

date. The recorded transfers of property being so very few, and transactions mostly extending over such limited areas, and opinions of value varying so widely, no current market price of land could be said to exist at the present date. It was requisite, therefore, to take some time over cautious inquiry, and comparison of the views of those whose estimate was very low, as of those whose enthusiasm and perhaps speculative hopefulness led them to gauge values by a high standard, especially about Waitara, as a great port of the early future.

Before forming a final opinion, I found it desirable that I should acquire some general knowledge of the southern portion of the Province. I therefore returned to Wellington by coach. To the southward of the Mount Egmont Ranges I passed through an open belt of land, abundantly grassed and well watered, and apparently very fertile. This belt has varying breadths of six, eight, and thirteen miles back from the beach to the forest, and stretches along the coast as far as Waitotara. It seems impossible to escape the conviction that the declaring this rich tract open for purchase and settlement must to some extent affect values in the northern portion of the Taranaki Province. In fact, portions of this tract are at present under settlement, and are being rapidly stocked with both sheep and cattle, while the near completion of a very fine coach road is rendering it every day more accessible.

I have not lost sight of the advantage which the claimants will enjoy, of being able to defer making choice of their new land for a period of two years to come; for during this interval, owing to the increase of population and to the peaceful condition of the country, it can hardly be disputed that the area of choice open to the claimants will have acquired an improved and more definite value, while it will then be far more certain which would be the most promising district to select from.

It should be stated that each original New Plymouth land order entitled the holder to select a fifty-acre section of rural land. It contained, however, provisions specially guarding the Company who issued it from being held answerable to the holder for their inability to give him possession and occupation, in consequence of any Act of the Colonial Government.

Besides the points I have mentioned, several considerations which it would be difficult to give in writing with reasonable brevity, have weighed with me in arriving at the values set out in the award against individual claims. After all, and whatever care and pains may be bestowed on it, an award in such a case as the present one can at best be only arbitrarily arrived at.

The award is intended to be in full satisfaction of all claims, but is not intended to interfere with any scrip now afloat and unexercised in respect of the original land orders. It seems very doubtful if any such scrip is now outstanding; if it is so, it was in all probability a subject of sale and transfer long ago, and there are no means of arriving at any information respecting it until it may be presented for credit in some future purchase of Crown land.

It is my duty to acknowledge the courtesy and kindness of His Honor Frederick Carrington, Esq., the Superintendent, of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the Collector of Customs, the District Registrar of Land and Deeds, the Chief Surveyor, and of a great number of private gentlemen of experience and long residence at Taranaki, all of whom most readily gave me every assistance in their power in facilitating my inquiries.

The enclosed award I beg humbly to submit to your Excellency, trusting that it may meet with your approval and confirmation.

I have, &c.,

J. W. HAMILTON,
Commissioner.

Wellington, 24th March, 1873.