

139. *Mr. Statham.*] When you agreed that £2 10s. was a fair price for the land under the circumstances, did you take into account the fact that the Department would have to fence?—Yes.

140. The new arrangement made was that the Department would have to fence?—Yes.

141. You say it would have cost more to take the land under the Public Works Act. That is only conjecture?—It is an estimate.

142. At what price—you had the value the State would have to pay and the price per acre for the land itself?—Perhaps £2 10s. for the road itself. The road was taken up before the land.

143. Would not that be taken in as the actual value of the land itself?—Yes.

144. Was not that 5s. an acre?—The 5s. an acre was for the whole lot of 1,343 acres. The road is on much better country; it is on river-flat.

145. Is there enough of it to make it of any value?—There is a chain all the way.

146. You think that particular piece would have been worth £2 10s. per acre?—Yes.

147. Did the making of this road increase the value of Mr. Ballan's land?—I should not think so. He has the main road from which this country would be worked.

148. Did it not open up any of his country?—No, only in the sense that it is already opened up by the main road.

149. When did you first know that Mr. Russell had anything to do with the land?—Some time after the £2 10s. offer had been accepted.

150. Did you know when he purchased it from Mr. Ballan?—No.

151. Did Mr. Ballan tell you anything when he saw you?—No. I did not hear of it then. The first I knew was when Mr. Russell was through Napier. That was after the offer of £2 10s. had been accepted.

152. When was Mr. Russell through there?—I could not give the exact date, but I know it was after the £2 10s. offer had been accepted.

153. Do you not remember what month it was in?—It must have been in one of the winter months.

154. That was before the conveyance to the Crown had been completed, which was on the 23rd December, 1911?—Yes.

155. So that Mr. Russell was through the winter before that?—Yes.

156. And did he tell you then that he had bought the land from Mr. Ballan?—I understood from him then that he had.

157. You actually understood during the winter before that he had actually bought the land from Mr. Ballan?—Yes.

158. Can you remember when you saw Mr. Russell there—was it in May, 1911, or before that?—It must have been after that.

159. Did he tell you he had actually bought it then—did he speak of it as his land?—Yes, the Runanga Estate. Of course, whether it included this piece or not I do not know.

160. Cannot you give us more nearer the date you were there: how many months were you there?—I was in the office there from about the 3rd June to the end of September in that year.

161. So that it was some time before the 3rd June that you saw Mr. Russell?—No, after.

162. Did you see him at the office?—Yes, he had been up on to the estate and was passing through Napier when he called in.

163. Do you know whether that was his first visit there?—I could not say.

164. Between the 3rd June and the end of September you saw him, and he told you the property was his?—Yes, he spoke of the estate as his property.

165. *Mr. Witty.*] You said, Mr. Walshe, that it would have cost £1,550 to have taken it under the Public Works Act. That is a rough estimate?—Yes, that does not include severance or cost of proceedings.

166. Nor would it have put on the 2s. per acre?—No, it would not have increased the value of it.

167. So that there is really an increase of £800 by the taking of that land?—Yes, the cost of the extra fencing.

168. In regard to the land that was being taken, is that a fair average of the Runanga Block or is it better?—It is slightly better, I should think.

169. And it has deprived the block of the river frontage, has it not?—Only partly.

170. By this severance has it or has it not decreased the value of the Runanga Block?—I do not think it has made much difference to the block. It has not increased it nor decreased it.

171. You are sure the offer of £2 10s. was made by Mr. Ballan and not by Mr. Russell?—It was made by Mr. Ballan's solicitors, I think.

172. On Mr. Ballan's behalf?—Yes.

173. *Mr. Coates.*] In your opinion, if this country was subdivided into smaller runs, would not this property as a whole be benefited by the road?—The Runanga No. 1A has a main road running through it from which it could be subdivided.

174. The main road would be all that is required to subdivide this block?—Yes.

175. The portion that has been sold of the Runanga 1A?—Yes.

THURSDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1912.

JOHN STRAUCHON examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Under-Secretary for Lands.

2. Have you seen this land which is the subject-matter of inquiry before the Committee?—Yes. I simply passed through it. I was unaware at the time it was the land referred to in the previous parliamentary inquiry until a Native who was acting as guide to Mr. Ritchie and