

better on larger-sized places than on very small ones?—I cannot speak as to your district. From my experience of Mangaweka, ten years ago we were in a far more prosperous condition. We had twice the population, and everything was much better than it is to-day, and this condition has been brought about by aggregation.

121. Does not that apply to a great many places in the North Island for the time being to a greater extent than it does after things are settled down?—Yes, under certain conditions. That might apply in the case of co-operative works. If we have large sums of money being spent it is only natural that we have more money in circulation, but even making due allowance for that I contend, as far as our district is concerned, we are suffering from the effects of aggregation, and would be far better off if the land was not allowed to be aggregated and we had the families still there.

122. You say that some of that land carries six hoggets to the acre?—I gave one particular instance.

123. That would be only a bit of flat country—you would not profess to say that that would apply to the district?—No. The average land all through the Kawhatau Valley would carry two and a half to three and a half dry sheep to the acre.

124. You do not lose sight of the fact that it is possible, in a district like that you speak of, there may be as much money for the small settler in sheep and cattle when you come to take into consideration the question that he has to employ labour to milk, whereas he can keep sheep with less labour? It may be to the advantage of the district to run it in larger-sized areas or holdings and keep sheep?—I cannot say that in connection with our district, for the reason that in the majority of instances they employ their own labour in connection with the dairying industry. They have their own families, and they are under no extra expense in carrying on the industry.

125. That is right as long as they have families, but when the families grow up and go away from the district it drives the people to take to a different process of farming?—Yes, there may be instances of that kind. A man may have six or seven children, and they leave their homes and get married and take up sections for themselves. In that case it would be impossible to carry on dairying.

126. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] Are the holdings in your district all farmed and occupied by the owners, or are they merely managed by a substitute or a dummy?—I consider there is a good deal of dummyism going on throughout our district.

127. Will you state a case?—Yes. Take the upper Kawhatau, the place that was previously occupied by Wheeler, and now owned by one of the Marshalls, some of the wealthiest people in the Rangitikei. They own 1,000 acres or more, and they have a manager up there. Then take Hewitt's property: he is a wealthy man residing in Pahiatua. I am quite sure he never resided on his property in the upper Kawhatau, and that is managed by a manager. I could give several other instances.

128. Do you know of cases where exceptional leniency has been shown by the Land Board?—I know a few years ago I felt compelled to draw the attention of the Land Board to the leniency shown to individuals who took up land away back and never resided on it, and it was only after extreme pressure that they have been forced to reside periodically on the land. They then clear out again, and later on leave the district altogether and put managers on instead.

129. These are cases within your knowledge?—Yes.

130. Prior to going into the Mangaweka district, are you aware of any of those people you mentioned, such as the Gorrings, being looked upon as land speculators, or were they settlers?—Judging from the statements I have already made in connection with the doings of Mr. Gorringe before his brother joined him in the Pohangina district—aggregating land and selling it again, not remaining on it, and doing the same up in our district and also in the Manawatu—I think is as good an illustration as you can get in connection with land speculation.

131. You think the cases in point do not show any inclination to settle?—No, none whatever.

132. In your statement to the Committee you mentioned that there were a large number of empty homesteads in the vicinity of Mangaweka and the district: is that due to aggregation?—Yes.

133. Can you say, roughly, within a radius of ten or twelve miles of Mangaweka how many empty homesteads there are?—If I was to take Ruahine, Kawhatau, Meanee, and Mangaweka, I do not think I would be far out if I were to say that, roughly speaking, there are between fifty and sixty empty homesteads on account of the aggregation. I think I am well within the mark when I say that.

134. And it has a material effect on the attendance at the local school?—Yes, in every case. In answer to Mr. Anderson I said that the attendance at the school had gone down by 30 per cent., but I find now that it would be about the same in other centres on account of the aggregation.

135. Has the aggregation any material effect on the business of Mangaweka?—Decidedly so.

136. Is there any reduction in the number of retail shops in the town?—Yes, quite 25 per cent. reduction to what it was five years ago.

137. What effect would it have generally on the prosperity of the town?—A very bad effect.

138. Trade has diminished?—Yes.

139. Is population decreasing?—Yes.

140. Do the statistics show that?—Yes.

141. Have any cases of aggregation occurred in Mangaweka on account of last session's legislation?—Yes, several cases I have already mentioned.

142. What would you consider will be the effect of that legislation in the future with regard to aggregation?—Speaking from my own experience of Mangaweka, I think it is going to prove very disastrous to the country throughout the Dominion—that is, if you take Mangaweka as an illustration.