

26. There was something said about the full quantity not being purchased: can you state where these parts which were not purchased are?—They consist of eight small sections.

27. Is there a separate valuation for these sections?—Yes—£1,000 for three and a half acres—a little over £300 an acre.

28. Would you consider that, having a frontage to the road and not to the sea, they were more valuable, or about the same value?—I do not know enough about the value of property in the neighbourhood to be able to say. But I do know that Mr. Stark's land facing the sea is a high bluff, and that the eight sections are nearly level with the beach. I do not know whether that would mean an increase or decrease in value.

29. You consider them to be probably of the same value?—I should be inclined to fancy that the low-lying land was more marketable than the bluff facing the water.

31. *Hon. Major Atkinson.*] Do you know the date when the Government first began to treat for the property?—I do not know.

31. *Mr. Cowan.*] According to valuation of your department this property appears to be valued at £107 an acre in 1882, and in 1885 the twenty-eight acres had run up to £400 an acre. Is there such an increase in the value of other property in the district as to warrant such an increase in this particular property?—I do not know. It is impossible to say, for you cannot compare them. There is nothing to go by. There is so much difference in the sites and other surrounding circumstances that it is impossible to tell.

32. Have you, in your experience, come across any other instances of such an increase in value?—Any number, especially in Auckland and the suburbs.

33. In rural districts such as this?—Yes—any quantity of them; and there are many instances of a greater increase. The whole of the City of Auckland has been more than doubled. The property surrounding Remuera and One-tree Hill has risen quite as much in value.

34. In the land only?—Yes—for villa residences. There has been an increase in Eden Country alone of £1,000,000, irrespective of Auckland.

35. *Hon. Mr. Peacock.*] You are aware that reference is made in Mr. Brewer's letter?—I have never seen the letter.

36. It is stated, and it is well known in Auckland, that an offer was made for ten acres of the best of this land, with a house on it, for £3,500, at a moderate time before this sale took place. Do you know anything about it?—This is the first word I have heard of it.

37. The paragraph is this: "In conclusion, I would refer to an absurd report," &c. You are not aware of anything connected with this?—No.

38. If you found that within a year or a year and a half of the time of the sale these ten acres, including a house, had been offered (and the offer accepted) for this sum, would you not have hesitated to accept the valuation of over £15,000 as now quoted by you?—No, I should not. I should have been quite satisfied, if the owner was satisfied to pay the tax, and the assessor said it was a fair value.

39. What I mean is this: Do you not exercise any judgment in regard to the values that are put on property, if there are any circumstances that would warrant you in hesitating?—Most certainly I do.

40. If the land had been bought, namely, ten acres with the house for £3,500, and the land subsequently fell in value, would not that knowledge have made you go into the matter and have further inquiry made as to the correctness of the valuation?—Most certainly; but I never heard anything of the kind.

41. *Dr. Newman.*] In one of these papers you wrote asking for valuation as though you were surprised at the amount of the valuation?—Inquiry was made of me by the Public Works Department if I knew anything of it, and I gave the valuation, but said that I would make further inquiry to make sure. I was asked if I had any knowledge of Mr. Seaman, and if his valuation was to be trusted. I replied that I had known him for some time and had no reason to doubt him in any way, and that any valuation he made I was prepared to support.

42. When did he make the valuation?—In October. Since then he reported on the matter—in March.

43. Are you aware that Mr. Brewer values the property at £17,000 odd?—No; I do not know who Mr. Brewer is, or anything about him.

44. He is not an officer of your department?—No.

45. Have you an independent valuation of the house?—Yes; the house and other buildings are valued at £3,250.

46. Has any land round the neighbourhood been valued at £600 per acre?—Not in large pieces. In small pieces I dare say it will come to fully that, and some of it to more. 4 and 5 of I. (100 by 150) are valued from £255 to £600 an acre; 1, 2, and 3 of I. are valued at £425, including £200 for improvements.

47. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us the valuation of any of the other blocks?—4 and 5 are valued at £225 without any improvements; 17, 18, 19, and 49 (one acre) are valued at £290.

48. *Dr. Newman.*] Are there any other blocks of, say, twenty acres, or something like that, valued at anything like that amount?—There is nothing of that size. The largest is ten acres, valued at £1,000—that is the adjoining block. The five acres adjoining are valued at £950, including £390 for improvements. But there is no comparison in the value of the properties at all.

49. Should you think that one acre in one piece was worth six in the other?—Yes, I should think so.

50. *The Chairman.*] There are some pieces in that neighbourhood, swampy ground, worth about £20 to £25 an acre, are there not?—Yes.

51. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Has it come within your official knowledge that between 1882 and 1885 the value of suburban property about Auckland has enormously increased?—Yes.