

WEDNESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1892.

Hon. Mr. CADMAN, further examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The principal question I wish to put to you is this: Seeing that the land is not yet acquired from the Natives either in the Awarua Block or over a very large portion of the Ngaire route, and that it is now under negotiation for purchase, do you think it is a wise thing for the Government to push forward the construction of the central line, either from the north end or from the south end before the land is acquired?—Certainly it is not a wise thing to push any line of railway through land that you are going to acquire; it must increase the price you have to pay for the land; but I may add that, as far as this is concerned, some of the principal owners of the Awarua Block are agreeable to part with 100,000 acres, and the question of place and price to be arranged in the future. I may say in reference to the Stratford route the Crown interests that are acquired on this line would be equal to about 100,000 acres.

2. Having land under offer and having land purchased are two widely different positions. What I would like you to state to the Committee is this: seeing that the price for the Awarua Block is not yet fixed, would it not be putting up the price to allow this southern railway to proceed any further pending the completion of the negotiations for the purchase of that land?—I do not think that the price will change now that the railway is commenced. The land varies very much in value. Indeed I have seen ten different valuations put on various portions of that block by the Survey Department.

3. If you were negotiating for that property on your own account, and you were at the same time constructing a railway on its boundaries, would you not in your own interests absolutely stop construction of that railway till you had completed the purchase?—If it were my own I would acquire the land before I enhanced its value by a railway.

4. In the same way, the process of construction that has gone on from Te Awamutu has tended to enhance the value that the Government will be compelled to pay for the purchase of Native land in that locality?—No doubt. There is not the slightest doubt. I may say that the agitation of the Ohura Block has thrown difficulties in the way, as we now feel the Natives are not so anxious to sell, and it is not peculiar to this part.

5. Do you think, in order to facilitate the acquisition of these blocks that are under negotiation, that it is your duty to urge upon your colleagues that the railway expenditure in the meantime should absolutely cease?—I do not know that it would make any difference if it were stopped to-morrow. All you could do in twelve months would not make any difference to the value of the land.

6. If the Natives saw that the works were stopped, and given to understand that the works would not go on till the purchases were completed, would that not have a lowering influence on the price of the land?—You must bear in mind that the owners are not all living there on the land. Some are in this town, and know full well the value of that block, and know all about these matters as well as we do ourselves. The principals in this block are men like Mr. Donnelly, Mr. Broughton, and Mr. Blake—one is a European, and his wife is the owner—the others are half-castes. Those mentioned are owners.

7. *Mr. Duncan.*] I do not gather exactly what state the purchase of that block is in?—It is in this position: the block is placed under what is called "restrictions." Those who understand Native Land Court matters will know what this means—that is to say, it has gone through the Court with a provision that no freehold title can be obtained from the Natives except these restrictions were removed, but it could be leased for a term of twenty-one years, and in order to remove the restrictions it is necessary to get a majority in the number of owners to sign a document asking for the restrictions to be removed, after which the matter is sent to the Native Land Court for inquiry. Until that were done this block could not be dealt with, but in the Native Land-purchase Bill now before the House there are provisions put in which enable the Crown to deal with blocks like this, notwithstanding the restrictions that have been made. The suspension of the restrictions by the Act referred to applies only to the Crown; private individuals cannot deal with it.

8. In other words, the Crown has power to set aside the restrictions?—Yes, the Crown only.

9. *Mr. Mills.*] Do you know whether the Crown is negotiating for portions of the land on the Ngaire Block—namely, Maraekowhai Block, Whitianga Block, and Ohura Block?—Yes, we are endeavouring to acquire that land.

10. *The Chairman.*] The Committee wish you to furnish a statement showing the expenditure of the Government and the interest already acquired in the four principal blocks along the Ngaire route?—Yes, I will see that that is sent to you.

11. *Mr. Mills.*] What is the total area of those several blocks and the amount acquired?—I will furnish it in my statement.

*Statement furnished by the Hon. Mr. Cadman.*

Taumatamahoe Block, 150,000 acres.—Interests acquired by Government to date, estimated at 100,000 acres; will be defined by Native Land Court shortly. Land will then be available for settlement.

Maraekowhai Block, 57,000 acres.—Purchase recently commenced. Only three shares out of seventy-nine yet acquired.

Whitianga Block, 35,000 acres.—Not yet passed through the Native Land Court. Cannot be dealt with in the meantime.

Ohura South, 116,152 acres.—Cannot be dealt with until order of Native Land Court declaring extent of individual shares is clear of danger of rehearing.

NOTE.—The three first-named blocks were dealt with by the Land-purchase Department as a whole under the collective name of "Taangarakau" before the titles were adjudicated upon by the Native Land Court.