

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

ON FOUR PETITIONS RELATIVE TO THE TE AUTE ESTATE.

TUESDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER, 1877.

REV. S. WILLIAMS in attendance and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us the total acreage of the Te Aute estate?—About 7000 acres. *Rev. S. Williams.*
2. I have been looking over the grants. It appears there have been about 8,217 acres granted in four grants. First, there was a grant of 4,244, another of 338 acres, another of 3,153 acres, another of 382 acres. Is all this included in the Te Aute estate now?—There have been some exchanges, and some of that land has been re-conveyed to the Government. *13th Nov. 1877.*
3. The first is a grant of 1,745 acres, and was made on 10th June, 1857. Is that still held by the trustees?—Yes.
4. There was another grant of 1508 acres on the same day?—Part of that was re-conveyed to the Government.
5. How much?—I could not say. I gave all particulars on that point in my evidence before the Royal Commission in 1869.
6. Then there was a grant of 2,244 acres in 1857. Is that still held?—Yes.
7. Then there are grants in 1858, of 338 and 244 acres. Are those lands still held?—Yes. Those lands were exchanged, and should, by right, be included in the land given by the Natives. In my evidence in 1869, and also in my evidence in 1875, I pointed out that there had been an error.
8. I see that this land is not held now in the same trust?—No; I called the attention of the trustees to that; and on two occasions I have called the attention of the House to it.
9. I see, with respect to this grant of 4,244 acres and the 338 acres, that that part of the land is held for the benefit of a school for both races, and that the 1745 acres and 1,508 acres are held in trust for the benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants. How were these two trusts kept distinct?—It has been managed as one trust.
10. And for the benefit of whom?—I have calculated that for the present about twenty children may be supported as foundation scholars, and I have endeavoured to keep five European children, that is a quarter of the number of foundation scholars. There are now only three; but I have arranged to take more at the beginning of the year.
11. What is the total number of children on the books?—There are 36 now on the books.
12. Who are the trustees?—The Bishop of Wellington; Hon. Mr. Stokes; Mr. George Hunter; and Mr. Bannatyne.
13. They were the trustees of the 382 acres. How did they become trustees for the other portions of the estate?—It was conveyed to them by the Bishop of New Zealand under an Act of the General Assembly.
14. You are the tenant of the estate?—I managed the estate for the benefit of the trust till 1869. Since that time my connection with the estate has been as tenant. The term of my lease expires in February next.
15. What rental has been paid by you?—£500 a year.
16. Has any arrangement been entered into with respect to the future tenure?—No. I was asked by one of the trustees, simply acting in his individual capacity, if I would be prepared to make an offer to the trustees; but I declined to do so. I said I should leave the trustees to act according to their own judgment.
17. Then the trustees have not come to any determination?—I heard it remarked by gentlemen in Wellington what an extraordinary circumstance it was that two of the trustees should act independently of the other two. I therefore asked the question, if anything had been done, and I was furnished with a copy of the minutes of proceedings at the last meeting of the trustees, when I found that it was resolved that no steps should be taken until Mr. George Hunter, one of the trustees, had had an opportunity of visiting Hawke's Bay and Te Aute, and making further enquiries.
18. The petition states that it would be for the benefit of the trust if the land was cut up into small lots, and let by tender. Do you concur in that suggestion?—I suggested such a step to the consideration of the trustees. I did not offer a definite opinion on the subject. There is much to be said both for and against such a course being taken.
19. What is the present condition of the estate: Is it under grass?—Parts are very well grassed; other parts are only partially grassed. There is a great deal of fern on certain parts of the land.
20. Is the country of that character that it ought to be let in large blocks, or in smaller blocks?—My suggestion referred more particularly to that part of the estate near which we supposed the railway station would be. But the station has not been placed where we had been led to expect it would be placed.
21. Where is the school placed: the school that is supported out of the trust funds?—At the extreme north-east corner of the largest block of land.
22. Is it maintained entirely out of the proceeds of the estate?—For the last two years we have received a grant from the Government of £200 a year.
23. Assuming that an increased rent were obtained (I see that the estate is variously estimated to be worth from £1500 a year upwards), would not that increase the means for educating children. Would it not be likely that a larger number of children would be educated?—No doubt.