

305. There is the lease of W. Symes (16), and of W. and A. Symes (17).

*Hon. the Chairman :* (16) : that is 467 acres. Under the old lease there are three periods of rent—£83 9s. 6d., £95 8s., £116 17s. Under the new lease only one rent is given—£73 1s. 6d.

306. *Mr. Levi.* These rents were 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 5s., and the reduction is about 3s. ?—I would like to state that the Natives do not complain so much of the reduction in the rents as of the loss of improvements ; that seems to be the sorest point : they seem to think that the loss is very much more on account of losing improvements than losing rent. I do not know that they have calculated the rates of reduction of rent through the above periods.

307. Are there any other farms ?—There are farms all round ; but I know nothing of the others as regards leasing except that of Mr. George Death, who leases from Nicholson ; but I am not certain of the rent he pays. Francis Symes's father has a lease. George Newland has a lease.

308. *Hon. the Chairman :* Is that No. 12 ? There are three periods of rent—£48, £54, and £72. Under the new lease it is £23 16s. 4d.

309. *Mr. Levi.* Do you know the rents that have been awarded by the arbitrators generally ? Do you know any case in which a rental has been largely increased ?—I know the case of Mr. Lysaght, of Mokoia (14, 15).

310. *Hon. the Chairman.* (14), 2,000 acres. Old rentals, £180 and £205 ; under the new lease, £605 9s. 2d. ?—The rent originally was exceedingly low ; the Natives let it without computing what the rent would be per acre.

311. How do you know that ?—I have some little knowledge of it : it was about the time that Mr. McMasters took the land.

312. *Mr. Levi.* He was an original lessee ?—Yes ; it was about the time the Natives returned from Otago ; I think it was £170, or something about that. They saw that was a big lump of money and they took it without further consideration. They also knew that the improvements were to revert to them.

313. What sort of land is it ?—It is a splendid property : one of the grandest properties on the coast.

314. *Mr. Pratt.* Did he crop it ?—No ; he generally grazed.

315. How many sheep to the acre ?—I do not know how many it carries : it is land of excellent quality : it will carry about four or five sheep to the acre. Mr. Lysaght bought it from Mr. McMasters.

316. *Mr. Levi.* Do you know any other lease of which the rent was increased ?—There is another, Mr. William Wilson's ; that was at first a piece of very rough land, almost worthless.

317. Why so ?—It was sand and swamp : such land as one could scarcely hope to improve. He gave about £15 : that has been increased to £17, or thereabout.

318. *Hon. the Chairman.* W. Wilson, 532 acres. Under the old lease, two periods of rent, £15 and £20 ; under the new lease, £10 4s. ; so that that is a reduction ?—I forgot I was thinking that was for half a year.

319. *Mr. Levi.* Do you know anything else that would illustrate the unfairness of the awards ?—I do not know anything else to illustrate their unfairness ; but common-sense would show that Natives were getting less for their lands than they were worth : not only that, they have lost all improvements. There is a great difference in the values given between Europeans and Europeans and that between Europeans and Natives. Then, again, many of these Natives have no land ; they are landless ; they are depending on the land of their neighbours ; some are leasing land from pakehas.

320. *Hon. the Chairman.* Have they no land at all ?—I would not say that they have no land at all, but what they have is inaccessible and unusable.

321. *Mr. Levi.* Are you well acquainted with the attitude the Natives have taken up with regard to these arbitration cases ?—Yes ; I am acquainted with that. They protest against the whole of the proceedings from the beginning to the present time. The word they use to describe it is "*muru*," which means that it was taken from them by force.

322. *Hon. the Chairman.* What do you mean by the whole of the proceedings ?—The proceedings of the Arbitrators' Court, and the Act which gave them power to make these awards. What they say is that they are willing to be put on the same basis as other people, but that this is special legislation against their interest, and therefore they object to it.

323. *Mr. Bell.* Is the witness their paid agent : the Committee, I think, has a right to know in what capacity he appears here ?—No ; I am interested as executor under the wills of Taurua and Ngairo.

324. What you say they chiefly object to is having no right to improvements rather than the loss of rent ?—Yes ; that is the sorest point—namely, that the improvements will not be theirs at the end of the leases.

325. Do you know why they did not appoint an arbitrator ?—They would not appoint an arbitrator because if they did so they considered they would be parties to the arbitration. They simply protested against the whole matter.

326. *Hon. Mr. Peters.* Did they object to the operation of the Act of 1887 ?—Yes.

327. *Mr. Bell.* And the Act of 1884 also ?—With regard to the Act of 1884, I do not think the Natives knew anything about it. The Act of 1884 was not put in operation as far as the Natives were concerned ; they did not know anything about it.

328. *Mr. Levi.* You were executor under Taurua's will : were you served with notice ?—I was served with several notices.

329. As executor in respect of the several leases ?—I consulted the Natives. They said, " We are not going to appoint an arbitrator." The reason was, as I have said, that if they did they would be considered parties. They refused, therefore, and simply protested against the arbitration.

330. Do you know of your own knowledge whether notice was served on the Natives, and that