

No. 36.

Mr. JAMES BOOTH and Major KEMP to the UNDER SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 16th July, 1872.

We have the honor to report that we have to-day made arrangements with Aperahama Tahunuirangi and other Ngatiapa and Wanganui Natives, for the purchase of a block of land situated between the Mangawhero and Wangaehu rivers, known as Heao, and containing, according to an estimate by Mr. Monro, surveyor, 60,000 acres. We have made no offer as yet as to price per acre. Before doing so, we will, one or both of us, go over the block.

Aperahama, on the part of himself and the other owners who were present, asks for a deposit of £500 to pay survey and other expenses, and on telling him that Government had determined not to advance money deposits on land, excepting those held under Crown grants, he (Aperahama) offered as a security for the £500 a block of land for which he holds a Crown grant, containing 700 acres, all under grass. On further consideration, however, we think it best to advise the Government to advance a sum of £300 under the regulations of clause No. 33, "Native Land Act, 1867," for the purposes required.

The Natives are the more anxious to pay for the survey of their own land inasmuch as by an arrangement with the surveyor they supply their own labour, and so get the work done at about one half what it would cost if the surveyor hired labour.

We were in hopes to have secured the whole country between Mangawhero and Turakina, which would have given about three times the present acreage; but, as there are a few of the owners who are at present opposed to selling between the Wangaehu and the Turakina, Hakaraia Korako, the principal owner, and the chief who made the original offer, advises that we first complete the purchases of the block above offered, and he has no doubt but that the other portion will then be offered.

I have, &c.,

JAMES BOOTH,
MEIHA KEEPA.

The Under Secretary, Public Works Office, Wellington.

No. 37.

Mr. JAMES BOOTH to the UNDER SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 30th December, 1872.

I have the honor to report that the sum of £300, unexpended balance of account, has been lodged by Major Kemp and myself to the credit of the public account in the Bank of New Zealand at Wanganui. The above amount, you will remember, was obtained by Major Kemp and myself on imprest account, for the purpose of paying for the survey of a block of land called Heao, the purchase of which we were negotiating. In consequence of disputes amongst several of the owners of the above block, we thought it advisable to withhold the money for survey until the title had been obtained.

The land has now been surveyed at the expense of the Native owners, with the understanding that it is to be sold to the Government. The block, or rather blocks, for it is in two separate portions, between the Mangawhero and the Wangaehu rivers, contains—in part towards Mangawhero, 5,100 acres, known as Ngapukewhakapu; and in the part towards Wangaehu 10,000, acres known as Heao. These blocks are separate and distinct, but the owners have determined to sell them as one block.

I have gone carefully over the land in question with the object of ascertaining its value, availability for purposes of settlement, means of access thereto, &c., &c. With regard to the portion on the Mangawhero river, I have the honor to report—

1st. That the country as a whole is very rough, being covered with high scrub and bush, the latter being of a light character. There are not many large timber trees.

2nd. I consider that about half the land in this block will be available for agriculture. The rest, which is very broken and hilly, will be almost valueless for many years after the flat land has been brought under cultivation.

3rd. Means of access—the line of road as laid off, but not made, by Mr. Field, between Wanganui and Taupo goes through a portion of this block. The making of a road, which is a matter of necessity, will be an expensive undertaking, but it is questionable whether it is advisable to buy so small a block as 5,000 acres requiring the additional expense of an entirely separate road. Between the utmost boundary of land sold to settlers (Mason's block) and the nearest boundary of the block in question offered for sale, there intervenes a block of 2,000 acres, more or less, owned by Aperahama Tahunuirangi. Quality of land, same as that above described. This land has never been occupied by Natives, and I have already suggested that there will not be much chance of the Government buying the 5,000 acres on the Mangawhero, unless this block of Aperahama's is also included, thereby making the European settlements on that river continuous, and so lessening the expense of making roads.

With regard to the portion, 10,000 acres, called Heao, on the Wangaehu river, the land is very much of the same character as that already described, but it has this advantage, that the road which is now being laid off by Mr. Hales between here and Taupo, will be available for a great portion of the block; there being only the Wangaehu river between the said line of road and the land in question. There are several good sized flats on this latter block, for which settlers are willing to give twenty shillings an acre, but the owners decline to sell unless the whole block is taken.