

151. When you returned after the interview with Mr. Bell and had a meeting with the Natives, you explained to them the line of action decided upon, and that was to test the legality of the titles of those blocks?—Yes. This large document, which relates to 1f, and all the documents relating to the other blocks, were translated by Mr. Damon on the spot, and they were read out and explained. We did not spare ourselves. We were practically up all day and night.

152. Why did that course fail, then?—Simply because the Natives came to the conclusion that they could not possibly carry on. They had not raised any money at all: but we were all afraid that if we made another step we would render ourselves liable to attack by the other side. We perhaps could not withdraw. That is the position as I took it to be, and I did not want matters to go any further. But I went as far as I possibly could go.

153. It was suggested by Mr. Bell that possibly the £800 would not be sufficient?—Yes.

154. It might cost some thousands?—Yes. There might be trustees or people at Home that you would want to find out.

155. The outlook was not very bright?—I thought I had stirred up a hornet's nest, but as I had put my shoulder to the wheel I did not like to turn back. I fought as long as I could, but I left to the Natives the decision as to what should be done.

156. Failing to finance for purposes of litigation, and having a feeling that it might involve you in tremendous expense quite unknown just then, and in view of the fact that there were proposals for sale, the mind of the Natives gradually changed towards entertainment of the proposal for sale?—Yes, they were quite ripe for it. They were not influenced in any way whatever by myself.

157. Then followed the meetings that you referred to and the ultimate decision that they should sell?—Yes.

158. And that decision was unanimous?—Yes.

159. To sell for £25,000, the Natives getting in addition £2,500 worth of shares?—Yes.

160. You have followed your profession as a surveyor for many years, have you not?—Yes, I have been a surveyor for about thirty-five years.

161. And you have been resident in the King-country for a number of years?—About six years.

162. You know the character of the land there?—I know it very well.

163. Have you had any experience in mining?—Yes, I have had about fifteen years' experience as owner of a mining battery and as a representative of English companies.

164. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Gold-mining companies?—Gold-mining. Of course, in the study of gold-mining one also studies coal-mining. For thirty-five years I have taken a scientific journal, and for the last thirteen years I have taken the *Coal-mining Journal* of America (Mines and Minerals, &c.)

165. *Hon. Sir J. Carroll.*] It was a subject of interest to you?—Yes, in fact, I have studied nothing else the whole time.

166. Have you been over the Mokau-Mohakatino land?—I was over the north-eastern portion down as far as the Parahika and over it on to the lower part of the land there. I have been on the north-western side for about ten miles down, where a bird's-eye view could be got of half of it.

167. What is the character of the land?—Towards the north end there is a little alluvial deposit by the Parahika and a little flattish land, but the block there is only about 9 or 10 chains wide. The best part of that country is cut out of the Mokau Block. The part that a man interested in farming land would be interested in would be the flat land or the foothills. There is not a great deal of flat land or foothills in the north part, and it gradually rises to about 3,000 ft. nine or ten miles down. The upper part of the country there, in common with the whole of the land from the west coast up the hill above the 1,500 ft. level is composed of rhyolite. Now, rhyolite is a lava, and it decomposes into sand and iron, which oxidizes, and that is rather poor land. There is a good deal of it about Te Kuiti on the higher ground. It is very often mistaken for limestone.

168. I am not speaking about the Te Kuiti land. I want you to confine your statement to the Mokau lands themselves?—But the other has a bearing upon it.

169. Is it steep, rugged country?—A lot of it is very steep and rugged, and practically unfit for cultivation. For the most part the hills come down very close to the stream on each side, and there is very little flat land along the river.

170. Is there any valuable bush on it?—I did not see any bush that was worth having. I did not see any clumps of rimu there, and certainly very few totara-trees. I would not call it timber country at all. As a milling proposition I would not look at it.

171. The best part of it is cut out. Have you referred to the areas that were sublet?—No. I mean that there is a lot of flat land by the Parahika, but on account of the Mokau Block being so narrow there it does not take that flat land in.

172. It is not in the Mokau Block?—No.

173. The best land in that district is not included in the Mokau Blocks?—That is so.

174. What is your opinion as to the average value of that country?—When I looked at it from the northern side and the north-west side I reckoned there were about 9,000 acres that I would have been willing myself to pay twenty shillings an acre for. If it had been situated in a place easily accessible or had had any roads to it I should have been prepared to say it was worth more. But the approaches to that piece of land are very bad indeed.

175. It is country not easy to road?—Very hard to road.

176. What is your opinion as to the value of the block, outside of the 9,000 acres which you refer to?—I should think the land worth from about 5s. up to about 12s. an acre, the 5s. for the very upper part. I would not really have it at all if I had to buy. Say 10s. an acre for the balance down to the 1,500 ft. level of the rhyolite land, and for the foothills, papa, and the lower part £1 an acre.