

*Mr Myers:* Is it proposed to do that to-day?

*Right Hon. Sir J G Ward:* I think, as Mr. Major said he wanted to go on by train to-day, I will give notice of the witnesses I propose to call. One is Mr Jennings, M.P., and the other is the manager of the Press Association, Wellington.

*Mr Skerrett:* I have a witness here who was unable to attend before. Mr Granville was with Mr Symes when he saw Mr Gower at the shearing-sheds, but, although he was present at the interview, he informs me that he did not hear any of the conversation. For that reason it is of little use calling him.

*The Chairman:* If he is in attendance, probably the Committee would like to hear what he has to say.

JOHN GRANVILLE examined. (No. 10.)

1. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Where do you reside?—Mangamingi, near Eltham.

2. What are you?—Sheep-farmer.

3. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.*] Do you know anything about this case before the Committee?—I told Mr Skerrett what I had to give.

4. *Mr Skerrett.*] You were present at an interview at Mr Gower's shearing-sheds between Mr Symes and Mr Gower?—I do not know that it was an interview. I called at Mr Gower's shearing-shed with Mr Symes, who was to have given an election address that night, I think between 3 and 4 o'clock. Mr Gower appeared at the door of the shed, and I think he spoke to Mr Symes, but I am speaking from memory, as I have no notes. I was sitting with Mr Symes in the buggy, and we saw Mr Gower at the door of his shearing-shed. Mr Symes said, "Let's go in and see the shearing." Mr Gower showed us through the shed to have a look round. Mr Symes went to the wool-press with Mr Gower, and a few minutes passed before I joined them; and then Mr Gower invited us to his house to have some refreshment, and we returned him our most grateful and cordial thanks. There was no talk of money in the discourse that took place.

JOHN DOUGLAS RITCHIE examined. (No. 11)

1. *Mr Myers* ] You are the Land Purchase Inspector for the Government?—Yes.

2. You were not Land Purchase Inspector in 1906?—No.

3. But you have in your custody the files for that year?—Yes.

4. Would you mind turning up the file relating to the sale by Mr Frederick Bayly of his property at Toko?—Yes.

5. Will you tell the Committee when that property was offered to the Department?—The first letter on the file is dated the 9th March, 1903, from Mr Major to Mr Barron, offering the land.

6. Do you mind reading it?—'Bank Chambers, Hawera, 9th March, 1903.—To the Chairman, Land Purchase Board, Government Buildings, Wellington.—SIR,—On behalf of Mr. F Bayly, of Toko, I beg to submit his property at Toko to you for acquisition under the Land for Settlements Act. The property comprises about 900 acres of grassed land, with a frontage of just about two miles and a half to the Ohura Road. It is level and undulating land, and well situated for dairying purposes, and is divided into five paddocks, each section having a frontage to the road. There is a good house on land, with outbuildings and yards. The price the vendor places on same is £12 10s. per acre. In the interests of closer settlement this is a most desirable property to obtain, the demand for land for dairying purposes in that locality being very keen. I hope you will obtain your inspecting officer's report as early as possible, that you may advise me of your Board's decision as soon as possible.—Yours, &c., C E MAJOR.'

7. A report was obtained, I suppose?—There is some correspondence about it, but of no consequence, between Mr Major and Mr. Barron, there is nothing definite. There is a letter from Mr. Barron to the Prime Minister, dated the 18th March, 1903. 'Mr C E Major has offered the estate of Mr F Bayly, situated on the Ohura Road, and containing about 953 acres, for sale under the Land for Settlements Act at £12 10s. per acre. I know the land fairly well, and doubt if it is (as Mr Major says) suitable for dairy farms. Mr Bayly at present depastures 4,380 sheep on it. Please direct whether the Board should deal with it. Form attached.—A. BARRON. The form came back with instructions to proceed, signed by Mr Seddon: "You are hereby directed to negotiate with the owner of the property of Mr F Bayly's estate, consisting of Sections 16, 14, 12, 10, and part of 7, Toko A Block IV, Ngairi District, Taranaki, and containing 953 acres, more or less, for the purchase thereof at such price as may be agreed upon between the owner and the Board.—R. J SEDDON, Minister of Lands.'" Some other correspondence went on, but nothing was done, because Mr Barron could not get the work done.

8. Just run along the file, and see if there is anything further?—There is a report here from the Crown Lands Ranger, New Plymouth, to Mr Barron.

9. Does he value the land?—He gives an idea of the value, but he would only give a sort of preliminary valuation.

10. What is the preliminary valuation?—£11 10s. per acre. That is on the 14th April, 1903.

11. And does he report upon the suitability of the land for close settlement?—He says, "The property is well watered and grassed, and is all suitable for dairying, and admirably adapted for cutting up into about six farms with no expense for roading." There is another letter from Mr Major on the 22nd April, in which he says, 'I understand that an officer for your Department inspected the place some two or three weeks ago. Will you please inform me whether there is a prospect of your acquiring the property, as Mr Bayly is anxious to know what is being done in the matter.' Then there is another letter from Mr Major, of the 8th May, 1903, to Mr Barron, in which he says, "I wrote to you on the 9th March and again on the 22nd April, but have not