

that Mr. Mays mentioned it and when Mr. Stark informed me that it was not the fact I did not think anything more about it.

1065. What is your usual course in making these inquiries: do you usually inquire of the person who has the land to sell?—No; I make inquiries all round: very seldom from those who have to sell. If I take a case into the Compensation Court, I try to get all the evidence I can.

1066. Was not another piece of land purchased at the North Shore?—Not by me.

1067. *Mr. Dargaville.*] It is on record somewhere that you estimated the value of the property, or made a statement showing the details whereby you arrived at the estimate of £20,000 or thereabouts?—My estimate was £17,300, mentioned in my report of the 12th April, which was made at the request of the Government.

1068. Do you remember whether at any time you expressed an opinion that the property might realize £20,000?—I do not remember doing so.

1069. If the Government had elected to take the case into a Compensation Court, what would have been the result?—I have expressed an opinion that, with the evidence that Mr. Stark and others could produce, I do not think that the Government would have got it for anything less than they have paid. From a long experience of Compensation Courts—I have taken a great many cases into the Court, and never lost one yet—I should say that with the evidence that could be produced, the Government could not have got the land cheaper than what they have paid—namely, £17,100.

1070. I should like you to tax your memory as to whether you did not express an opinion that, if the Government went to an arbitration, in that case they would have to pay £20,000?—I do not remember it, but I may have said it.

1071. It is important, and I should like you to be accurate?—I have not the slightest recollection of it, but I may have said so.

1072. Then, circumstances that are within your knowledge now might have induced you to say so?—Yes; since I wrote my report of the 12th April.

1073. I want you to be quite clear as to whether you did not express that opinion long prior to April, at or about the time when the Minister for Public Works was in Auckland?—I have not the slightest recollection of it; but it is not at all probable, because I was not aware of the value of property at that time; I was totally unacquainted with the value of property at the North Shore. At the same time it is possible that I may have done so.

1074. And the reason why you may have said it would be, I presume, because of the general opinion as to the value of property at the time?—Yes; combined with the uncertainty of Compensation Courts. Sometimes one gets a very different verdict from other times; it depends on the presiding Judge and the evidence.

1075. I understand you to say that it is possible that you may have said so?—Yes.

1076. Your reason for saying that you possibly may have said so would be the evidence that you were aware Mr. Stark would be able to support his claim with?—Yes; and the uncertainty of Compensation Courts. In Compensation Courts it is very difficult to get evidence for the Government. I have had as many as twenty-six witnesses on the one side, and only myself on the other.

1077. Your reason, then, is partly the uncertainty of Compensation Courts, and partly on account of the knowledge that you acquired of the price at which property was in the neighbourhood?—Yes; I placed more reliance on the property-tax valuation than anything else.

1078. Do you now think that, if the Government had elected to go into an Arbitration Court, instead of dealing privately for the property, they would have got it for less than they are now paying for it?—I thought at the time that I made my report that they would not have got it for less than what they are now paying.

1079. And that was the evidence you supplied to the Minister?—Yes; and I think so now. I have heard nothing since to alter my opinion. A great many things have come within my knowledge to strengthen my opinion.

1080. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] Could you mention any of these circumstances?—Further inquiries as to the value of properties from residents, land agents, and owners.

1081. Can you name any of them?—Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Osmond, Mr. Fraser, Mr. Mays, Mr. Snell, and any one who I found could give me any information. I took every step I could to get information.

1082. *The Chairman.*] Can you state what Mr. Mays told you?—He told me the value of Hammond's property next to Mr. Stark's, and what was being asked for it.

1083. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] What was Hammond asking?—£1,500 for three acres. I took a fancy to the property myself, and made inquiries about it.

1084. *The Chairman.*] There is no house on it?—No.

1085. Did you hear if any property had been sold?—No; I did not. I must give you to understand that I only had one day to do the whole business in.

1086. *Mr. Gore.*] Do you remember telling the Minister for Public Works that, if you had to go into a Compensation Court to give evidence, your evidence would be to the effect that the property was worth £17,500?—I do not remember, but it was very likely that I did so, as it was my opinion at the time.

1087. You have told us that you did not value the property yourself?—No; I took the property-tax valuation.

1088. Still you were prepared to go into Court, and say that the property was worth £17,500? Yes; that was the property-tax valuation, with the usual 10 per cent. added.

1089. You made no valuation of the property at all?—No. In all compensation cases I have depended to a great extent on the property-tax valuation. I have never yet heard in such cases that the valuation is too high; the complaint is generally that it is too low.

1090. You also made some inquiries as to the value of the property, and were told that Mr.