

29. Was the correspondence which passed between the Lands Department and the Chief Surveyor at Napier submitted to you for report as the man on the ground?—I think most of it was, but I am not sure.

30. Several letters passed between the Chief Surveyor at Napier and the Lands Department which seem to hinge on the whole transaction. I want to know if that correspondence was submitted to you and reported on by you?—I can tell you if any particular letter was submitted to me, but whether all of them were I could not say without seeing them.

31. I suppose you surveyed this Government block of land?—Yes.

32. What value did you put upon it?—I think it averaged 14s. for the front sections.

33. In regard to the strip that is required from the Runanga Estate, is that all flat land?—No, not all.

34. Then on what grounds did you recommend that this land should be purchased at £2 10s. when you valued the surrounding land at 14s., and when you knew the other to be sold at 3s. 6d. You must have had a reason for recommending the Department to accept it?—Because I believe it was worth that much to the Department on account of the frontage.

35. That was the reason you recommended the Department should take the land at £2 10s.?—Yes.

36. And you believed the Department was making a good bargain at that price?—Yes, making a fair bargain.

37. If it was not for the fact that it gave access to those sections, what value would it have been to the Government?—My last value gives it at £693 9s.

38. And then you allowed the extra valuation solely and wholly because you considered it would be of that value in opening up this other block?—Yes.

39. What increase per acre did you think the Government would get for it?—2s. per acre.

40. For the whole block?—No, for the adjoining sections.

41. By their acquiring this block it would increase those sections by 2s. an acre?—Yes. There are about 19,000 acres.

42. Were you in any way connected with Williams and Kettle when they made the offer on behalf of Mr. Ballan?—I was asked to report on that offer of £4, and my report was that it was not advisable.

43. What was your impression when you found that £4 an acre was asked for that by Williams and Kettle?—I thought they were trying to get the price on account of the frontage, and I thought they would come down.

44. You thought at that time they were asking an exorbitant price?—Yes.

45. And you as a Government officer refused to recommend that?—Yes.

46. In any of your communications did you only communicate officially with the head office, Napier?—Yes.

47. You had no communications from any private individuals, agents, or otherwise in connection with the matter?—No, none at all.

48. Do you remember that there were instructions issued from the Under-Secretary of Lands to the Chief Surveyor at Napier to proceed and take this land under the Public Works Act?—Yes, that was the road.

49. Was that the road-line only, or did it include the piece that you have now taken?—There are no provisions in the Act, I believe, for taking that 1,343 acres.

50. I will come to that later on. What I want to know is, was the instruction from the Under-Secretary of Lands to the Chief Surveyor at Napier to purchase this piece they have now purchased, or only to take the road-line under the Public Works Act?—Only to take the road-line under the Public Works Act.

51. What would have happened—you could not have skirted round the spurs in the front sections—there must have been a piece of land between the road and these sections: what would you have done?—It would have included the two access-roads—the land right up to the Waipunga and access-roads.

52. And then taken only a chain all the way round?—Yes.

53. Immediately after this it appeared that fresh instructions were issued that negotiations were to be opened up between the Department and the owners, and the idea of taking under the Public Works Act was dropped?—If we could purchase the whole of the land including the road at £2 10s. The offer given to us was, I believe, to purchase the whole at £2 10s. or break off negotiations altogether.

54. It was not then a voluntary act on the part of the Department—it was because the Department's hands were forced?—They offered to buy the whole piece at £2 10s. or take the road under the Public Works Act. They had no choice of taking the road only at £2 10s.

55. I did not mean that at all. Did you put a price upon the road-line at all?—No, never.

56. The point I want to make is this: the negotiations with regard to taking under the Public Works Act seemed to end abruptly, and do I understand you to say that they ended because you had to take the whole block at the price of £2 10s. or else pay more for the road? The Department was placed in the position that they had to take the whole of this block at £2 10s., or if they took the road alone they would have to pay more for it?—Yes, that is so.

57. There do not seem to be any particulars in the papers we have got as to the charge they were going to make for the road-line?—No.

58. Did you have any particulars as to what they were going to charge for the road-line?—No.

59. That being so, why did you advise the Department to take the block at £2 10s.?—I do not see that it would make any difference.

60. The point I want information on is this: at a certain point you were satisfied to take the road under the Public Works Act, but when you reached that point of taking the road under