

The result of committees distributing would be that the three committeemen, their immediate friends and relatives, would get all, and the majority nothing, and more discontent among the grantees would ensue than exists at present. I am certain that the distribution by committees would not give satisfaction, knowing, as I do, the uncurrent, and that the grantees are scattered all over New Zealand. What the Native witnesses want is to get the rents into their hands as they used to do, and they are opposed to each grantee getting his share, as thereby their influence is much diminished; and such a system as they propose would, to a certain degree, bring about the state of things that existed before the West Coast Commission sat, and which it recommended should be put a stop to. I believe that no Native on the Coast would trust to the extent of a shilling some of the Native witnesses who gave evidence, and by inference hope to become committeemen.

TUESDAY, 5TH AUGUST.

MAJOR KEMP (KEPA) examined.

3027. *Mr. Sinclair.*] Your name?—Meiha Kepa Terangiwinui.
3028. You were appointed an arbitrator on the subject of those leases now under inquiry?—I was.
3029. What tribe do you belong to?—Whanganui.
3030. Do you belong to a tribe interested in the West Coast reserves?—Yes.
3031. Which?—I am also related to Ngarauru, one of the tribes interested in land on the West Coast.
3032. That is one of the largest tribes between Waitara and Hawera?—Yes.
3033. Are you the head man of that tribe?—According to some of our customs, I am a leader of that tribe, not perhaps at the present time, but from the time of ancestors.
3034. Did you take a leading part at the time of the troubles in connection with the reserves—at the time of the war?—Of course; I took the Government side and fought against my own tribe, and that tribe against me.
3035. Did the Government promise you that your people and lands should be protected?—Yes.
3036. Was it understood that your people's land was granted then as reserves or as their own?—I understood that the Government were to reserve these lands for us and the Natives. I did not understand the arrangements about the Crown grants.
3037. Have you seen the Crown grants?—I have not.
3038. But you know they have been issued?—I have heard that in consequence of the Commission held by Sir William Fox and Sir Dillon Bell that the Crown grants were issued.
3039. Did you sit as an arbitrator in connection with these West Coast reserves?—I did.
3040. Who sent you there? Did the Natives ask for you, or did the Government send you?—It was the Government who sent me.
3041. Did you make an award in any case?—The first land I sat on as arbitrator was Te Ruaotemoko.
3042. Did you give an award in that case?—I did not agree to the award. The reason I did not agree with the award was that, having gone over the land and made an inspection of it, it was proposed by the other arbitrator to class some of it as bad land, even where there were but slight hollows or slight inequalities. This land had all been improved. Some of it was in grass before the lessee obtained it. Other portions which the lessee had improved he said was but second class or inferior land.
3043. Did you consider that this was not inferior land?—I considered that it was good land.
3044. How does this particular land class in comparison with other lands in the district?—This land was even better than some others: it is very good land. Had it been owned by Europeans no one would have said it was indifferent land. I only wish that the gentlemen in this room could go and see the land for themselves. I would point out to the Committee those small hollows and inequalities which they wanted to class as bad land.
3045. Is it not considered the best land in the district?—It is very fat land indeed; but the lessee has left some of it forest—he has not cleared it all.
3046. Do you know the rent that was fixed by the arbitrators' Court?—I could not agree with my co-arbitrator after that time; then some other sum was fixed. After this disagreement between us we went to see Mr. Barton, the lawyer, at Hawera.
3047. Was that to record the fact of the disagreement?—Mr. Barton read out the award to which he wished me to sign my name, but I would not consent. I said it was unfair work, and I would not consent to it.
3048. If you had fixed the rent, what rent would you have fixed?—I think that £200 would have been little enough; seeing that the land contained 500 acres, it ought at least, I think, to command that amount.
3049. *Mr. Bell.*] What do you think a fair rent for that land?—If it was Government land or European land they would ask £1 an acre for it, but, being Maori land, they would perhaps say it was worth only 5s. or 6s., or perhaps 2s. 6d., an acre.
3050. *Mr. Sinclair.*] Do you know a piece of land at Waokena?—Yes.
3051. Do you know that £1 an acre has been offered for that?—I have not heard so.
3052. Which is the better land of the two, Waokena or Ruaotemoko?—Ruaotemoko is the best block.
3053. Was there any objection made by you to anything else?—Yes; the proposal to make the lease for thirty years—I objected to that.