

2090. But you know what the provisions of this Act are?—I was acquainted with some of the clauses of that Bill.

2091. Then you agreed to them on the promise of the Premier that a Bill should be brought in in 1888 which would give the management of the reserves to the Natives?—I ceased to oppose the Bill upon the Premier making that promise.

2092. Did your people approve of your action in that respect?—They did not approve.

2093. When did you first hear that they did not approve of it?—Directly the Natives heard that the Bill became law they began to blame me.

2094. Then the Natives heard that the Bill became law very soon after it had passed?—Ngarangi heard of the Bill because the Europeans told him of it; and the Natives blamed me.

2095. *Mr. Levi.*] Europeans! what Europeans do you mean?—I do not know what the Europeans told Ngarangi, but Ngarangi came to us and began to scold the Native members for having consented to the Bill.

2096. When was that? It could not be in 1887, for the Premier did not promise to bring in the Bill till 1888?—It was the session that terminated after his petition had been dealt with.

2097. That is, before the session of 1888?—After the session of 1888.

2098. You say you were misled by the Premier's promise: do you mean by that that you were misled as to the nature of the Bill that was passed?—I was misled to this extent: the Premier promised that the next session he would introduce a Bill that would be beneficial to the Natives and give prosperity to them.

2099. Do you know that the effect of the Act of 1887 was to give the lessees renewal of their leases, without the consent of the Natives, at rents to be fixed by arbitrators?—I knew, from the fact that the Premier asked me if I would act as arbitrator, that the arbitrators were to be selected from the Natives.

2100. Do you know what these arbitrators had to do?—It was not clear to my mind what their duties were to be.

2101. Did you know that they had to fix the rents of new leases?—I knew that that would be a part of their duty.

2102. Did you know that they were to fix the rents of the leases in all cases, whether the Natives consented to renewal or not?—I believe that was so.

2103. You believe now, but did you know it at the time?—I did not know at the time that the leases were to be compulsory—that they were to be granted in the face of opposition made by the Natives.

2104. Do you know if any alteration was made by which they were to determine on the value of the land with improvements, or on the value of the land less the improvements on it?—We Native members cannot clearly understand the meaning of many of these Acts in consequence of the legal phraseology that is used in them. I understood some of the provisions of the Bills; others I did not understand. I am sure that very often ordinary members of the House do not know the real meaning of these Bills; it is only a few lawyers that understand them.

2105. Do you remember or do you not whether the Natives understood this altered provision as to improvements?—I did not know that the Bill had been so altered.

2106. *The Chairman.*] Did the Natives understand that the value was to be assessed on the natural state of the land or on the land as improved?—I understood that a fair rental would be given for the land. I did not know what the duties of the arbitrators would be.

2107. *Mr. Levi.*] Did you know at that time that regulations were then in existence which could be used, in connection with this Act of 1887, to give compensation for improvements and perpetual renewals of leases without the consent of the Native owners?—I did not know.

2108. *Mr. Bell.*] You sat on the Committee of Native Affairs when Ngarangi's petition was before it in the second session of 1887: were not all these provisions discussed before the Native Affairs Committee upon Ngarangi's petition?—All the statements made in Ngarangi's petition were discussed by the Committee.

2109. Were not the provisions of the Bill brought in discussed by that Committee?—We only discussed the statements contained in the petition. We called on the Public Trustee to give evidence, and the Public Trustee admitted before that Committee that the Natives suffered great hardship.

2110. Did not the Committee discuss this Bill introduced in that session?—The Committee did not discuss this Bill at all.

2111. They brought up a report on Ngarangi's petition, did they not?—Yes.

2112. Did they not refer to the provisions of the Bill at all?—I forget what the nature of their report was.

2113. *The Chairman.*] The Bill now before the House: does it contain your own opinions, and is it agreed to by the Natives themselves?—My Bill contains the ideas of some of the Natives, and the legal gentlemen who represent them have also considered the Bill. As the Natives have agreed to its provisions, so have the lawyers who are acting for them; so they have nothing to do but to give me support.

2114. Do you think that the Bill is a fair Bill?—I do; but if any proposal could be substituted that would be better for the Natives they would consider it.

2115. Do you not consider that you are bound to do justice to Europeans as well?—I think they should be considered. A Bill could not be a good Bill unless it was good for both; but the Maoris are treated so grievously now they have not sufficient land for their own maintenance—their rents are simply dissipated by the Public Trustee and his officials.