

90. My experience is that some persons are very much dissatisfied when they go to a new district and are unsuccessful in getting land. Do you not think that the Act might be amended in a way that will give more satisfaction to disappointed persons—for instance, in respect to unsuccessful applicants on a number of occasions, and also in the case of married persons, should not they get some additional advantage?—Yes, I think the Act might be amended in that direction—that is, if you amend it in the direction of giving unsuccessful applicants who have been at several ballots a preference.

91. What proportion does the loading bear to the upset price of land in this district?—Generally, we put it at about 25 per cent. on the upset price, but, as I have said, that will not make the roads.

92. With reference to the recommendation that “ thirds ” and “ fourths ” should be capitalised, do you not think it would be a greater advantage to settlers if they were utilised in paying interest on loans, because in the one case it amounts to a very small sum, whereas in the other it would mean a very substantial sum to be expended in the making of roads? Do you not think that suggestion is worthy of consideration?—I have had little experience of that, and can hardly express an opinion upon it. I have not had any “ thirds ” put aside in this district for that purpose, but the idea appears sound.

93. *Mr. Johnston.*] You say that the improved-farm settlements have been a failure?—Yes.

94. Have they been a failure principally through the locality chosen for the settlement?—The localities have been badly chosen for one thing, and the class of settlers who happened to be put on the land were not altogether the most desirable men. They were often men of no experience who had come from the towns. That is one of the causes of the failure.

95. In your opinion, if the land had been properly selected and suitable men had been put upon it they would have been a success?—I believe they might have been a success if we had had good land and a good class of settlers.

96. Who locates the land for this purpose?—That was done before I was Commissioner.

97. On whose recommendation is the land located?—I suppose there is a recommendation from the Chief Surveyor or Commissioner; and in some cases I think a number of men have formed themselves into an association, and they have had the privilege of selecting blocks themselves. I fancy that in the case of Heathfield and Waipati, in the Otago District, there was an association which selected these blocks. They are situated twenty miles from the nearest railway-station, and the roads to them are bad. I think there was a small area of 300 acres of open ground there, and the reason why it was opened was that the land was so poor that it would not grow bush or scrub. That showed that the men had no experience in selecting land, and that they were not up to the mark.

98. Is it within your knowledge that residents in town apply for land for the purpose of making a home for themselves when they retire, or of putting their sons on the land?—Yes.

99. Have there been a considerable number of such applications?—Yes, I think so.

100. Would you advocate that class of tenure?—I think it would be desirable to provide for such cases, but I also think that there should be certain restrictions in order to prevent dummyism. The principle appears to be right.

101. You say that the land laws and the conditions of settlement are suitable, generally speaking, for Southland notwithstanding any climatic difference?—Yes, the conditions are fairly liberal in regard to residence, &c.

102. You do not think it is necessary that they should be altered to suit the climate?—The climate here is not so severe as all that.

103. You say that Stewart Island is suitable for homestead settlement?—Yes; I think the homestead system could be applied to parts of Stewart Island better than to any other locality in this land district.

104. Do you think it advisable to settle Stewart Island at all?—Yes.

105. Do you not think it would be better to hand it over to the acclimatisation society or keep it as a reserve for flora and fauna?—Practically half the island is to be reserved for the preservation of the native flora and fauna and for scenery purposes.

106. The difficulty is that when settlement takes place it interferes with the preservation of the flora and fauna?—I should say that settlement will only take place along the coast. It is the interior and parts of the coast that are proposed to be reserved. [Witness indicated on the map the portions of the island proposed to be reserved.]

107. Is the timber valuable?—No; it is inferior timber country generally.

108. Do you find that the Crown tenants are all good payers?—Not all.

109. According to your last report they are satisfactory?—I think they are all perfectly willing to pay as long as they have the money.

110. You said something about small runs of 5,000 acres, and that they got half their rental back: is that for the improvements they have done on them?—No; they get nothing. The rule as to the improvements is this: If you are paying a rental under £50 per annum the law allows you five times that rental, and that is all the improvements that that run can be loaded with, and that is all the improvements the incoming tenant will have to pay to the outgoing tenant.

111. Are those conditions fulfilled? I suppose they are under inspection?—Yes. The improvements are valued about a month before the outgoing tenant leaves.

112. Supposing there were only about one hundred pounds' worth of improvements?—The Act does not make improvements compulsory, but the valuation of same at the end of term is based on annual rental paid.

113. Is there much cutting-away of forest going on?—Yes, in the way of sawmilling.

114. For settlement purposes?—Yes.

115. Is it good timber?—In some places there is fair timber; but, as a rule, we try and get the sawmillers to take out the timber before we throw the land open for settlement.