

produce?—The Waikato settlers, I am sorry to say, have not very much surplus produce; but they were very anxious to have communication with the Thames. *Hon. Dr. Pollen.*

105. *The Chairman.*] Would it not be a useful road for opening up the Waikato, and for connecting it with the Thames?—I think it would. *5th Oct., 1875.*

106. What is the value of that land at present?—I cannot say.

107. What is your opinion of its value?—I cannot give an opinion personally. I should be sorry to be obliged to take the land with its liabilities.

WEDNESDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 1875.

Mr. W. A. MURRAY, M.H.R., being in attendance, was examined as follows:—

108. *The Chairman.*] The Committee are desirous, Mr. Murray, of taking your evidence as to the sale of the Piako Swamp to Mr. Thomas Russell. Do you know anything about that transaction?—I do not, personally. *Mr. W. A. Murray*  
*6th Oct., 1875.*

109. Do you know anything of the character of the land or the works done upon it?—Yes.

110. Will you describe to the Committee the general character of the land in question?—This land is the watershed between the rivers running into the Waikato on the one hand, and the Piako on the other; and, so far as I have seen it, it consists largely of what may be described as peaty morass; but which, judging from the natural lie of the country, presents considerable natural facilities for drainage. There have been considerable works carried on by the Company there in the way of cutting outfall drains to different places—partly to the Waitakaruru, a tributary of the Piako, in the valley of the Thames, and to other streams flowing into the Waikato. I understand that the road-making will shortly be completed through this property, it being part of the main road from Hamilton to the Thames. The road which I saw was quite a chain wide, and the ditches on each side were about 8 feet wide and 5 feet deep, the material being taken and put into the centre of the roadway, thus forming a uniform circle. I believe, however, that the road will require to be fascined, or to have a coating of gravel put upon many parts of it, as at present it is, I believe, too soft for traffic. This roadway would also be available when a railway is to be constructed from Hamilton to the Thames. This land is not all of a peaty character. So far as I have seen it, there are several thousand acres of dry land adjoining the swamp, and there are also some islands interspersed through the swamp. The vegetation upon the dry land consists of fern, koromiko, and topaki. There is a good deal of flax upon the margin of the swamp, and the vegetation upon the other part consists of rushes and manuka. It will be very questionable whether the land will succeed by surface sowing without cultivation first, owing to the fibrous roots, rushes, and manuka. The danger would be, in burning off when the land is thoroughly dry, that the level of the swamp would be reduced, and thus cause lodgment of water. Perhaps it would be better if the Committee will ask me questions.

111. *The Chairman.*] What proportion of dry land is there in the 80,000 acres?—Do you refer to what is dry now, or to what was originally dry?

112. To what was originally dry?—I should fancy about 6,000 or 7,000 acres.

113. What is the character of that proportion?—I have already described it as being covered with fern, &c.

114. But, I mean, what is the character of the soil?—Volcanic.

115. Good or bad?—Fair average soil.

116. You have stated that there is a danger, if the grass was burnt off, of the drainage level being so reduced as to afford a lodgment for water. The question I wish to put is, whether the land will not ultimately sink without the burning off, so as to afford a lodgment for the water?—It will sink, but not to a very great extent.

117. Do you consider that the soil generally in the swamp—I am now speaking of the dry land—is good?—The swamp generally is rather mossy, but the dry land is good.

118. *Major Jackson.*] But not sufficiently near the clay?—The swamp is far from the clay, but there is a little sand through it. Swampy land, if it contains a considerable percentage of sand through it, is about the best soil you can have; but if it is altogether peaty, very little can be done with it. This land is neither the worst nor the best class of such peaty land.

119. *The Chairman.*] Are you aware that it was open for selection from 1867 to 1871 at 5s. per acre?—In 1872 I was told that I could have bought it at 5s. per acre. I think it was by Cobb's coachman.

120. Did you think at the time it was worth it?—I had not seen the land sufficiently close to be able to estimate its value. It looked to me to be a vast waste of rushes as far as the eye could stretch.

121. Then I would ask you, from your present knowledge of the land, whether it could have been taken up piecemeal; that is, whether it could have been drained by a piecemeal operation, or does it require a comprehensive system of drainage?—It would have been of little value if taken up by small settlers; but the dry land would have been immediately available for settlement.

122. Was it accessible?—Quite so.

123. The quantity of dry land was about 6,000 or 7,000 acres?—Yes; but of course I am only speaking by guess as to quantity.

124. Have these drainage operations been successful in reclaiming the land so far?—I think they have been successful as far as they have gone.

125. What do you consider the value of the land now?—Do you mean of the whole block?

126. I am speaking of the swampy part, where the drainage operations have been going on?—I should fancy it was worth about 7s. 6d. per acre for the whole swamp; but when it is drained it will be worth considerably more than that; but a considerable part of the swamp is not drained yet.

127. Will it require a large expenditure to complete the drainage operations?—I believe it will.

128. Have you any idea of the expenditure already incurred?—I have been told that the sum is about £20,000, but I do not think that is a correct estimate. I believe it is nearly double the amount.