

valuators, or one of them and the umpire, or by the umpire alone, *together with ten pounds per centum added thereto* and the sum of the instalments he shall already have paid previous to that date, or he may receive a lease on deferred payments under this Act for a period of ten years from the first day of January, 1884, whereby the price may be paid by twenty equal half-yearly payments; but in that case the price to be paid shall be a sum equal to the value so fixed as aforesaid by the valuers, with fifty pounds per centum added thereto, less the sum of the instalments already paid by such selector." That was intended to cover the cost of advertisement and valuation, &c.

53. Would it not be more desirable to have some provision to prevent men causing useless trouble: to compel them to pay the costs of this valuation at once?—It is quite possible it might be. I think it is highly probable it would. It would be prudent to require a deposit.

54. *Mr. J. Green.*] In the seventh clause of the petition the petitioners say, "Having taken up areas varying from 50 to 200 acres, the petitioners find themselves debarred by the terms of the Land Act from completing their selections up to 320 acres." I should like to know whether, in your opinion, it is desirable that these extensions of area should be provided for in the Act, contiguous to the present holdings, or whether you would extend the privilege; and, if so, to what distance from the present holdings?—My view is simply this: that every settler in the colony should be put upon a similar footing; and that, so long as he takes up 320 acres of land, he should be allowed to take up his area whether contiguous or not, so long as he has been a resident and complies with the law as regards improvements.

55. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Irrespective of quality?—Yes.

56. How would you meet the question of residence, which is an essential of the system?—This is the clause that I drafted with a view of meeting that, and which is marked 55 in my annotations to the Government Bill: "Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in 'The Land Act, 1877,' or any amendment thereof contained, any licensee, lessee, or person who has acquired the freehold of any allotment or allotments of land on deferred payments of an area or aggregate area of less than three hundred and twenty acres, who has fulfilled the conditions of his license or licenses as regards improvements and personal residence at the time of making the further purchase of rural land on deferred payments hereby authorized, may apply for and obtain a license to occupy on deferred payments another allotment or allotments of rural land: Provided that the area of the allotment or allotments so last purchased, together with the area of the lands formerly purchased or occupied by him on deferred payments, shall not exceed in the aggregate three hundred and twenty acres of rural land: Provided, further, that such selector may also apply for and obtain a license to occupy pastoral lands on deferred payments, subject to the provisions of the law for the time being regulating the disposal and occupation of pastoral lands on deferred payment; and such selector may reside on any one of the allotments, either of rural or pastoral land, which he may have purchased on deferred payments; and such residence on one allotment shall be held and deemed to be a sufficient compliance with the conditions of residence required by 'The Land Act, 1877,' or any amendment thereof, for the several allotments held by such selector."

57. Do you not think it is the business of the department to adjust the size of the sections so as to accord with the quality of the land?—I think not, at any rate in the South Island, inasmuch as I do not think 320 acres of any land left in the hands of the Crown is too much for *bonâ fide* settlers in the colony to have. I think it is little enough.

58. Then you would not give an opportunity of a larger number of settlers rather than a smaller number of settlers, say, in a situation where there was fair access to the land?—No. I think 320 acres of any land left in the hands of the Crown, no matter where situated in any part of the Middle Island, it is little enough for any man to have.

59. *Mr. Hurst.*] To what distance would you allow a settler to take up the balance of the 320 acres: would not that have the effect of locking sections that might be occupied successfully by others?—No; he has got to improve the lands.

60. *Mr. Stevens.*] Do you think it would not be as well if the Government were to make some promise to undertake to deal with these special cases of hardship mentioned, with regard to these deferred-payment selectors: do not you think that preferable to incorporating in any Act some enactment whereby the whole of the colony would be affected, for the purpose of giving redress perhaps to 100 settlers?—With regard to the revaluation, I have already stated if in the opinion of the House it is inadvisable to give the right to require a revaluation I would make an alternative suggestion. I do not think I could say the suggestion is to my own mind a better one than the other. I think that whatever method of relief is adopted, that which is adopted should be defined by statute. I may further point out that, if any system of revaluation is adopted, I think it is a singularly appropriate time for moving in that direction, because these men may say: "Well, in future you are to fix a fair valuation for the land and dispose of it by ballot, and you did not treat us in that way."

61. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What should you say during the last year was the number of people who paid over the upset prices in Otago?—I do not think during the last year there has been very much land sold above its value. During times of depression the evils of the auction system do not become apparent; but the moment the slightest excitement for land begins, and we are on the very verge of another period of the same kind, then the evils of the auction system come in, and the people get perfectly mad about the land.

62. *Mr. Hurst.*] You think we should give relief to the people for being foolish?—I think it is expedient that ignorant men should not have traps laid for them to fall into.

63. *Mr. Macandrew.*] You refer to deferred-payment settlers?—Yes.

64. *Mr. Pearson.*] Among the people who paid cash in Otago there would be no agitation?—Certainly not.

65. *Mr. J. Buchanan.*] Are the lands all open lands that you refer to?—Yes; it is all open country. I do not think there is any bush on the deferred-payment sections in Otago.

66. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] There were only twenty-two last year bought above the upset prices?—Yes, I think that very probable.