

myself in connection with a block of land behind told us it was Mr. Russell's. I had nothing to do with it officially until it came to the question of fencing. That was the first official connection I had with the block. Had I known there was going to be any question raised I should have taken more notice of it. I have a fair knowledge of it through passing along, but I would not attempt to give values. [Plan referred to.] Along the top terrace is a fence.

3. Where is the new fence that the Government has got?—Along one side of the road-line. It was part of the agreement that they should fence one side of the road. The other fence that was already existing is Mr. Russell's fence, and is on the opposite side of the purple strip shown on the map where it is marked "fence." I should say that the acquisition of this purple strip is worth a considerable amount—I am not prepared to say what—as compared with the block behind it. I think Mr. Walshe has already given it in his evidence that it adds 2s. per acre to the Crown block—the Pohokura Block. Without this you have neither road frontages nor have you homestead-sites. It is very important to get that portion for homestead-sites. The flat is composed of white tussocks and danthonia. For about ten miles you can canter along on horseback, because it is quite level.

4. *Mr. T. W. Rhodes.*] And the fencing and roading would also enhance the value of Runanga No. 1A Block?—Yes, it would, of course. Mr. Russell's complaint to me when he came and asked me to get on with the fencing was that it was not properly fenced, as the Natives left the gates open.

5. *Mr. Witty.*] What was the date Mr. Russell asked you to get on with the fencing?—The date is on the file. It would be somewhere about May or June, 1912. That was the first occasion on which I saw Mr. Russell in regard to the fencing.

6. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] In regard to the piece of land in question marked purple on the map, what was the reason the Lands Department was so anxious to purchase this block?—I do not know, but my reason would be that I wanted it for frontages and homestead-sites for the people behind. I do not know what Mr. Kensington's reasons would be.

7. In your opinion it was taken for homestead-sites and frontages for the sections behind?—Yes. Without that it would not be of so much account.

8. Is the Government land of as much value without the adjoining land?—No, I do not know that it is. I was not on this block, but the country on the ridges is the best land, because the pumice has been washed down and has accumulated on the flats. Riding through it I rather liked the appearance of the flat land.

9. Is it all ploughable?—No, not all, but there are good portions of the flat that are ploughable.

10. Is the land behind it ploughable?—I could not say; I was not over it.

11. Is the road-line improved in any way by the alteration from the back to the front of this block—from the original line of fence?—There never was a road up to the original line of fence. You could not take a road up there.

12. Is the taking of this piece of land essential to the line of the road?—Not the whole of it. That road must have been taken some day whether we had come in or not. That is the main road from Runanga to Galatea.

13. It was essential for the block that this road should be taken?—Well, that the road should be taken. There must be a road. I do not say it was essential to take the block.

14. In what position would that have put the prospective Crown tenants if you had not purchased this land?—They could not get out or in. The short road-lines marked red would have been their only access.

15. Are you in a position to express any opinion as to the value of the land?—No, I am not. I simply passed up and down. I was not looking at it with any idea of values.

16. From your observations, do you consider the purchase by the Crown to have been suitable or otherwise?—Decidedly suitable.

17. *Mr. Witty.*] You passed through the land, Mr. Strauchon, and I understood you to say that half of it was flat and the other broken?—Of the lower portion probably half of it would be flat. I am only guessing at that. When you get up to about the second-last creek, before getting to the portion marked yellow on the plan, the spurs come closer down and are very pumicy.

18. From what you saw of the land, do you think the price of £2 10s. per acre was excessive?—I would not like to express any opinion. It is a good big price as compared with Pukahunui, which I went to look at.

19. The Pohokura Block could not have been cut up to advantage without the purchase of this land?—In regard to homesteads, no.

20. Is the land that has been acquired above the average of the Runanga Block?—I could not say. I was not over it sufficiently to say.

21. Do you not think that by taking away the river frontage from the Runanga Block it would deteriorate the value of Runanga?—It does not take the whole of it away; it only takes the lower portion of it away. Portion of it is very steep from one side, but I think the land at the top is better so far as grazing is concerned.

22. Is that the Pohokura or Runanga?—Runanga No. 1A.

23. Then you do not think that the purchase of this land has deteriorated the value in any way of the balance of Runanga?—If it had been mine I would not have wanted to sell it. If we had not taken it some one would have had to go in and take the road. It always depreciates a property if you make a narrow strip like that.

24. Without the purchase of this strip of 1,404 acres there would have been no place to erect homesteads?—I think not; but if you inquired from Mr. Walshe he could tell you better than I could.