

been favoured with any reply to either letter Mr. Bayly is most anxious to know whether there is any prospect of the Government acquiring the property, as he purposes entering into other arrangements in regard to the place if the Government decide not to take it." Mr Barron replied on the 13th May as follows "I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 8th instant, 22nd April, and 9th March, with reference to the purchase of Mr F Bayly's property at Toko. In reply, I regret that I have not yet been able to proceed further with the negotiations for the purchase of Mr Bayly's property The price is a high one, and I should not advise Mr Bayly to wait if he can find another purchaser." Then there is another letter, dated the 10th June, 1903, from Mr Major to Mr Barron.

*The Chairman.* What is the object of this evidence, seeing Mr Major admits the sale of the property?

*Mr Major* I admit all these letters.

*Mr Myers* I understand that the Committee will have to report to the House as to whether the transactions were proper.

*Right Hon. Sir J G Ward* I think it would be better to let the matter go on.

*Mr Myers* Perhaps Sir Joseph Ward would allow me in the other matters to see the files myself in the company of an officer of the Department.

*Right Hon. Sir J G Ward* I only want the ordinary course to be followed. I think it would be better to get the facts from Mr Ritchie.

*The Chairman* I want to conduct the proceedings on the lines adopted in the usual course.

*Mr Ritchie:* On the 10th June, 1903, Mr Major again wrote to Mr Barron, 'I am informed that the Government has decided to purchase for railway purposes the long narrow strip of land that was divided from the other portion of the property by the main road. This now leaves a compact block of land of about 880 acres. I hope that the Board will decide to acquire this property and cut it up into small sections. I am confident that there will be a keen demand for the land.' On the 12th June Mr Barron acknowledged that letter "I am in receipt of your letter of the 10th instant, in further reference to the sale of the property of Mr F Bayly at Toko. In reply I beg to state that the offer will receive consideration as soon as possible." There is a memo here to Mr Barron initialled by Mr Seddon, "Purchase of land from Mr Bayly at Toko Mr Barron, how does the matter stand?" That is dated the 4th July It is just a slip of paper stuck on the file.

12 *Mr Myers.* What date is that?—I think it is the 4th July, 1903, as far as I can make it out. Then there is the report of a Board meeting at Stratford on the 29th July, as follows: "A meeting of the Taranaki Land Purchase Board was held at the County Hotel this day Present—Mr A. Barron, Chairman; Mr James Mackenzie, C.C.L., Mr John Heslop The Board considered an offer made by Mr C E Major on behalf of Mr Fred. Bayly, of 880 acres, Subdivisions 1, 10, 12, 14, and 16 of the Toko Block, at £12 10s. per acre. Resolved to recommend that an offer be made of £12 10s. per acre. Also that the sum of £450 be given for improvements made since the property was first submitted to the Board, conditional on two dwellinghouses, with the sheds and yards as specified, being completed as promised, also that the section-lines be fenced as agreed upon. Resolved also, That an offer be made of £20 per acre for about 5 acres of Section 8, Block 16, to give access from Gordon Road to Division 10." There is then a reference to other properties, and the report is signed by Mr A. Barron, Chairman; Mr James Mackenzie, Commissioner of Crown Lands, and Mr John Heslop

13. Was there a valuation from the Government Valuer or any other person; or does it appear that the Land Purchase Board purchased on its own valuation?—Mr Barron's valuation appears to be the only valuation on the file.

14. *Mr Fraser* In that report do you read that the Board decided to purchase at a particular price?—Yes, £12 10s. an acre. On the 1st August, 1903, Mr Barron reported to the Prime Minister the results of the Board's deliberations; that went to Cabinet on the 2nd August, and the recommendation was approved for purchase.

15. When was the recommendation approved?—On the 2nd August.

16. And the purchase was at £12 10s.?—Yes.

17. By what name is that estate known now?—Clandon.

18. *Mr Myers.* I think, Mr. Ritchie, that would be the only estate acquired for some time in the district, the next was Mr Alfred Bayly's?—Yes, as far as I know

19. I want to bring you to Mr Alfred Bayly's property There is nothing else on the file in reference to Mr Fred. Bayly's property?—No. The other correspondence is only departmental correspondence about the cutting-up.

20. Just before we pass on to Mr Alfred Bayly, do you know whether at the time the Government purchased the property Mr. Frederick Bayly subdivided?—No, I do not know

21. Let us come, then, to the late Mr. Alfred Bayly's estate: First of all, how many miles is that property off Mr Fred. Bayly's estate?—I cannot tell you.

22. It is at Toko?—It cannot be far distant.

23. I am told that these are adjoining blocks?—I do not know.

24. Do you mind saying when that was offered to the Government?—The first offer was made by Mr Arndt on the 19th November, 1903.

25. At what price?—£12 10s. per acre.

26. Was a valuation obtained, or a report?—No, not at that time.

27. What happened with regard to that?—It was allowed to stand over, and there does not appear to have been anything done until the 16th April, 1904.

28. Was there any correspondence between the member for the district or any member?—There is nothing on the file. There is nothing except correspondence between Mr Barron and Mr Arndt. On the 16th April the following letter was received from Mr Seddon: "I have received a letter