Land Board?—I think not.

270. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Was not, in your opinion, the whole of the Strath Taieri Estate put prematurely into the market?—Decidedly so; and I may inform the Committee that you tried to postpone the disposal of the land until the railway was opened to it.

271. Are you not aware, from interviews (in which you were present with me) with the Commissioners, that one of their leading motives was the fear of what is called the colonialization of these reserves?—It was not stated in so many set words, if I remember aright; but it was quite evident that fear was a predominating feeling.

272. Do you not think that any danger of such a result might be obviated by dealing with these reserves through the Public Trustee so far as beneficiaries are concerned, and through the Land Department so far as revenue is concerned?—Yes; that is what should be done.

273. *Mr. Cowan.*] With regard to that 600 acres you have told us was sold at Gore, if the Commissioners had the settlement of that land at heart would they not have called the sale at Waikaia?—I think not. Gore is pretty accessible, and it is a central point of the district, to which the railways converge.

274. *Mr. Lake.*] Do you not think that the introduction of perpetual leases under the Land Board would bring in less revenue to the trust, looking to the fact that Government is subject to political pressure for making roads out of the returns, and also in the direction of condoning arrears of rent?—So far as the letting of the land and recovery of rent are concerned, it would make no difference whether perpetual leases were given by the Board or the School Commissioners. With regard to the alienation of land, I think it is a very great mistake that it should be sold at all, my reason being this: that the money is never likely to be so securely or so well invested as it is already in these splendid estates, which will undoubtedly increase in value with the increase of population and the advance of the country.

275. *Mr. Cowan.*] Would the administration of these estates by the Waste Lands Board add materially to the cost of working the department?—No. I should say it would add very little, if any, to the work of the Land Department.

Mr. A. C. BEGG examined.

276. *The Chairman.*] You are one of the Commissioners in connection with the management of the Otago education reserves?—Yes: I am the representative of the Education Board of Otago on the Commission.

277. How long have you been a Commissioner?—I really forget just now; but it is about six or seven years. That can be found out from the records.

278. The opinion has been expressed that it would be advisable to transfer the management of these reserves from the Commissioners to the Crown Lands Department. Your evidence is desired in order to satisfy the Committee as to whether or not these changes would be desirable, with a view to promoting the interests of settlement on the one hand and of education on the other hand. You are asked to give evidence upon this point—as to whether you think the change would be beneficial or not?—Do you want an expression of opinion upon what has taken place to lead up to these proposals?

279. An expression of opinion generally?—My own opinion is that it would be very inadvisable generally to transfer the management from the Board at present managing the reserves to the Minister of Lands, because the present Commissioners have very large local knowledge of the circumstances in connection with the question of settlement of the land in Otago. And they are more capable of administering the reserves than the Minister of Lands, who may be a person who knows very little about the history or management of settlement in Otago.

280. *Mr. Macmillan.*] I understand that the present Commissioners have parted with the freehold of a portion of the land, the original intention when these endowments were made being to retain the freehold as a permanent endowment for these institutions?—The endowments were made a very long time ago, and power was got by special Act to sell portions of the land suitable for settlement. The intention was, I believe, to retain purely pastoral lands for leasing, and to get power to sell sections of land, as the progress of settlement demanded it, for agricultural purposes.

281. Then the Commissioners thought it advisable to depart from the intentions of the original trust and dispose of the lands in terms of the Land Act?—To dispose of portions of agricultural lands. There never was any desire to part with the purely pastoral lands, of which there is a considerable area.

282. Independent of the question of who would be the best to manage these reserves, do you not think it would be more economical to have the administration of all these lands under one body?—Well, I cannot very well give an opinion upon that point. It has been stated recently that the expenses of managing the business of the Waste Lands Board have been increasing very much, and that even if the sales of land were stopped the expenses would still be large, on account of the large area already dealt with on deferred payment and perpetual leases. I do not know that it would be any very great economy to remove the administration. The cost at present is small, the only expenses being the clerks' salaries. The Commissioners are not paid anything.

283. I understand there are two Commissioners of Crown Lands on the Board, one for Otago and the other for Southland?—Yes, Mr. Maitland and Mr. Pearson.

284. And three other Commissioners?—Yes.

285. In the practical working of administration, has there been any conflict between the two Commissioners of Crown lands and the other three Commissioners?—Well, with regard to the question of perpetual leasing there has been a difference of opinion. The two gentlemen, who are Government officers, have wished to give way to the Minister of Lands on the subject, and deal