

96. And the Government got how much?—£976 5s. 2d.

97. So that it has apparently doubled in value within the last three or four years?—Yes, just about doubled. That is since it was first put up under the renewable lease in 1909.

98. The £976 is what the State receives, and the actual valuation was £1,570?—Yes. Of course, we are not entitled to the whole of that—only the actual value of it. That is the difference in the value to-day and when we could get possession of it at the end of the lease.

99. What is the increase in value since 1909—has it doubled?—In the Valuer-General's value one is £1,570 as against £790.

100. Would it be likely to appreciate in value at the same rate in the next four years?—It depends on what it was used for. If it was used for farming I should say No, but if used for subdividing I should say it would; but roads would have to be made and other conditions fulfilled.

101. Do you think if you had been owner of this property that you would have made a good thing out of it if you had parted with it on the terms the owner got before he sold to the speculators?—That depends on how I managed to get it off.

102. If you wanted the money, say?—I would not like to live in that locality.

103. *Mr. Guthrie.*] As Commissioner of Crown Lands do you consider the Government has obtained fair value for these sections?—I do.

104. On what grounds do you consider it is a fair value?—On the present market price of the sections for the purposes that they are used for.

105. Have the Government got all that they are entitled to in connection with them?—According to the Act, decidedly.

JOHN DOUGLAS RITCHIE examined. (No. 6.)

1. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] You know the Hetana Settlement?—Slightly.

2. You have been over the land?—Just on the edge of it.

3. You had a look recently at some land in the vicinity which was offered to the Government?—Yes.

4. Does the land in the neighbourhood of New Lynn appear to be of one kind?—Yes.

5. Will you tell us what it is suitable for?—It is totally unfit for agricultural purposes, and in the Hetana Settlement they appear to be doing very little with it. In my report I mentioned that they had done very little with the sections and that some were in a derelict position, and that land within half a mile of it was practically a waste and quite unsuitable for any purposes that we could recommend it for.

6. It was offered for workmen's homes?—Yes.

7. And you considered it unsuitable for workmen's homes?—Quite.

8. Do you consider Hetana and the country in the locality a desirable suburb to Auckland City?—I should not think so.

9. Do you know anything about the values?—No, I do not know much about suburban values.

10. You know the land you visited and inspected was under offer?—Yes.

11. At what price was it offered?—£65 an acre.

12. What do you think it was really worth?—I was looking at it more from an agricultural point of view, and I put it down as worth nothing. I would hesitate to recommend it at any price.

13. *Hon. Mr. Buddo.*] You know the Hetana Settlement?—I went on to it a little bit the day we were inspecting the other property. I did not go over it all.

14. Do you think it is likely to appreciate in value during the next ten years?—It may from a building point of view, but I should doubt it very much. There seems to be an immense area of country all round about there much alike, and quite as accessible for building and for brickworks. I doubt very much whether there will be any great population there.

15. Still, you think it will increase somewhat?—From a building point of view I suppose it will, but not very much.

16. *Mr. Witty.*] Did I understand you to say that these people have not improved their land?—Very little, from what I could see.

17. Would you consider it a reasonable improvement if a man spent £380 on improving a 3-acre section?—That may be an odd one that I did not see, but from the general look there was very little in the way of improvements. That £380 may be mostly building. Of course, there were some buildings on the settlement.

18. What are the buildings?—Small dwellinghouses.

19. I notice that some of them are up to £400 in value?—There are a few decent workmen's buildings. But I meant the surroundings. There has been very little done.

20. Is there any prospective value, do you know?—I should not like to say there is a great deal—at least, for many years to come.

21. But eventually, as Auckland spreads, the value will increase?—That will occur in every place, I suppose.

22. *The Chairman.*] How far is the land that you looked at—the land valued at £65 an acre—from the settlement? Is it a mile?—It is less than a mile, I think. This map shows it. [Land pointed out on map.]

23. Is it the same class of country?—Very much the same.

24. *Hon. Mr. Massey.*] How much of the land in the locality would you estimate to be worth £30,000, say—how many acres?—Some of that country is coming in for fruitgrowing, but that is the only thing it is really fit for. From an agricultural point of view I should hesitate to recommend it at any price.