

areas which but for the law the trustees of the infants would have sold to the Crown. I would therefore respectfully suggest that steps be taken to alter the present state of affairs. Some of the most intelligent men amongst the people say that they are insulted by the existing state of the law, and add that as parents they are better capable of attending to the welfare of their offspring than an irresponsible person who cannot have any interest as to how the children are being reared and brought up. If the present state of things continues, I will be unable to complete the purchase of any block wherein minors are interested, and the result will be we will have blocks interspersed amongst those acquired by the Crown owned by infants and held by them to the detriment of settlement, besides getting all the benefits from roading and increased value caused by European settlement, &c.

Lately the Natives have been showing a greater desire to sell, but they, of course, offer the bad blocks first; and in a very great many instances I have had to refuse to buy—as, for instance, a number of the Rangitoto Tuhua blocks, lying in the Tuhua Survey District, the same being pumice country, and rough, and therefore unfit for close settlement. Where the Natives are interested in many different blocks it is difficult to deal with them, for they know as well as we do the good land from the bad; therefore they do their best to sell the bad land first, with a view of hereafter getting a better price for the good.

I will now try and give you an idea of the class of land in the various blocks I have been buying. Of course, to comply with the Act I have had to take the valuations put on the land by the Government Valuer, and the values and information set forth in the circular you sent me and supplied by the Lands Department. I have also in certain cases acted on my own general knowledge of the country; also from surveyors and Europeans who are conversant with the character of the land in the localities in which they reside.

Re Tokanui Blocks.

All these can be classed as good pastoral and agricultural land, and every effort should be made to acquire them. Taking these blocks as a whole I am of opinion that they are worth £1 10s. per acre to buy from the Natives, and then leave a good profit after cutting up, &c. When put on the market you will notice that for blocks near Kihikihi, the main road to Otorohanga and Kihikihi, and the railway-line, I am paying £1 an acre, except in one block—viz., Tokanui No. 1A—for which I have gone to £1 10s. per acre. For those blocks further away towards the south-east I am paying only 15s. per acre; but the quality of the land is the same throughout, situation being the only cause for making a difference in price. To put these blocks in the market will cost very little, as they are all accessible to roads already made. Korakonui Block, adjoining at the east end, containing 2,000 acres, is good land. I hope to be able to acquire about half of it, and add to the Tokanui blocks. The price is £1 an acre, which I had to give, that being the value put on the land by the Government Valuer.

Re Rangitoto A Blocks.

These blocks are subdivisions of the large block of above name. Those to the north of a line drawn from Pamotumotu Trig. Station to Otoru Trig. Station comprise good land for close settlement, and are worth over £1 per acre to buy from the Natives. So far, the highest price I have paid is 15s. per acre. If all the blocks to the north of the above boundary could be acquired, a splendid farming settlement would be the result. The blocks lying to the south of above boundary also contain good land, mostly bush and somewhat rough, and for the most of these blocks I am paying 7s. 6d. per acre, but for two at the extreme south I am paying 10s. per acre. These two blocks are worth the money, as there is good milling-timber on them, which will be very valuable before long.

Re Kakepuku blocks, in a few of which I have been buying, the price being paid seems high, but I had to go by the value put on them. The land is really good, and all that can be purchased will be readily taken up by settlers, besides helping to fill up gaps between sections already acquired by the Crown. I have also bought in some Kopua and Mangauika blocks, and the land being good will also come in to get the district more closely settled by Europeans.

Re Taumatotara and its Subdivisions.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Europeans settled around this block are most anxious that the same be acquired. Owners are only now showing a disposition to sell. The block, you will see from the plan, is situated in Kawhia South, and lies in the middle of Crown lands or lands taken up by European settlers. It will take time to acquire the most of this block.

Re Hauturu East and West Blocks.

There are numerous blocks held by Maoris scattered about, and interspersed amongst the lands acquired by the Crown, and settled upon. The owners of these various blocks are not keen to sell, although I have bought in a few. These blocks near to the railway I have made every effort to buy, but so far without success. The above remarks may also be taken to apply to blocks held by Natives in Kinohaku East and West. The other day I received a request from a number of owners to say that they are now willing to discuss matters with me as to sale of some blocks, and to meet them at Oparure. This I have agreed to do as soon as time will permit.

There are other blocks under purchase which I need not remark upon; but all are shown in the progress report I herewith send you.

Re Rangitoto Tuhua Blocks.

In these blocks I have, in some, purchased considerable areas, as for instance in Rangitoto Tuhua Nos. 72, 77A No. 2, 57A, and 58. All these blocks are somewhat rough, but will, when cut up, be a great