

1888.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF) ON THE PETITION OF THE MOKAU COAL COMPANY AND ANOTHER (No. 476, SESSION II., 1887), TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.

Brought up 1st August, 1888, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

PETITIONERS pray that a certain lease to one Nevil Septimus Walker may not be validated, and that N. S. Walker may not be empowered to complete the same, or to obtain the execution of a new lease until full inquiry has been made into the matter.

I am directed to report as follows:—

That the evidence taken in this case be referred to the Government for consideration, in view of the Bills now passing through the Legislature.

1st August, 1888.

WILLIAM KELLY,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 1ST JUNE, 1888.

Mr. HENRY ROBERT RICHMOND examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You can make any statement you wish to the Committee. Your principal reason for appearing before the Committee is contained in the concluding paragraph of the petition: "You, petitioners therefore humbly pray that the said lease to the said Nevil Septimus Walker may not be validated, and that he may not be empowered to complete the same, or to procure the execution of a new lease in the place thereof, until a full inquiry has been made into the premises; and that your honourable Council will grant such further relief as, in its wisdom, it may deem expedient." That is your principal reason?—That is the prayer of the petition. I understand the Bill now proposed, which would at all affect the case, is not yet before you.

2. A Bill now before the House?—Yes; it is a printed Bill. That Bill would enable Mr. Walker to register the lease at once without any inquiry at all.

3. What is the title of it?—"The Native Land Court Act 1866 Amendment Bill." Section 4 of that Bill is as follows: "Deeds, not being conveyances, relating to land held by memorial of ownership or certificate of title issued by the Court may be registered with a Registrar of the Court by delivering to him a true copy of such deed, and submitting the original for comparison. It shall thereon be a duty of the Registrar to minute the contents of such deed, as provided for in relation to conveyances." There is a provision for investigating the circumstances in a preceding section—section 3—with regard to conveyances, but there is no such provision in regard to leases so far as I have been able to see.

4. You will take each paragraph of the petition and let us hear what you have to say upon them?—With regard to the second paragraph of the petition, George Stockman has been occupied in dealing with the Natives for about twelve or thirteen years, I think—ever since the Mokau District was opened. He obtained from Heremaia, a well-known Native chief, permission to mine for coal on all the north part of the Mokau District. He afterwards obtained from some Natives, whose claims are properly on the south bank, a written agreement purporting to give him the right for ninety-nine years to mine for coal—remove all minerals and timber from all lands which they might possess or might become entitled to north of the Mokau River. I have here a copy of the agreement upon which the Judge's certificate was founded. [Agreement between Stockman and the Natives, dated 27th December, 1881, handed in and read.]

5. Is that the original lease?—This is the agreement upon which the two certificates were granted.

6. Is that a copy or is it the original?—It is a copy of the agreement.

7. Have you the original agreement?—I have not. I understood you to say you would endeavour to get it. I do not know where it is now. I wish to call attention to the position of the signatures. The signature "Mare Kura" appears above the word "signatures," and then the other names follow.