

on a pastoral run. It is obvious to what extent a pastoralist could be black-mailed under such a system. A sense of justice prompts us to state that many of the original pastoralists of Canterbury were faced with financial embarrassment by being compelled to purchase at £2 per acre land, in Mackenzie country and Upper Ashburton and Rakaia, a great portion of which is not to-day worth 5s. to 10s. per acre. We have not found any difficulty in respect of the freehold lands in cases where we recommend the subdividing of runs.

While on this subject, we may state that a proposal has been suggested which, if adopted—it is alleged—would enable the two Balmoral runs to be utilized to great advantage. We refer to the purchase of the Braemar freehold of 20,000 acres, which adjoins the Balmorals. Knowing the price at which the owner of Braemar is willing to sell—a figure between £1 15s. and £2 per acre—we have no hesitation in regarding the proposal with disfavour. About two-thirds of Braemar is comparatively safe country, the remainder risky. Say the property could be acquired for £35,000: that would mean a rental of £1,750 per annum, which would not, in our opinion, be obtained from the Crown lands and Braemar combined. We regard the proposal, from a State point of view, as untenable.

IMPROVEMENTS EFFECTED ON THE RUNS.

We have furnished with the report a table (Table 3) showing the nature and value of the improvements existing on the pastoral runs. In the event of the present licensees failing to obtain at public auction renewals of the leases of the runs held by them, or portion of the runs, the incoming tenants must pay the amounts equal to the values of the improvements before they will be allowed possession of the new runs. The total value of the improvements effected on the runs is £33,522. The values vary from £72 to £6,460. In respect of Glynnwye Run an embarrassment arises. We have recommended that this run should be subdivided into three runs. Two of the subdivisions will be loaded with values of improvements exceeding £5,000. (The estimated values of improvements on Glynnwye Run is £6,460.) Now, the incoming tenants will most assuredly be unable or unwilling to pay down such large sums for improvements, and probably the runs will not be disposed of to new lessees, and will again get into possession of the existing lessee or his nominees. As the object of our recommendation is to encourage the occupation of the country in moderately sized blocks by several licensees, we venture to suggest that the value of the improvements on Glynnwye Run be appropriated by Parliament, and that interest thereon be paid by the lessees. Something of this nature must be done if the object in view in subdividing the run is to be achieved.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE RESIDENT ON THE PASTORAL RUNS.

During our inspection we took an informal census of the persons (exclusive of casual hands) usually resident on the pastoral runs, the result of which is shown on Table 3 furnished with this report. The total is 132. Residence is not compulsory under the Land Act on pastoral runs, for obvious reasons. If the Government were to insist on compulsory residence on these runs, educational and other kindred facilities, and monetary assistance for roads and bridges, and compensation for losses sustained which are usually conceded to permanent settlers, would have to be conceded to the pastoral lessees. In our opinion the enforcement of permanent residence at the present stage of the development of the Mackenzie country and Upper Ashburton country would militate against its successful occupation. These localities are not places for women and children during the winter months. During the summer months the lessees of the Mackenzie country do reside, more or less, with their families. The only runs held under separate leases, and on which there are no persons permanently resident are Irishman Creek, Balmoral No. 2, Glenmore, Gray's Hills, Lilybank, and Whalesback; and, with the exception of Lilybank and Whalesback, the lessees of the runs named cannot reasonably be regarded as absentees,