

as I can remember, it was to the effect that dummyism was not known to the department; that we had no proofs of dummyism; and that I could not say how much land had been taken up for speculative purposes or by means of dummyism, but that I believed the great bulk of the land had been taken up by genuine settlers or for improvement.

266. Will you define what you understand by the term dummyism?—What I had in my mind at the time was a person engaged or employed by another to select land on behalf of the principal, the former having no interest whatever—and not intending to have any interest whatever—in the land himself.

267. Did you include in that category members of families taking up land?—No; I do not include them, because it is a very common practice in the district, and is recognised by the laws.

268. You adhere still to that report?—I do; but I speak of the report from memory.

269. That is your opinion still—that there is nothing of the sort in the way of dummyism?—My opinion is that we have no proofs.

270. Have any special steps been taken to prevent dummyism in the district?—There have been no special steps taken, though the Land Board have had the question under consideration repeatedly, and the Board obtained information from Victoria and New South Wales as to the practice in those colonies to prevent dummyism. That action was due to a great deal of discussion—correspondence and articles—appearing in the newspapers about dummyism and speculation in the lands of the district.

271. Can you supply us with any of that information?—I can. I hand in a letter received from Mr. Black, Surveyor-General of Victoria. It is a copy of a letter from the Surveyor-General of Victoria, replying very fully to the questions of the Land Board on this subject. [Copy of letter referred to put in.]

272. Is there any other information upon this subject that occurs to you just now?—Do you mean as to my own views or as to information gathered?

273. Have you gathered any other information?—I have made inquiries as to dummyism in this district of various persons, and particularly of the Crown Lands Ranger. He assures me that he cannot lay his hand on a single person who is a dummy; and has not proofs of a single case.

274. Any particular cases brought under the Board's notice?—No, except the case of a man at Kaiwhata; but until yesterday morning there was no suspicion in my mind of what is technically known as dummyism. There was a statement from a man in the Forty-mile Bush that one of the Puketoi Blocks was being held in the interest of a comparatively small number of people, and not *bona fide* by the people who had selected the lands; but on pressing him he said it was mere hearsay, and he would be unable to give any proofs.

275. And this matter has not yet been dealt with by the Board?—It has not yet been dealt with by the Board; but the Ranger and myself have been on the lookout to meet statements of that sort, in order to bring any particular case before the Board.

276. Have you any opinion to express as to amendment needed in the law to prevent this system of dummyming—any suggestions to make?—Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to say this: that I hold strongly the opinion that dummyism is of rare occurrence in the district, except where families amalgamate in their own interest to take up land. But if you ask me what steps should be taken to insure, as far as possible, that dummyism shall not take place, then I think we cannot do better than follow the practice of New South Wales and Victoria. I gather that the practice in Victoria, as stated in Mr. Black's letter, is this: They exercise judgment in choosing the selector; they enforce residence—that is done both in New South Wales and in Victoria—for a term of five years (of course, improvements have to be effected in every case); they withhold titles, and bar transfers and all dealings with the land until the expiration of the term of residence. I think that, in the main, these provisions would tend to make dummyism a very difficult matter. I might add that in New South Wales they imprison people up to a term of two years where the law has been broken or evaded, or where a man has failed to comply with the conditions of his license by acting the part of a dummy—that is to say, where he has broken the law by allowing the land to be used by other persons than himself. I do not say that it would be wise to insist upon all these conditions of settlement all over New Zealand, but it might be wise to do so on limited areas.

277. Have you any other suggestion to make, or any more information to give us?—I would now speak of the sort of dummyism that is known to the department. As I understand, members of families are considered to be dummies if they join together to take up land. It is a very common thing when a man takes up a section of land for his wife to take up one also—that is, on perpetual lease. It is also common, apparently, for the sons and daughters to apply for and select land. This is demonstrated in the balloting by the recurrence of the same surnames. One cannot help noticing that the same series of names occur for section after section, up to the limits allowed by law. This, of course, is an advantage to the family, inasmuch as they get more chances for the sections applied for than a single applicant does. It has also been known to me that, after applications have been made by, say, the parents of a family, the sons and daughters have applied for land contiguous. So far, we have not had time to make applicants prove their *bona fides* in all cases—that is, by effecting the improvements upon each selection. They need not now reside, owing to the fact that by doing double the improvements residence is not necessary, the intention, apparently, being that all the sections so selected shall be worked as one estate by the parents and children combined. I may say, in passing, that this practice is recognised in New South Wales as legitimate and proper, under the conditional-purchase system, where sons and daughters are allowed to select contiguous to their father's holdings, and are exempt from residence upon such selections, provided they reside with the father on his. The family is allowed to ring-fence the whole property—that is, the whole of the selections—instead of fencing off each piece separately, as required in other cases. That, I believe, so far as I know, is the sort of dummyism that is going on in this