

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1912.

HARRY EDWARD WALSHÉ examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Assistant Surveyor, in the employ of the New Zealand Government.
2. *Mr. Witty.*] You were surveying this Pohukura Block in 1909?—In the early part of 1910.
3. The Crown land is very broken country, is it not?—Yes, the Crown land is.
4. And almost impossible to get a road through it for the purposes of closer settlement?—There is no practicable road that can be got.
5. *Mr. Statham.*] The best route for the road was along the Waipunga Stream?—Yes, without doubt.
6. And there was a good deal of correspondence between yourself and the Under-Secretary, I suppose, through the Napier office?—Yes.
7. About the question of having the land acquired under the Public Works Act?—Yes.
8. Then do you remember, when the negotiations were broken off because Mr. Ballan wanted £4 an acre, you suggested as an alternative that there should be access-roads put in?—Yes.
9. In a letter to the Under-Secretary from the Chief Surveyor at Napier he encloses a copy of your letter of the 21st September, 1910, as follows: "This area lies between the new road and Crown lands and boundary, and contains 1,343 acres 2 roods, and consists of river terraces and low hills—all poor pumice country. The value, including five miles and one-eighth of fencing, is £516": that was your valuation?—Yes.
10. "Should this area not be acquired, more roading will be necessary at an estimated cost of £400 (two miles and a half at £2 per chain)": that was your estimate?—Yes, that was my estimate.
11. "Besides reducing the value of the sections owing to their not having any easy country for homestead and yarding purposes"?—Yes.
12. Then, you remember negotiations were broken off altogether on account of Mr. Ballan wanting £4 an acre?—Yes.
13. On the 13th February, 1911, the Chief Surveyor at Napier wrote to the Under-Secretary stating that Mr. Walshe values the land at 5s. an acre. The Government valuation in 1907 was 5s. an acre. Those are the facts, are they not?—Yes.
14. Then the surveyor—that would be yourself—reports, "That the land in question is pumice country covered with small scrub and tussocks (no bush), and states that the Natives are willing to sell their portion of Runanga No. 1B, between the proposed road and the boundary of the Crown land, at 4s. per acre, this land being precisely similar to Mr. Ballan's portion of No. 1A for which he is asking £4." Is that correct?—Yes.
15. Was it precisely similar land?—Yes.
16. Then the Chief Surveyor goes on to say it is out of the question to give that price, and asks authority to give 15s. Do you think that 15s. would be a fair price under the circumstances?—It would have been a good price for the Department to have got it at.
17. Now, on the 20th March, 1911, the Chief Surveyor at Napier wrote to the Under-Secretary, "There is no alternative but to take the roads up Waipunga Valley under the Public Works Act and give two access-roads to tap four sections. This will be an inexpensive road to form and maintain, and the fencing will be the only item of any cost, but even so it will be a better and cheaper road than any other we can get elsewhere. To enlarge the sections to 7,000 acres as suggested will only save one access-road, and as they are only short ones the expense will not be great, and I would respectfully suggest that the original scheme of subdivision be adhered to." That is, that the sections remain at 3,500 acres, the original scheme, and that two access-roads be put in the 32 chains and 45 chains?—Yes.
18. That would save acquiring any land except what was actually acquired for the road?—Yes.
19. And would that have been satisfactory?—It would have reduced the value of the Crown sections on the frontage. There was practically no easy country on the frontage. Tracks would have had to be cut then from the boundary to enable them to have worked each spur.
20. Your connection with the land practically finished when you finished the survey?—Yes.
21. Was the offer of Mr. Ballan to sell at £2 10s. per acre submitted to you for report?—Yes, that was submitted to me.
22. Did you recommend the purchase at £2 10s.?—Yes.
23. Do you know what price was given to the Natives for their portion of No. 1B?—I fancy about 3s. 10d. an acre. but I would not be sure.
24. That means that the Natives got 3s. 10d. an acre for their land and Mr. Russell got £2 10s. for his?—Yes.
25. And Mr. Ballan in making the bargain also bargained that all fencing should be done?—Yes.
26. Which cost the Department some £500-odd?—Yes.
27. *Mr. Guthrie.*] You have been surveyor in this block from the time of the first negotiations and before?—Yes, since January, 1910.
28. Are you the gentleman referred to in the memorandum as the Chief Surveyor from Napier?—No.