

tender the upset price, or a little over, as he would feel that he would have to act cautiously, except in certain cases, where, being very anxious to secure the section, he would tender much above its real value. The remarks as to attempts being made to obtain revision of capital values also apply to this system, only with more force, as the applicant could plead that he made mistakes, &c., in arriving at the cash value, and had nothing to guide him as he would have in open bidding at auction.

6. *Applications lodged during the Same Day* (the present system).—In this case all applications received during the hours the sale-room is open to the public on any one day have equal chances, and all applications for the same section are decided by ballot. Some of the results have been that the sections often fall to unsuitable persons, such as merchants, solicitors, and others in permanent occupation in cities, unmarried women, single men who rove all over the colony looking for work and who evade settling down on the land and making it their home; persons with too limited capital to work the section profitably; and, in short, the great army of persons who take up land as a pure speculation, and with no intention of occupying it in a *bonâ fide* manner, but hope to make a few pounds out of it at a future time by transferring to some one who, through necessity or otherwise, is willing to pay a high price for it. In addition to these are married women whose husbands have permanent occupation or other land, and are themselves ineligible. These persons put in applications ostensibly for themselves, but really for the benefit of some relative or other person who is perhaps himself ineligible, or who wishes to increase his chances, and in whose interest they hold and with whose money they improve the land for a time, relying upon getting a transfer to him at a future date, usually just before the residential conditions of the lease come into force. In this way a *bonâ fide* farmer is often prevented from obtaining land, and is penalised by having to purchase it afterwards by transfer at a considerable profit, which is, as a rule, far more than the value of the work done on the section warrants.

Restrictions somewhat in the form mentioned in No. 1, or more fully elaborated hereafter, would to a great extent remedy this state of things, and tend to confine the applications to persons desirous of taking up Crown Lands with a *bonâ fide* intention of occupying and utilising them as intended by the Act.

These evils, are, however, not nearly so pronounced in applications for sections under the Land for Settlements Acts, as here the applicants have to come before the Land Board, which decides whether they are suitable so far as means, knowledge and experience, amount of land already possessed, &c., are concerned. In the applications for improved-farm-settlement sections, again, the Commissioner is empowered by regulations to decide upon the character, &c., of the applicants, and to restrict allotment to those who are of the class prescribed therein, thus reducing to a minimum the speculative element.

The systems numbered 1, 2, and 3 seem to me to be unsuitable to the circumstances of settlement in this colony, and, as the auction and tender systems each favour the applicant with most capital, I see no way of dispensing with the ballot in cases of duplicated applications; but the method of conducting these ballots is certainly capable of improvement and regulation in such a way as to practically prevent speculation and insure *bonâ fide* settlement. For example, not more than one member of a family should be allowed to participate in the same ballot for a particular section or group of sections. By "family" I mean the man and wife, and any of the children under the age of, say, twenty-one years who may have been living at home with them during the twelve months immediately preceding the date on which any lands being applied for are declared open for selection.

Preference should be given to applicants who are landless, in the following order: (1) Married men with children; (2) married men without children; (3) widows with children capable of assisting, and married women with similar families but who are judicially separated from their husbands; (4) single men, twenty-one years of age and upwards. (See, also, further report of the 3rd August, attached.)

Single women should, I think, be barred from selecting where residence is compulsory, experience clearly showing that it is almost impossible to get them to reside in a *bonâ fide* manner; indeed, it is unreasonable to ask them to live on the land alone.

The Land Board should have special powers to reject applications from persons who in its opinion are in affluent circumstances, or from individual members of their families and personal friends whose *bona fides* as permanent settlers the Board has good reasons for doubting, and also from those who do not possess the necessary farming experience and other qualifications coupled with sufficient means to insure success. This is following somewhat on the lines at present laid down under the Land for Settlements Regulations. Sections should be opened as far as possible in groups of approximately even rentals, or in allotments, as the Board may decide. Every applicant should appear personally before the Land Board, and answer all questions put to him, and should in addition be prepared to produce at the meeting his bank-book or other satisfactorily attested documentary evidence that he is possessed of or can legitimately obtain sufficient means to enable him to profitably work the land applied for. In my opinion, such means should, in the case of heavy bush lands to be leased on the occupation-with-right-of-purchase or lease-in-perpetuity systems under Part III. of "The Land Act, 1892," be equal to not less than one-half the capital value thereof, and in the case of open lands to not less than one-fourth of the capital value of the lands applied for. Under the above tenures some little capital is absolutely necessary to insure success within a reasonable time.

#### *Selections by Persons with Little or No Means.*

To my mind, the most favourable, and indeed the only, tenures now in force under which an applicant practically without capital has a reasonable chance of speedily providing a comfortable home and independence are:—