

as an area of something like 600 acres in another part of the district has also been acquired. The whole area consists of first-class land, and the 1,200 acres recently acquired was cleared and grassed. In this case, then, two persons in partnership are holding an area of land which should be occupied by nearly twenty settlers. In the interests of the whole district it is a pity that the Native owners were persuaded to depart from their original intention of close settlement. If they had not done so there would in all probability have been about twenty dairy farms or small sheep-farms on the area of land that is now used for grazing a good many less sheep than it would carry if worked in small holdings. This strip of country has a road frontage of about three miles, and there is a shearing-shed at each end of the block. It is a painful object-lesson to see such an area of dairying country within easy distance of the Ohutu Butter-factory mopped up in this way, and the annual loss sustained by the district in connection with this case alone is sufficient to justify the strongest condemnation of the evil of land-aggregation. Between Utiku and Mangaweka an area of 1,600 acres has been acquired by one person, who has purchased the holdings of three adjoining settlers. This land practically adjoins the area previously mentioned, so that the small farmers have been excluded from a very large area in the vicinity of Utiku. In view of the fact that dairying is being carried on successfully on adjoining holdings of less than 100 acres, it is manifest that this land, which is of good quality, is particularly suitable for dairy-farming in small areas. Another case of aggregation recently occurred in the Hawhaengo Block. A settler who held 85 acres of first-class land in one part of the block and about 1,000 acres in another part of the same block has just acquired the 74-acre dairy farm of an adjoining settler. So long as the law permits this system those who add farm to farm cannot be blamed, but those who have the welfare of the district at heart will see all too clearly that a remedy is needed. The basic principle of political economy ignores the desires of individuals and recognizes only the welfare of the community. If there were illimitable areas of land awaiting settlement it would not matter an iota how large the individual holdings were; but when every land ballot is besieged by eager applicants for sections, and large numbers are still left landless, the case is very different. Among the direct effects of aggregation are: loss of settlers; loss of trade; less output; less facilities for education and social intercourse, and a fostering of selfishness and speculation. It is, of course, gratifying to find our farmers so prosperous that they can buy out their neighbours, but it is not good for the country that they should do so." I think in this connection that I have given you sufficient evidence that land-aggregation is going on in our district, and if I had the time at my disposal I could show you that there are equally as glaring instances over other portions of the Oroua and Rangitikei electorates. I do not think there is any further necessity for me to waste the Committee's time by going through the various statements made by the newspapers who have disputed my statements so far as aggregation is concerned. As a matter of fact, there is one gentleman on the Committee whose sons have aggregated ten holdings of between 1,000 and 2,000 acres. I got the records from the County Council, and they show that Mr. Guthrie's sons hold ten sections in the Ruahine country.

*Mr. Guthrie:* That is not so.

*Witness:* I merely give that as an illustration. There are either two or three sons. I do not think it is necessary for me to go further into this question. I think I have given the Committee sufficient data to go upon in connection with aggregation to disprove any statements that have been made by the Lands Department or by those who oppose the statements I have made. I shall be pleased to answer any questions.

7. *Mr. Forbes.*] Do you consider that the Crown lands report bearing on the question of aggregation published in the Press is a true statement of the position?—I have the statement in front of me, and I have no hesitation in saying that the official reports are a misrepresentation.

8. What particular parts are misrepresented?—In connection with those I referred to, such as Wilsons. Wilsons were credited with having 6,658 acres, made up of 3,372 acres of freehold and 3,286 acres of leasehold. Evidently they are mixing up the Wilsons on the Ruahine-Rangiwahia Road with the Wilsons at Upper Kawhatau. The latter own some 2,000 acres of land there. They have bought out five different settlers. They are non-resident and have land in different parts of the North Island, and instead of having five or six settlers as originally, to-day we have one man and a pack of dogs. These are the only residents on this block. I would not say it is first-class land, but it is good grazing-land and capable of carrying two and a half sheep to the acre. These are the Wilsons who reside at Bull's. Of course, there is another Wilson referred to in the report, T. R. Wilson. He lives away out on the Mataroa-Mangaweka Road, and there is no relationship between T. R. Wilson, the Wilson in Kawhatau, and the J. G. Wilson of Bull's. I think this should be made clear, because a lot of people are under the impression that the statements were made wilfully by the Department. Personally, I never made the statement, and never referred to them in the *Settler* as being one family.

9. Did you say that the Chamber of Commerce in Mangaweka had made representations to the members of the district, Messrs. Newman and Guthrie, about this matter of aggregation?—I do not know whether they made any reference to aggregation; I understand both Mr. Guthrie and Mr. Newman are doing their best to assist in opening up some of the country for closer settlement. I understand they are doing their best to assist in any way they can, as the representatives for both districts, in cutting up some of these estates or in giving any information.

10. And do you think what is required is that the Government should purchase this land and resubdivide it again?—Yes, I think the time is opportune to do that. I believe some settlers who have large holdings are prepared to dispose of the land provided they can get a fair amount from the transaction—that is, a reasonable profit out of it. I am not prepared to say what they are asking. The only ones referred to were the Wilsons, who, I understand, are prepared to accept £15 per acre for Mr. C. Wilson's property. Of course, there are certain portions of Gorringer's estate which they would not take £20 an acre for—that is, where the homestead is. I am not