

139. Then you did not think it advisable? You did not think it advisable to communicate with the Minister when he said that Mr. Ritchie had nothing to do with the matter?—I should certainly not seek to confirm the Minister; for the Minister's statement is quite correct.

140. Had you seen this statement made by the Minister, that Mr. Ritchie had nothing to do with the matter, would you have thought it your duty to have communicated with him on the subject?—The statement was not that Mr. Ritchie had nothing to do with the matter, but that Mr. Ritchie had not anything to do with the purchase; neither he had.

141. *Mr. Green.*] Mr. Barron thinks that when the Board sits that is the "initiation"; that was the 14th of September?—No.

142. Well, then, will Mr. Barron state when is the "initiation"?—The initiation is when the offer is put before the Board.

143. That was on the 14th September. Is it not the case that the Board sat before that time?—I cannot at this time say.

144. When do you say is the "initiation"?—When the Board, or the Chairman of the Board, takes action to inquire as to the estate.

145. The Chairman is the Surveyor-General?—Yes. [Telegrams read.]

*The Chairman:* The Governor's warrant is dated the 4th September.

*Mr. Green:* Is that the "initiation"?

*The Chairman:* That is a matter of opinion, I presume.

146. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] I want to ask you a question, Mr. Barron, for my own enlightenment, in regard to the papers relating to these transactions in the Land Office. They are all numbered, are they not?—There is a large number at the top, over a small number. The large number is the record number; the small is the number in the file. It is not always possible to follow that. A letter may go without the sub-number, but it is put in its place notwithstanding.

147. There is some alteration of number here. The record number is 18861; it commences at 1 and goes on. Mr. Adams's report is 112. I would ask the Chairman to instruct the witness to lay before us the entire file, without any omission whatever.

*The Chairman:* Everything relating to Pomahaka.

148. *Mr. Mills.*] Did I understand you to say that when you sent that telegram it was merely a departmental inquiry to justify your going further in the matter?—It was a departmental inquiry to see whether the land referred to was such as could be dealt with by the Land Purchase Board.

149. If that report had been unsatisfactory, would anything more have been done?—Nothing more would have been done.

150. Did the Minister or the Surveyor-General speak to you, or in any way influence you, about this block with a view to purchase?—No.

151. If Mr. Adams made a valuation it was only incidental, to see whether the block was of such a kind that it ought to be submitted to the Board at all. Did your telegram in any way influence him so as to give more than the value?—Certainly not.

152. *Mr. Duncan.*] When you by telegram instructed Mr. Adams to make this "flying survey," as we might call it, what was the next step after he replied to you?—His report was submitted to the Surveyor-General officially.

153. Did your connection cease with the transaction then?—Yes; entirely.

154. *Mr. Green.*] Mr. Barron states that the first instructions were to Mr. Maitland?—To Mr. Adams first, but Mr. Maitland's were sent on the same day.

155. Both on the same day?—Yes.

156. Did Mr. Adams report to you, or did he report to the Surveyor-General?—To the Surveyor-General. As a matter of routine, all communications are addressed to the Surveyor-General in the department.

157. What do you designate that reply he sent after your telegram? Is it a report?—Yes; it is a report on the kind of country.

158. Did you of your own motion know, or did any one instruct you, that the particulars were to be got from Mr. Begg?—I have answered the question, that I was aware that Mr. Begg was Mr. Douglas's agent.

159. You were aware that he was Mr. Douglas's agent in Dunedin?—Yes. Mr. Begg was in Dunedin, Mr. Douglas was at Mount Royal, and Mr. Adams was on his way to the Conical Hills.

160. Did Mr. Adams send in his report?—Yes.

161. Of the Conical Hills?—Yes. [Put in.]

162. What date have you got?—The 30th August.

163. Were copies of the document sent to Mr. Maitland in connection with this matter sent on to Wellington?—I do not quite understand your question.

164. Were the papers sent by Mr. Maitland to the Wellington office? What I want is the date of the letter—if there was a letter—from Dunedin to the Wellington office from Mr. Douglas?

*Dr. Fitchett:* It is here; 21st August.

165. *Mr. Green.*] You said that you instructed Mr. Adams to get plans from Mr. Begg?—I instructed Mr. Maitland to get the maps from Mr. Begg.

166. You sent a wire, on the 30th August, asking for this report?—If I did, it is on the file. I do not remember.

167. Did Mr. Percy Smith himself send this wire to Mr. Maitland, recommending Mr. Dallas as valuer, or did he direct you to send it?—He sent it himself.

168. Was that the first action of Mr. Percy Smith in connection with this purchase?—I think not.

169. Do you know of any other?—The previous one, I think, is on the file.

170. That is the first date of which we have any evidence given that it was the first action?—I am in the office, but I cannot speak to everything that happens.