

View Hill Plains (disposed of under the Land Act).

Of 303 applicants, 88 were women—46 being married, and 42 single.

						Applications.
{In 41 cases each applicant had but one chance				...	...	41
" 29 "	"	"	two chances, through relatives	...	...	58
" 17 "	"	"	three " "	...	...	51
" 8 "	"	"	four " "	...	...	32
" 5 "	"	"	five " "	...	...	25
" 4 "	"	"	six " "	...	...	24
" 5 "	"	"	seven " "	...	...	35
" 2 "	"	"	eight " "	...	...	16
" 1 case the	"	"	ten " "	...	...	10
" 1 "	"	"	eleven " "	...	...	11

303

Thus the chances of each of the last two men were to each of the first forty-one applicants as $10\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. It is just possible, however, that two or more of these numerous relatives wanted land for themselves.

The question of allocating the land to a particular individual when there is more than one applicant for an allotment is a difficult one to solve in a manner that will be equitable, just, and fair to all alike. Objection is taken to the ballot as a gambling affair; but, after very careful consideration, and bringing my experience to bear upon the subject, I am of opinion that a form of ballot which practically constitutes an order of choice, somewhat different both in the ballot and in its preliminaries from that now in force, will give most satisfaction and do away with much of that to which objection is now so strongly taken.

Experience has proved that preference for "married men with families" against all others, as provided for in the Land for Settlements Regulations, is a sound provision when applied to workmen's homes or settlements composed of very small holdings in the vicinity of cities or large towns, but if applied to rural farm settlements is found to be capable of producing most undesirable results; and upon these grounds, if I might be allowed, I would suggest an amendment in the direction of making it permissible only when in the opinion of the Board it would be advantageous to apply it, which might happen occasionally under special circumstances, such as when there were good and extensive homestead buildings on an allotment.

Amongst the 246 applicants for Chamberlain Settlement, the last disposed of, there are more "married men with families" than there were allotments to select. Had the Board adhered strictly to the regulation, which it declined to do, it would have meant turning away without even examination nearly two hundred applicants who had trustfully come to Timaru, many of them from long distances, for the purpose of undergoing examination and in the expectation of being admitted to the ballot. As the number of applications from "married men with families" has been, and is likely almost invariably to be, in excess of the number of allotments offered in any settlement, it would, if the regulation were strictly carried out, end in married men without families, widows with families, and single men and women, ceasing to apply for land, as there would be no possibility of their getting it until the supply of "married men with families" was exhausted.

Again, there are many industrious and worthy single men, with large experience, anxious to make a start in life, who would make far more desirable settlers than some of the married men, and not a few of these young men who are on the point of marrying would be debarred from getting land and carrying out their intentions were the "married men with families" clause to be enforced in all cases. In the last two ballots there were several of this class, whose *fiancées* also applied and came up for examination. These jointly told the Board of their intention to get married in the event of their getting an allotment, and I am pleased to say that at least two couples were successful.

There is another point bearing upon the subject of the admission of applicants to the ballot which is worthy of consideration. At present there is no proviso in the Land for Settlements Act or Regulations for excluding from the ballot a person who has already been the holder of land in a settlement under the Land for Settlements Act, and who has sold his interest therein. Shortly before the opening of the Chamberlain Settlement a person holding the homestead allotment in another adjoining settlement transferred his interest in the lease, and received for the goodwill thereof nearly £800. Although this transaction had only been completed a few weeks before, he had the audacity to put in an application for the homestead section at Chamberlain. There was no law to prevent his doing this, but the Board took the responsibility of refusing his application, telling him that as he had already been successful in acquiring land under the system he must stand out and let others have a chance of doing the same. Discretionary powers should be given to reject the application of any person who, having held a lease of a size which, in the opinion of the Board, was sufficient for his means and requirements, has transferred it less than two years previous to the date of his fresh application.

PROPOSALS.

The points to be considered are, then, first, the inequality of chances under which so many now have to suffer; and, secondly, the compulsion now exercised in forcing persons to take sections in a "group" against their will, which has been the cause of much resentment amongst the applicants when they learnt the conditions under which they would have to apply.