

1769. Was he the lessor?—He leased this land to a European.

1770. At what rent?—8s. an acre.

1771. What has become of the lessee: do you know?—Yes.

1772. Is he still there?—Yes; he went on the ground to live the other day.

1773. Then, it is quite recently?—Yes; during the last month.

1774. Now, I want to call your attention to some papers that have been before this House: do you know that your conduct was the subject of inquiry before a Committee of this House in 1884?—I do not know that my conduct was ever called in question.

1775. I beg your pardon: it was in 1886?—I was here in 1886.

1776. And you were examined before the Committee on Native Affairs?—Yes.

1777. Do you know the report they made. [Parliamentary Paper I.—2 page, 25]. That was an inquiry, perhaps you are aware, into the payment of a cheque for £5,000 which Williams received and put to his bank account. I will read you a paragraph from that report [Paragraph read]. Now I will read you another paragraph, which states that the unsatisfactory state of things on the West Coast was due to you: Thomas William Fisher—that is you, I suppose?—Yes; that is my name.

1778. And two other persons “who fomented discontent among the Natives for the purpose of private gain to yourselves”?—No.”

1779. But that is the report which the Committee made?—

1780. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Did you attend the meeting for the settlement of these rents—I mean at the arbitration?—Yes, I was present.

1781. Who represented the Natives—do you remember?—Mr. Livingston represented them.

1782. But did any person appear to conduct the proceedings on behalf of the Trustee?—No one at Waitotara.

1783. Did any one represent the tenants before this Board of Arbitrators?—No one represented the tenants. Most of them were there.

1784. Were they not represented by a lawyer?—No; only Mr. Hutchison had his attorney there—Mr. D. Hogg.

1785. The umpire was there?—Yes.

1786. Who was he?—Mr. Arundel.

1787. The parties stood up and produced what evidence they pleased before the arbitrators?—Some Natives did not give evidence.

1788. Did they protest?—They protested generally against a thirty years' lease.

1789. *Mr. Peacock.*] You say that Mr. Livingston took no lively interest in the matter on behalf of the Natives: did he ask no questions?—He conferred with Mr. Cowern in the matters that arose. Mr. Cowern put the questions. Whatever Mr. Livingston spoke he spoke through the chairman. Mr. Cowern acted as chairman.

1790. I understood you to say that Mr. Livingston did not ask necessary questions so as to elicit the true land-value? I did not say so. He spoke to Mr. Cowern and Mr. Cowern put the questions, being chairman of the meeting.

1791. Your evidence was that Livingston did not seem to take any active part on behalf of the Natives, which he ought to have done?—No, I did not put it in that way at all.

1792. I will put a question to you as to the arbitration generally. I understood you to say there was dissatisfaction generally as to the way the arbitrators generally did their duty?—I did not say so: the dissatisfaction was with the Act of 1887.

1793. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Mr. Fisher has left the impression on my mind that the result of the findings of the arbitrators was not satisfactory to them (Natives) in some respects?—I am not speaking about the work of the arbitrators. I say that rentals were reduced to a considerable extent, unfairly to the Natives. I will give you some further explanation. I will illustrate what I mean by this instance to show the reduction of rental. There were two properties, one of 400 acres, four miles from Umuroa. These two properties were held by one man at one time. At the end of the fourteen years' lease the property, which was owned by a European, he was offered 8s. 6d. per acre for; but he would not accept that. At the end of the fourteen years' term the Maori lease would be renewed under the award for 2s. 2d. an acre.

1794. What lease are you referring to?—Umuroa (No. 38). Verry is lessee.

1795. *Mr. Rennell.*] I would ask you if, in your opinion, a committee of three Natives for each grant would give satisfaction, or fairly distribute the money?—There would be a difficulty among them.

1796. Now, taking a grant of twenty-eight grantees, and three leading men appointed as a committee, would the other twenty-five persons interested be satisfied with their mode of handling the money: would they all get their shares?—It is very doubtful.

1797. Now, in the case of two hundred Natives in a grant, what would you say?—There would be great complaint; no doubt they would all be continually disputing about their getting any share at all.

1798. At all my meetings with the Natives in Waitotara, while this matter was under consideration, before the arbitrators sat, you were present?—Yes.

1799. Can you say whether, from your knowledge, I have given full information to the Natives, or whether I withheld any information from them?—You have always answered their questions fully so far as I know; I believe you have always been very particular in giving them all the information they wanted.

1800. Do you recollect that when they asked me for information if I told them I could not give it on the spot that I would send it to them?—Yes; you have always carried out your promise to them in that way.