

88. That was after you had parted with the land to Mr. Russell?—Anything that was done before my solicitors had in hand, and whatever Mr. Russell was prepared to do after the 13th March was done “on his own.”

89. Were you consulted about the offer of £2 10s. per acre?—No, sir.

90. What is your explanation of this letter from Russell and Anthony offering to accept £2 10s. per acre in your name, although you had given a right of purchase to another man?—I was not aware it was offered to the Government at the price. I never knew the price at which it was sold to the Government till I saw it in the newspapers.

91. Do you adhere to the statement that after the 13th March you had no communication with the Government in regard to this purchase?—Certainly.

92. *Mr. Nosworthy.*] Are we to understand that after the sale of the property Messrs. Russell and Anthony, who were solicitors for G. W. Russell, that they were acting on behalf of both of you?—No, on behalf of Mr. Russell. Mr. Fraser was my solicitor for a time, and there was some communication with Mr. Charles Hill, also my solicitor, and Russell and Anthony, and I told my solicitor that anything that transpired had to be done on behalf of Mr. Russell and had nothing to do with me.

93. Messrs. Russell and Anthony were not acting for you, but acting for Mr. Russell?—Probably my solicitor might have given them the use of my name to get the transaction put through, but it was not with my consent.

94. You gave them no authority to do so?—I would not be positive on the point. The thing was just wavering, and I took no more notice of it after the sale to Mr. Russell.

95. We have been told that the Crown negotiated with you, and not with Mr. Russell after he became the purchaser?—The negotiations were with Mr. Russell, and not with me.

96. *Mr. Statham.*] Did Messrs. Russell and Anthony charge you for writing the letter of the 17th June?—I never got any account for it, except perhaps in my solicitor's costs.

97. *Mr. Witty.*] Did you give your solicitor, Mr. Hill, power to deal with Messrs. Russell and Anthony?—Probably I might have.

98. If that were done he would be empowered to negotiate with Messrs. Russell and Anthony, who were negotiating with the Government?—Yes, probably. I meant to sell to Mr. Russell, and then I let the matter drop.

99. And you left the matter in the hands of your solicitor to carry out?—Yes.

100. *Mr. Guthrie.*] This land could not have been transferred to the Government without your consent, because you held the title to it?—There were two mortgages on the property.

101. What portion of the purchase-money did you receive?—I received 5s. per acre.

102. And when was that bargain made?—I really could not say what time it was, but when Mr. Russell approached me on the subject through my solicitors he wanted to know if he sold any portion of the land would I be prepared to take 5s. an acre for any portion of the land he sold, and I told him I would be quite agreeable. I was not aware he was negotiating with the Government at the time.

103. *Mr. Nosworthy.*] But you knew you had negotiated with the Government for £4 per acre?—Yes, I told Mr. Russell that. I had nothing definite to say that the sale had stopped.

104. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You stated that you thought it was quite possible that your solicitor instructed Messrs. Russell and Anthony to act?—It was quite possible. I was down in Geraldine at the time of the correspondence.

105. And it was quite possible that your solicitor, acting in your business, had instructed Russell and Anthony?—Yes.

106. *Mr. Statham.*] Are you sure that the amount you got on realizing on that portion of the land was not 10s. per acre?—I only got 5s.

107. *Mr. Nosworthy.*] Is it not usual for a solicitor to advise his client of all correspondence and what he is doing in connection with his business? Am I to understand that your solicitor had a right to write to Russell and Anthony without consulting you and without having your authority?—I suppose my solicitor would protect my interests.

108. *Mr. Statham.*] Did you authorize your solicitor to allow Russell and Anthony to use your name in any negotiations?—Possibly I might have. I seemed to get the whole thing off my mind when I made the sale to Mr. Russell.

109. You had nothing more to do with it personally?—No, not after the sale to Russell.

110. *Mr. R. W. Smith.*] You said you got the thing off your mind when you made the sale to Mr. Russell: you then left the matter in the hands of your solicitor?—Yes.

111. And your price was £4 per acre?—Yes.

112. Would you have taken £2 10s. per acre?—I question whether I would or not.

ROBERT AIMERS PATERSON examined. (No. 13.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Chief Accountant in the Lands Department.

2. Will you state to the Committee what you know of this transaction in connection with the Runanga Estate?—Personally, I know nothing of the land. I have not been on the land, but I know of the transaction in connection with the details of the purchase, and so forth.

3. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You had to do with the correspondence between Messrs. Russell and Anthony and the Under-Secretary for Lands, did you not?—No, I did not conduct the correspondence. I was away at the time that was done, but it all came under my notice immediately on my return.

4. *Mr. Anderson.*] Can you substantiate what has been said in regard to the carrying-on of the negotiations? We have been told by one witness that the negotiations were conducted with the registered owner of the land, and the registered owner of the land says they were not con-