

1913.
NEW ZEALAND

AGGREGATION OF LAND

(PAPERS REGARDING).

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

LAND-AGGREGATION.

Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 14th April, 1913.

The Under-Secretary for Lands, Wellington.

As instructed, I have looked into this matter, as disclosed by the attached papers, and have to report on the points mentioned in your note as follows:—

(1.) *Has there been aggregation or not?*

The term "aggregation" is, of course, both vague and elastic, but, allowing for this, I think it may fairly be said that the case of the Burlings, in Aohanga and Mount Cerberus Survey Districts, is a real case of aggregation. The Messrs. W. A. and R. R. Burling have, since the year 1883, acquired 16,190 acres of freehold land, and 1,475 acres of leasehold. If "aggregation" means the acquisition of a greater area than is necessary for the reasonable maintenance of the purchaser and his family, then the Burlings' case is doubtless one of aggregation, although it must be pointed out that there is nothing in the information supplied by the Commissioner of Crown Lands to indicate the class or quality of the land in question. Out of this 16,190 acres, the area purchased by the Burlings direct from the Crown amounts to only 805 acres, and no less than 12,562 acres were alienated from the Crown for cash prior to the year 1888. It is therefore absurd to charge either the present Government or the Department with maladministration.

The case of the Wilsons (Hautapu, &c.) cannot, I think, be placed in the same category as that of the Burlings. There are eight separate owners, who hold altogether an area of 6,658 acres, made up of 4,272 acres freehold and 2,386 acres leasehold. This gives an average of 832 acres for each holder. Whether or not this should be regarded as a case of aggregation largely depends, it seems to me, on the relationship, age, &c., of the various persons, and on these points I have no information.

The Gorrings (Hautapu district) hold a total area of 3,932 acres amongst four persons (average 983 acres), 3,252 acres being freehold and 680 acres leasehold. This cannot, I think, be considered a very glaring case of aggregation, although there is, of course, nothing to prevent it developing into such, unless more stringent legislation be passed.

The cases of the Stuckeys (Hautapu) and the Masons (Hautapu) do not call for any special remark, even the editor of the *Mangaweka Settler* admitting that the areas "aggregated" were only sufficiently large to provide a comfortable living, and that the holders were residing and working the land in a *bona fide* manner.

(2.) *Is the aggregation the result of the passing of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1912.*

The answer to this is, certainly not. All the purchases of the Burlings were made between June, 1883, and May, 1912. The Wilsons' acquisitions range from 1904 to 1911, and the Gorrings' from 1907 to 1910. Stuckeys' and Masons' acquisitions were also all prior to the passing of the 1912 Act.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands.

This report is forwarded for your information, together with report from Ranger Lundius, and also schedules showing searches made in the District Land Registrar's Office, and I trust the position thereby disclosed may be found to be satisfactory in so far as the Land Board and Department are concerned.

9th April, 1913.

JOHN STRAUCHON.

(3.) *At what time did aggregation begin and end?*

This is partly answered in the preceding paragraph, from which it will be seen that the aggregation referred to began as long ago as 1883. As to when they will end, of course, largely depends on legislation dealing with the matter being passed.