

250. Was the impression on your mind the result of investigation, and were you led to the conclusion from circumstances which came under your notice in the North Island?—I thought of New Zealand as a whole. I have studied the subject for years. When I saw the course the Government were pursuing, I believed it would lead to a difficulty of this kind by bringing suffering on some portion of the settlers. My opinions were not hastily formed, but were the result of long consideration.

251. Has there been one single case of complaint in the whole of the North Island?—I believe there have been many cases.

252. Can you cite one?—I cannot state any particular case now; but I believe there are cases.

253. We are anxious to ascertain if there are any complaints in the North Island?—I believe there are many.

254. Can you direct us to find them?—It is not my business to direct the Committee. If I had been asked at an earlier period to produce evidence, I could have done so.

255. How can you remedy a disease if you do not know the cause operating to create this disease?—That is for yourself to determine. I know how myself, but it is for the Committee to determine how they will do so.

256. *The Chairman.*] I think it will be better to confine yourself to the matter before us, and not to go into abstract propositions or questions.

257. *Mr. W. J. Hurst.*] Our whole efforts are directed to the discovery of the necessity for granting relief. It seems that the Bill before us has been the result of an abstract theory, and not of cases which have come under the notice of the gentleman who introduced this Bill.

258. *Sir G. Grey.*] I do not object to answer this question, or to explain this. I saw a difficulty arising which I thought it would be better to remove before it came to a head. I conceived it to be my duty to interfere in what I believed was a great evil. I imagine the complaints of the large number of persons who have signed the petition I hold in my hand will quite bear me out. I have been questioned with regard to a particular district, but I must not confine myself to one island. It seems that some of these questions have been pointed at me in a manner that requires me to clear myself, for I have been guilty of what seems to have been regarded as an impertinent interference in this matter. Perhaps I may be allowed to state that, in 1877, the Earl of Beaconsfield, in a speech delivered at the Mansion House, said, "That there should not be any interference with the land laws of Ireland and Great Britain, and that the party he belonged to would not permit any interference." This statement was received with frantic cheering. At that time, I and others always felt that interference was necessary; and if there had been interference then, great difficulty would have been avoided. I thought that great difficulty was likely to arise in this colony from our land system, and I am old enough and experienced enough to rely on my own judgment upon such a subject. I, therefore, produced a measure to give great relief and prevent the difficulties coming to a head. I did not deal with the North Island alone, but with New Zealand as a whole, for the inhabitants of the two islands are one people.

259. *Mr. J. Macandrew.*] I have had a conversation with Mr. J. A. Connell on this subject. I take it the difference between your remedy and his is, that in yours the deferred-payment settler seeking relief will have to go to law to his own suffering and the detriment of his self-respect, while under Mr. Connell's proposals the law goes to the settler and almost gives him what he wants as a matter of right. Assuming that there is this difference between your proposals, which will you consider the most expedient?—I cannot admit the difference. I find that the settlers who have attached their names to the petition which has just reached me have used my very words. They state that they find it impossible to meet their payments. Those who signed it were nearly all Scotchmen, and I cannot conceive that they come on sufferance at all. It is not like coming to a landlord, for these men are all part-proprietors of the land. They simply come to their fellow-countrymen, and ask for consideration. In the Deferred-payment Settlers Relief Bill is the machinery, I have known numerous instances in which the Government have interfered in this way; and I hold that it is the duty of the Government to interfere under such circumstances. Let me tell you of two cases in which the Government have thought it right and necessary to interfere. When the disturbance took place at the Bay of Islands the Government of the day offered the settlers excellent land at Auckland, if they chose to go there. Then, again, the Taranaki settlers were allowed to go to Nelson. The Government should always interfere for the benefit of the people; but in the case of these settlers, it is the people themselves interfering in their own interests. To say that it is proposed that they shall go as mere suppliants or beggars before the Court, is simply trifling with the question. I think I have put it in the very words they use themselves. They say here in this petition that they find it impossible to complete their payments which they had under the pressure of circumstances undertaken to make. You see they prove by their words that the impression on my mind was a just impression.

260. *Mr. W. J. Hurst.*] Do you take words as proofs, because they are uttered?—I say these settlers allege that it is impossible for them to make these payments. If people come improperly before the Court, they can be punished by having costs to pay. If you have a large body of your fellow-subjects,—a number of respectable men,—coming forward saying that they find it impossible to make these payments, and are likely to be ruined, surely it is the duty of this House to provide some means by which they can be helped.

261. If the number were sufficient. In one case it came out that less than thirty out of one hundred and thirty men who asked relief, were really deferred-payment settlers?—Even thirty would be a large enough number to justify action being taken to relieve them.

262. The men may have placed themselves in the position in which they now find themselves. If a tinker or a tailor takes up land, and enters upon a business which he does not understand, are we to give him relief because he fails?—You are not asked to pass an Act to give him relief. You are asked to pass an Act to enable him to get relief, if what he says is true, and if he is a deserving man. If a number of men allege that they have a grievance, they should be heard; and if their cases are good, they should have the relief they ask.