

101. Did you overlook this paper?—I have no recollection of seeing that paper at all.

102. It is numbered "204," in which Mr. March mentions that a large number of the settlers considered the rentals too high: you overlooked that altogether?—I do not remember seeing it. It does not affect the purchase of Pomahaka.

103. It is stated that complaint had been made to yourself that too high a price had been given for that land?—I am prepared to say that we did not give too high a price for it, notwithstanding that all the sections were not taken up.

104. What is the usual course when Crown lands are offered for sale: are they taken up at once?—No; not unless there is something particularly advantageous about them which the purchasers do not like to leave over to the next day. They frequently are not all taken up the first day—a great number are taken up afterwards.

105. If the price was not high, in the opinion of the settlers, why should that complaint be made?—It is not the price paid for the land of which the settlers complain; it is the price put on afterwards.

106. What is it that made that high?—The roading, the surveys, and other expenses connected with land.

107. For loading?—Roading and other purposes.

108. Do you not think that when property is bought that requires a large expenditure for loading that should be considered in the price?—Yes; no doubt. So far as there are particulars before the Board it is considered.

109. Then the price paid to Mr. Douglas may have made the price to the settlers too high?—I do not think so; it is the cost and expenses with which the land is loaded that makes the high price.

110. Why was this land loaded?—It was loaded for the purposes mentioned in the Act.

111. Has it been loaded in excess of the actual requirements for roads, &c.?—I would not say that. I have very little knowledge of what has taken place since in regard to this estate as to its loading. I have been very much away from Wellington, and it has not come before me.

112. This is not clear; but it is very important?—Yes; it is very important.

113. What I want to know is this: If nothing has been put on the land in the way of loading except for the requirements of roads, and the price complained of by the settlers is too high, may not the price paid by the Government for the land be the cause of that?—If you put it that way, the natural corollary to that is that the price would be too high; but I do not admit your premises.

114. Would you give as much for land that had no roads as you would for land, the qualities being equal, that had good roads about it?—No, certainly not.

115. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] You handed in among the list of purchases that of Te Anaraki that does not appear to have been bought until after the Conical Hills was discussed?—It is easily explained. As I came back from that meeting of the Board where we discussed the Pomahaka case, I arranged with the owners of Te Anaraki by telegram. The whole matter was completed before I got back to Wellington. An offer was made which they refused; an offer was then made which they accepted, so that it was as much a contract as if the money had been paid.

116. *Mr. Scobie Mackenzie.*] You said the reason why the Conical Hills was not purchased was that you had no money. If so, why did you bother Mr. Shennan and make him an offer, if you knew you had no money?—There was no intention to bother Mr. Shennan or to give him trouble. We retained the hope that we might acquire it afterwards. Who was to know what might come of it if he made an offer?

117. You have stated that you had not sufficient money to buy: you knew that the Bill to enable you to exchange was killed on the 27th of September; then why did you write on the 28th wanting him to sell—if the Minister would negotiate on that basis?

118. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] If you did not intend to buy because the money was not there, what was the use of writing that letter?—If we found that Mr. Shennan was prepared to sell, it might be postponed for next year or for a few months. I have not seen the Conical Hills papers lately.

119. *Dr. Fitchett.*] Would it be according to official etiquette to let him know that you had not the money?—No.

120. Did you never get a reply from Shennan?—If there was a reply it is on the file; there is no reply that I have any knowledge of myself.

121. With respect to this question of loading the land, had you all the prices and figures before you when you determined to recommend the purchase of the land?—We had estimates made.

122. *Hon. Sir Robert Stout.*] The loading amounts to £1,500?—It was actually estimated at from 4s. to 5s. an acre.

123. *Mr. Mackintosh.*] Is it not usual to set aside a part of the price of the land to provide for the loading?—In nearly all cases blocks are loaded for roads and other things.

124. You do not know how much was reserved in this case for the construction of roads?—I could not tell the exact amount of loading; the information is not difficult to get, but I cannot tell you right off what it is.

125. *An Hon. Member.*] There is a telegram from the Commissioner in Dunedin, relating to a letter in the *Otago Daily Times*?—The whole of the papers that I know of are on the file.

126. Well, you loaded the land with all these things and you also loaded it for contingencies?—Something was put in for contingencies—such as in the case of changes of lessees, some lands are vacant for a time. A small percentage is put in for anything of that kind.

127. Then, as regards the dissatisfaction on the part of the tenants, has not a great deal of land been put on the market of late in Otago?—The Government has put a good deal of bush-land into the market at Catlin's, and Logan's land was coming into the market at the same time.