

No. 11.

The LAND-TAX COMMISSIONER to Mr. J. W. A. MARCHANT, Chief Surveyor, Canterbury.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 23rd November, 1892.

RECEIVED your letter of 21st. My telegram of 18th reads: "I learn that the Premier considers your report hostile to the assessment of the Cheviot Hills Estate, and that valuation should be reduced." I entirely fail to understand how you can imagine the use of word "hostile" implied existence of any feeling of hostility as you put it. You say you entered on the business cordially, and in a friendly but independent spirit. Permit me to say that any one who knows you would be sure of this. It goes without saying. I made no charge of ambiguity, but I must also say that I do not know whether you recommend that the property be taken over or not. The latter part of your report appears to me to contradict the paragraphs on page 6 I referred to.

C. M. CROMBIE, Commissioner.

J. W. A. Marchant, Esq., Chief Surveyor, Christchurch.

No. 12.

The DISTRICT SURVEYOR, Waiau, to the SURVEYOR-GENERAL, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

23rd November, 1892.

As I had no opportunity of going into the question of improvements at Cheviot, my estimate is a very rough one. I think, for purposes of cutting up the estate, buildings are worth five thousand. Do not include mansion, as it is of little value for cutting up; bridge, five hundred; roads, two thousand; slip, four thousand; yards, five thousand; fencing, between seven and eight thousand (probably another thousand worth has been put up since valuation for tax—have not included this); plantations and orchards, six or seven thousand; drainage, grass, sowing, &c., probably fifteen thousand pounds, but half the last item would be taken off the value of the land; in all about forty-one thousand pounds, or, added to land value, less half grass, say three hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds.

The Surveyor-General, Wellington.

F. STEPHENSON SMITH.

No. 13

J. W. A. MARCHANT, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch, to LAND-TAX COMMISSIONER, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

Christchurch, 24th November, 1892.

AM much obliged and relieved by your explanation. I still think my report (page 6) clearly shows that the question of taking over the estate is considered in two ways—first, by your department with the object of selling it as a whole or in a few large estates for cash. As to this, I stated: "Under such conditions I could not advise that the estate be taken over." It seems to me that I could not have given my opinion plainer. Then, from the second point of view, in which it is assumed that the Government would indemnify your department taking all risks and responsibility so as to open the estate for settlement under "The Land Act, 1892." This course I strongly advocated and recommended, and that the estate be taken over accordingly. My letter of the 21st was written in great hurry to catch morning mail, and last paragraph might have been clearer. What I intended to convey was that, having already given as plainly as I could my opinion on assumption that you would require promptly to realise the cash price, I could not give a further opinion on the question until you stated clearly terms and conditions of sale, which you said would be fixed by Order in Council. To sum up; I claim that my report plainly deprecates your taking the estate in expectation of finding a cash purchaser or purchasers; but, on the other hand, that I advocated the acquisition on certain definite lines set forth on page 6, and I venture to think my views on the subject are correct. It is one thing to demonstrate that the property is worth assessment, and another to dispose of it so that your department should not suffer loss. In any case my recommendations are the outcome of much anxious thought and consideration of the subject with a knowledge of the responsibility, having regard to the magnitude and importance of the question at issue, and especially as it affected your department.

J. W. A. MARCHANT,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

J. M. Crombie, Land-tax Commissioner, Wellington.

No. 14.

D. McMILLAN, Valuer, to the COMMISSIONER of TAXES, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

Culverden, 30th November, 1892.

FINISHED inspecting Cheviot yesterday. Good agricultural land, about 21,000 acres, value two-thirds of that at £5, and one-third at £7 5s. per acre. Semi-agricultural, about 9,000 acres, value £4; best pastoral land, at £3 10s.; second ditto, at £3; hill country, at £1 17s. 6d. and £1 15s.; total value of estate, £295,998. I have to check my figures over yet, but think they are right. Written report to follow first mail.

DAVID McMILLAN.

C. M. Crombie, Esq., Commissioner of Taxes, Wellington.