

The actual settlement system has many advantages ; it settles every suitable lot, and enables the settlers to be near each other to assist in the erection of their buildings and rolling their heavy logs ; it gives statute labour to highways, and enables the settlers to have schools, which in their settlements cannot be sustained.

I think the Government should not give countenance to a system of speculation in the lands of the Crown, by parties who do not wish them for cultivation. Few would purchase lands to settle upon and cultivate amongst the lands of absentees. No one would wish to be neighbour to these unoccupied lands, as they would be deprived of the neighbouring aid so much required in a new settlement. The absentee's lands have no tenants, excepting the Wolf and the Bear, and the backwoodsman finds, to his mortification, they are prowling thieves feasting on the product of his labour.

The system of limiting the quantity of land to be sold to one individual is of general benefit. In those instances in which persons of large capital may wish to locate his whole family by his side, the discretionary power granted to the Executive will enable him to do so. Were there no limit to the quantity, large tracts would be taken, and no more improvements would be made than what are absolutely required by law to enable them to retain them.

Cases are not wanting where lands were sold in large blocks, before the orders in Council limiting the quantity, which very materially impede the settlement.

As a general principle, occupants should be prohibited from cutting and carrying away pine or other valuable timber, unless they comply with the regulations now in force ; that is, to pay the amount received for the timber, as a partial payment on the land.

The present land-granting system answers well ; as a proof of which the lands in the Counties of Perth, Huron, Bruce, Gray and Wellington, have been sold on this system, within the last eighteen months, probably amounting to over a million of acres, all of which are to be occupied by actual settlers.

The great body of this land has fallen into the hands of settlers, who went on as squatters, before the lands came into market, and who have now purchased, some of whom have made extensive improvements on them. These pioneers form a very useful part of the backwoods community, they search up the good lands, open temporary roads to them, and encourage others to follow them. In many instances these pioneers carry their provisions on their back for ten miles ; for their perseverance they deserve their choice of the land.

There is another class who go and explore, and find out the remaining lands unoccupied before the day of sale ; these go on the lots, commence improvement, and construct a house or shanty to give them a preemption.

It is amongst this class the greatest difficulties arise, as to what constitutes a preemption ; and with this class the Agents have the most trouble, each contending that he made the first improvements, but this is now brought nearly to a close, by the agents hearing witnesses in their respective cases and their receiving the first instalment from the person having the best claim.

This latter class are now removing their families and settling on this land in great numbers, particularly in the Counties of Huron and Gray.

Another class who may be called speculators, too large or incapable of exploring these lands, have purchased what have been rejected by these other two classes. They have generally got extensive swamps and unfit for settlement. They will probably forfeit the instalment they have paid ; such lots at present are only valuable for their timber, generally cedar, fit only for fencing.

From what I have seen of the present system, I would recommend its continuance, and the extension of its application to the tract lately purchased from the Indians in the Counties of Bruce and Gray, lying North of Sydenham and Southampton.