

343. You think that the most simple and effectual way of stopping them?—Yes; and by withholding the titles and transfers.

344. That there could not be transfers until the residential clauses were complied with?—Yes.

345. For instance, in bush-lands, a settler cannot go on the land for two or three years; but then he would be compelled to go and reside on his section two or three years before the title or transfer was issued. Do you not think that that would answer the whole purpose which we wish to arrive at?—Yes; it would give the areas to *bona fide* settlers—to working-men of suitable capacity.

346. It appears that most of the attempts at dummyism have been applied to the choice sections. Now, if this system were put in force, and all the choice sections were brought under the residential clause, do you think that would meet all the requirements we wish to arrive at?—It would meet some, certainly.

347. *Mr. Whyte.*] Do you think the uncertainty of the ballot system has the effect of disgusting many decent people who come to the colony longing for land?—I do not know of many, but I know of some.

348. Not only the uncertainty, but owing to the fact that if they wish to be equal to others they must get others to make false declarations on their behalf?—In certain cases. I have known cases where men from the South have been disappointed and dissatisfied.

349. But owing to the ballot the chances were that they would not get land at any price?—That is so; but I think the Committee should know that in the Wellington District we open large areas of land as “unsurveyed,” where the ballot is only in slight operation. I have here several maps of the district. This system does away with the ballot system to a great extent.

350. Referring to the speculation for the choice sections, does not that imply that the sections have been offered too cheap?—I do not think so. I believe that the valuations which were placed upon the land were all fair, and I have never had reason to think otherwise.

351. Surely, if they did not see a chance of making money they would not have speculated?—That is true, but they were fair prices to the *bona fide* settler.

352. My idea is this: I can see no way of the colony getting the full value of the land, and people really anxious to get on the land getting it, except by opening it up to competition, and the man to whom the land is finally knocked down choosing the tenure afterwards. Under the ballot system there is no certainty whatever about a man getting the land, and he goes away disgusted, and perhaps does not even apply. My question comes to this, Would the system of offering the land for open competition have the effect of doing away with the evil arising from the lands getting into the hands of speculators, and allow the colony to obtain the full value of the land?—I am not sure of that: I believe, if you throw the land open to competition you may have a recurrence of the difficulty which cropped up under the Act of 1885—of too much being given for the land, and applications being made afterwards from all for a reduction of the prices; and also, I would go on to say, as I indicated before, that I am in favour of throwing open certain areas for compulsory residence, certain areas for application, and a limited amount for cash purchase, so that these men could not say they had to go away because they could not get land.

353. Does that which you have said not depend on the administration of the law, and therefore on the officials?—Not the three of them, because there are not three modes. We can offer an amount for cash by auction, but I doubt whether the provisions of the Act of 1887 do not override the Act of 1885 as regards residence.

354. You have suggested that you should make inquiries into the occupations of the various applicants: would that be practicable?—Quite practicable. It is carried out now by Victoria: they choose the best man among the several applicants; they do it in open Court, and they secure the best man.

355. But is there any reason why a clerk or other man in towns should not have the privilege of going on the country?—None whatever: he would come into the fifth category of suitable persons.

356. *Mr. McKenzie.*] Supposing the father, mother, three sons, and four daughters—nine in all—put in applications for one section, must not some of them make false declarations?—I should say so. I should not like any member of my family to do so.

357. Do you not think the real issue is in this matter of declaration—whether made honestly or as a mere matter of form?—That is really it. Unless the declarations are faithfully made it appears to me that there should be none.

358. Is it not unnecessary to have dummyism at all? A speculator wishing to purchase a large area of land can do so without being in any way accused of being a dummy if he says, “I will allow these people who apply so much if they are successful”?—That is dummyism.

359. Supposing I come up to the North Island to purchase land. I have two sons, and I say to them, “I will give you £50”—or give them a holiday—that would be a benefit—“to make an application.” We each put in an application for 2,000 acres—that is, 6,000 acres in all. Immediately on our return back the land is transferred to me. Would my sons be right in making the declaration?—Well, that is a matter for their own conscience altogether.

360. Is that not the way in which the law is interpreted now?—It may be with people who choose to do that sort of thing.

361. You said it was quite right where families were combining together: would that not be right?—Not in the way you put it. I believe it is done in that way sometimes.

362. *Mr. Smith.*] Is it according to law to act in the way Mr. McKenzie has put the question?—I should say, no. That is not my interpretation of the law.

363. You stated that families combining to secure an estate was quite right and justified in your opinion, and when I put a case to you to drive it home you stated that it was against the law. How can you reconcile the two cases?—I reconcile it in this way: if a father and two sons secure an estate and work it jointly as one property we might allow it.