

2080. Can you tell us what amount of land is near the Stratford line?—No other land under negotiation besides that mentioned in the schedule.

2081. *Mr. Montgomery.*] What is the condition of the three hundred thousand acres that is marked to the west of Ruapehu?—The land as yet has not been surveyed; the title has not been investigated by the Native Land Court.

2082. Have the Government negotiated for it?—The Government proclamation stands over it at present, but Mr. Bryce intended to abandon the purchase.

2083. *The Chairman.*] This effectually deters the Europeans from coming there?—Yes.

2084. Did we pay any money on this at all?—Yes.

2085. Is the amount we have paid scheduled?—The money that has been paid is shown in the Return C.

2086. Is the price per acre that was to be paid shown?—No; it was to have been a lease, not a purchase, for a term of twenty-one years from the passing through the Court.

2087. For how long was this Murimotu Block leased?—One hundred and twenty-nine thousand acres were leased for twenty-one years.

2088. How many years of that time have expired?—About eighteen months.

2089. And do we then re-lease to the present occupiers?—That is the intention, and the purport of the Murimotu-Rangipo Validation Act. The agreement was entered into by Sir Donald McLean and Mr. Sefton Moorhouse. The Government have the right to retain 25 per cent. of the land for special purposes.

2090. *The Chairman.*] Had we any difficulty in obtaining the land?—None at all.

2091. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Does the block to the south-west of Ruapehu and Rangitaua contain 122,000 acres?—Yes.

2092. Does the schedule show the date on which we acquired this land?—No.

2093. Where are these 220,000 acres near the central line that are under treaty?—On the lower part of the line there are 59,000 acres and 50,000 acres at Otairi; a little to the left, Maungakaretu, 63,000; and, above that, Okehu, Parikawau, Te Wharau, and Papahaua. These are the blocks which make up the 220,000 acres.

2094. Is the price that we are to pay marked on the schedule?—The payments to date are marked, not the cost per acre. The average cost of these lands is from 7s. 6d. to 9s. per acre.

2095. *Mr. Larnach.*] That is the price to be paid to the Natives by Government?—Yes.

2096. They must be pretty fair blocks, then, as the price is high?—Yes; they are.

2097. *Mr. Montgomery.*] Have we any description of the quality of the country from surveyors?—I think so. It is one of the regulations of the Survey Department that surveyors, on completing the survey of a block of land, should report on the quality of the land to the department.

2098. Have we a description of the quality of land in the block of 300,000 acres near Owango? No; that land is not yet surveyed.

2099. It has not been examined?—I think not; if it has, only in a very cursory way.

2100. Is any money paid upon this land?—Yes; there has been money paid on it. It is one of the blocks I have not included in the schedule, because it was the intention of the Government to abandon the purchase.

2101. They intended, then, to abandon both this Owango Block and the other 300,000 acres mentioned before?—Not the whole of the latter; that includes the 129,000 acres which have been leased.

2102. Is the land south of Tangarakau under negotiation by the Government?—No; it is not yet surveyed.

Mr. WILLIAM WILKINSON, examined.

2103. *The Chairman.*] What is your profession?—I am a journalist.

2104. Are you not also a surveyor?—No.

2105. Are you the writer of this letter?—No.

2106. Do you know any one named J. S. Wilkinson, in Auckland?—No. I know no one in Auckland named Wilkinson. I live at 117, Queen Street. I have paid frequent visits to the King country, and I thought it was in consequence of information which you might have received to that effect that I was summoned to attend the Committee.

2107. What part of the King country have you visited?—Te Kopua, the Te Wharau Ranges, and the Mokau River.

2108. You know Te Awamutu?—Yes; I started from Alexandra and travelled south of Kuiti, where I stayed for two nights. I had with me a gold prospector, who said he had been in the district and had discovered gold. The object of my visit, which was made ten years ago, was to find if this was correct. From Kuiti I went into the ranges between Te Kopua and Taranaki and the Mokau. My journey was confined to the part of the King country I have mentioned.

2109. You do not know anything of the country near Taupo?—Very little.

2110. What sort of country, from a settlement point of view, is the country you saw?—My visit was chiefly for the purpose of inspecting the minerals. The Maoris were unwilling that I should advance into the district; and the digger I had with me made surreptitious visits to the ranges, and brought back pieces of quartz which were gold-bearing, and convinced me that there was gold in the district. I can say very little besides, except that from the summits of the hills I could inspect a good range of country; and it struck me that it was a pity that it should be left in the hands of the Natives; and that it would be vastly useful if cultivated.

2111. *Mr. Larnach.*] Have you seen any auriferous indications in that part of the country?—Yes; I have not seen the reefs themselves, but I have seen unmistakable evidence that there is gold there. I was deterred from making a visit myself because some Maori women discovered traces of gold in one of our tin dishes, and made a row amongst the Natives, who would not allow me to go. I have, however, no doubt, from the quartz that I saw, that it is a gold-bearing country.