

8. What class of land is that piece?—Well, that is no different to the rest of it. There is a creek running through the centre. About the middle of November you will get feed, but about March down comes the frost and snow. It is a very high elevation. The valley would not extend to more than half a mile wide. From the main Napier Road to the head of the valley we used to reckon was ten miles, but that was only a guess. The Waipunga River starts between the rocks, and down below it spreads all over the place, while in some portions there are patches of quicksand in which I have lost a lot of good stock. I considered the forest was my best portion, because it kept my cattle.

9. *Mr. Statham.*] Can you tell us what your opinion is of the value of the 1,400 acres acquired by the Government?—I told you what I was trying to sell it for, and I know Mr. Crawford sold it for less than 3s. an acre.

10. That is ten years ago?—Yes.

11. What is the present value?—I could not tell you.

12. Where were the patches of quicksand?—It works round about the valley.

13. Is the creek of any value to the Runanga Estate?—Every creek running through a property is of value so far as watering your stock is concerned.

14. But are you liable to lose the cattle when they go for a drink?—That is a thing you always have to risk.

15. Would the acquisition by the Government of the 1,400 acres be of any value to the big block of Government land—the Pohokura?—I could not say.

16. Do you think it would be of any value to the Pohokura Block?—It is of small value. The Pohokura Block is forest country.

17. Supposing you owned the Pohokura Block, would it be to your advantage to acquire that piece of land in the valley?—No, it would be of no use to me at all. I have plenty of water in the Pohokura Valley.

18. Well, say with regard to the road?—I have nearly six miles of frontage on to the Taupo-Napier Road. If I wanted to cut it up I would cut it up facing the main Taupo-Napier Road.

19. *Mr. T. W. Rhodes.*] What class of land is it in this flat portion?—Pumice.

20. If you were offered Pohokura, would you be inclined to give £4 an acre for the flat land?—I would take £4 an acre for it.

21. *The Chairman.*] You would take less than £4 an acre?—Yes, indeed I would.

22. How much less?—It is ten years back that the Government sold sections in the Township of Taupo.

23. We want to know the value of this portion?—I say 5s. an acre.

24. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You are still a grazier in the Waipunga Valley?—Yes, I have a small freehold there.

25. And you are thoroughly acquainted with the land-values of the district you reside in?—Yes, I have been in Taupo since 1881.

26. Has there been any rise in the value of the land in the Taupo district?—There never has been in my time—in fact, I should say there has been a fall.

27. Are you aware there has been a rise in other parts of the district?—Yes, but the value is absolutely falling in the Taupo district.

28. And you have been thoroughly acquainted with the district for many years?—Yes.

29. And you could buy the land at a lower price to-day than you could ten years ago?—Yes, at a lower rate to-day, except as regards the small pieces.

30. *Mr. Anderson.*] Is this land very far from the Township of Taupo?—It is thirty-three miles to the homestead, and thirty-seven miles to the boundary of the land nearest Napier.

31. The Taupo Totara Timber Company's tramway has been in existence there for some years?—Yes, for ten years.

32. Has that had no effect on the value of land in the Taupo district?—As far as I can see it went down. The Government has sold land up there for less than they did ten years ago.

#### THOMAS BALLAN examined. (No. 12.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A farmer, living at Christchurch.

2. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You were the owner up till quite recently of Runanga No. 1A Block?—Yes.

3. Were you approached in any way by the Lands Department for the purpose of finding a road to front the Pohokura Block?—Yes.

4. Did you view the proposal as one which would benefit the Runanga Block to any great extent?—To a certain extent it would, but to some extent it would not. By the Government taking that portion of the land it would deprive a certain portion of Runanga of about three miles of water frontage.

5. And to that extent it would be a disadvantage to the Runanga property?—Yes.

6. Did you ever reside on the property?—No.

7. *Mr. Witty.*] You carried out negotiations with the Department for the sale of portion of this block?—No, I did not.

8. Who carried them out?—Mr. Russell.

9. *Mr. MacDonald.*] Did you have no negotiations with the Government at all?—Yes, through my agent. I did not sell to the Government.

10. But did you offer this particular piece of land to the Government through your agents—the flat portion?—Yes.

11. At what price?—At £4 per acre.

12. *Mr. Statham.*] Do you remember the date when you sold to Mr. Russell?—Yes, on the 13th March, 1911.