

prepared to say that positively. It simply means that the Government will either have to take steps to purchase or to put on the screw in connection with the graduated land-tax to force them to disgorge.

11. Are there many people round there anxious to get land?—Oh, yes. Take a case in Hunterville recently. Simpsons disposed of some of their land under the new Act; the Government provided the money for five or ten families, and they went in for the land under the Land Finance Act. They are well satisfied with it, and dozens of people would be in the same position if they could get hold of the land. The difficulty is they have not enough capital.

12. You mentioned that a dairy factory in the district closed down?—Yes, the Mangaweka Dairy Factory.

13. Is that situated in a good dairying district?—Yes. In a central position both for the dairying district of Mangaweka, for the small farming centres alongside, and also for the Lower Kawhatau Valley.

14. The closing up of this factory was on account of the aggregation?—No doubt it has been caused through aggregation.

15. How long ago did it close?—This is the first season.

16. And were the settlers doing all right out of dairying?—Yes, every one of them.

17. What did they sell out for?—Because the land originally cost them £1 or £1 5s. an acre, and they sold out from £9 to £15 an acre and bought other land; and with the experience they had of buying up partly improved lands they have gone up in the direction of the Main Trunk line and commenced *de novo*. They know there is a good speck in view as soon as they get a bit of the bush down.

18. If this land in the Kawhatau was reopened for dairying, would there be plenty of people to take it up?—Yes, every bit of it would be taken up.

19. Do you think the dairy factory would be restarted again if the land was available for dairy-farmers?—There would be three or four dairy factories started if all the land I have referred to in connection with aggregation was cut up into small holdings.

20. Is there much dairy-farming done there?—Yes.

21. Are the farmers in good positions?—Yes, they are all in fairly prosperous circumstances.

22. You say the township is very much handicapped by the fact of this aggregation going on and the depopulating of the country?—Yes, that is so.

23. *Mr. T. W. Rhodes.*] In regard to the Hawhaenga Village, you say there has been a good deal of aggregation?—Yes.

24. What are the conditions there: is it practicable for a man to make a living off the original area of 6 to 10 acres?—There have been more than 6 to 10 acres. Some have been 60, 80, and 100 acres.

25. I understood you to say the areas were from 6 to 10 acres?—Those are the village allotments at both ends of the town. The old residents who have stayed there had no worse land than that disposed of, and they have carried on and made a living in the district and reared their families.

26. Are the conditions for making a living at the present day better or worse than they were?—Better.

27. Therefore you say they could still make a living?—Yes, the small farmers could still keep on there taking their milk to the factory and make a good living.

28. Could a man milk sufficient off 10 acres?—No. You are referring to the village allotments. As I pointed out, they were originally laid out for the benefit of the workers, so that when they could not get work on the adjoining farms or in the immediate vicinity of Mangaweka they could put in their spare time on their own sections, keeping a cow or two and growing fruit and produce, &c.

29. Without additional work they could not make a living?—No, certainly not.

30. Is there plenty of work available now?—Yes, plenty of work at certain periods of the year. I do not mean to say that it is continuous. You can understand, in connection with farming, whether dairying or sheep, that there are only times during the year when certain extra services are required, and there has always been plenty of work for the settlers who have had these sections.

31. Then, in your opinion, there is no need for aggregation?—No, not in the suburban sections adjoining the township.

32. And in your opinion the Land Board was wrong in allowing the transfers?—Yes, most decidedly.

33. Speaking generally, supposing the Government were desirous of acquiring land for settlement, is there any land that the Government could purchase outside of Wilsons at a reasonable price?—Yes, thousands of acres.

34. And it could be cut up?—Yes.

35. Have any representations been made?—Not that I am aware of.

36. Would it not be practicable for some of the settlers in the district who are so anxious to get land, and Wilsons being willing to sell, for them to form a land-settlement finance company?—Yes. I do not know whether the suggestion has been put forward.

37. If that suggestion were made to them they might be prepared to do so?—Yes. I do not think the Wilsons are anxious to hold on to the land if they can get a fair price for it. I think Harry Wilson's flat land is worth £15 an acre.

38. You think it would be possible to form a land finance company?—Yes.

39. Can you offer any suggestion as to how this difficulty could be overcome—you know the district well?—You mean as far as aggregation is concerned?