

1570. Do you know of any other holding thereabouts which would show the value of this?—There is a section which lies on the opposite side of the county road to the section I speak of, Umuroa; 310 is on the frontage of it (Umuroa), and it runs down to the Waitotara River behind Section 297.

1571. It is divided from 310 by the main road?—Yes.

1572. It is the better section of the two?—I should say there is very little difference in those.

1573. You mean as to quality of land and present improvements?—For carrying-capacity, yes.

1574. Give me the value of Kaihu—Nicholson's—the letting-value?—That is, of the property as a whole?

1575. That is, of the whole property as a whole?—I should say the value of that all over would be 5s.

1576. And what would the improvements per acre of that be?—I should say you would take it to be about £1 10s. an acre.

1577. Where is it situate—near the other reserves?—It joins Umuroa.

1578. Is it similar land?—Yes.

1579. Is it improved more or less?—It is improved.

1580. Is it improved to a greater extent than Umuroa?—No, I should say not; but about equal.

1581. Do you know, Mr. Fisher, of any negotiations taking place for the renewal of any lease before the Act of 1887?—There were negotiations in hand as to one piece of Nicholson's. I would point out, in this lease I am speaking of there are two distinct grants.

1582. In what lease?—In this one of Mr. Nicholson's. One grant of 340 acres was granted to Tawhitipou and others, and one of 330 acres to Rakei te Wharekorito and others.

1583. There is one lease in these two grants?—Yes.

1584. What about the negotiations for renewal?—I received a paper from the Reserves Trustee, Mr. Rennell, advising me that Mr. Nicholson had told him that the Natives had agreed to give a new lease for this portion belonging to Rakei te Wharekorito, and that, on account of the difficulty in getting the Natives together for their signatures, he asked me if I would attest the names of the Natives as they came into the township.

1585. Have you any of the documents with you?—I have the document.

1586. *Hon. the Chairman.*] The letter, do you mean?—Yes, sir [producing letter].

1587. *Mr. Levi.*] What date was this?—The lease was attested about the end of January, 1887.

1588. Now, what was the rental at which the lessee wanted this renewal?—£55 was the amount stated in that.

1589. And that was part of Nicholson's lease?—This was for the 330-acre section.

1590. How is it that it was not completed?—There were three signatures required to complete it. One of the Natives was living at Murimutu, some distance up the Wanganui River, and another at a place called Raorikia, on the Wanganui River, and another at Parihaka.

1591. They were the three signatures you could not get?—They were the three who did not come to the township.

1592. Do you know the rent the whole lease is fixed at under the awards?—I believe it is £65 and some odd shillings.

1593. And this amount was offered for half of it?—Not quite a half—330 acres out of 672.

1594. Were you present at any of the arbitration sittings on this question of renewing of the leases?—Yes, I was present at most all of them—that is, the southern ones.

1595. Which were you present at?—Patea and Waitotara.

1596. What were you present for at these arbitration sittings?—In case I was called upon in any way. I had served the notices of the Court sitting.

1597. Did you take any notes of any of the proceedings?—I did at the Waitotara sitting.

1598. Were you present the whole of the time at the Waitotara sitting?—Yes.

1599. And you took notes of the proceedings?—Yes, on behalf of the Natives.

1600. What was the method in which the business was conducted at these arbitration sittings? How did they go about it—what did they do?—In the first instance they called upon the lessee to make a statement, and in most cases a plan was produced showing the land and subdivisions of it—the different portions of flat land, and so forth. Then they would ask the value of the respective portions, and he would then give descriptions of the value of the respective portions.

1601. How do you mean?—He would give the value of the bush-land, so much per acre; then of the flat land, so much per acre; and the swamp, so much per acre; and so on.

1602. What next?—He would go on with the improvements, and value them in the same way.

1603. Would the lessees be asked what would be a fair letting-value of the sections?—I never heard such a question put to them.

1604. The evidence they gave was all as to the capital value of the land?—Yes.

1605. Did any one else give evidence beside the lessees?—With regard to the value?

1606. With regard to anything?—No; but the Natives gave evidence on their side.

1607. What did they give evidence as to?—Their evidence right through was simply against the Act of 1887 as a whole—simply protesting against the whole thing.

1608. But they gave no evidence as to the value?—No.

1609. Were they asked by either of the arbitrators or by the umpire any questions as to the value of the land?—Not that I know of.

1610. Were they asked any questions as to the improvements made on the land?—No.

1611. Who were the arbitrators sitting when you attended?—Mr. Livingston and Mr. Cown; and Mr. Arundel was the umpire in the Patea Court, and also for all the cases at Waitotara, excepting one called Te Hapua.

1612. And who sat there?—Messrs. Livingston and Johnston.

1613. Who was the umpire?—Mr. Arundel was the umpire in all the cases.