

360. Does he dislike Maoris?—I think not.

361. *Mr. Peacock.*] How could he ask questions if the Natives would not come forward—if they would not volunteer to give evidence?—The Natives were present in Court: they gave evidence to show that the statements of the lessees were not correct.

362. *Mr. Levi.*] Do you know the state the holdings of the lessees were in at the time they took the leases?—I did in many instances know the land before.

363. In what parts?—In all the parts we have been talking about.

364. What parts are they?—Otoia for one part, Mr. Caverhill's place, and all these places. I know them all.

365. Do you know the condition they are in now?—Yes; I know them now.

366. Have you known them all along?—Yes; I have been in the district the whole of the time.

367. What improvements have been made by the lessees?—There have been some improvements, to enable them to get what they could out of the land. They have grass on most of the land; they have fenced it in many cases; and they have built houses on it.

368. Have they cleared?—In most cases they have done some clearing.

369. Then, that includes all the improvements—grassing, fencing, and clearing?—In some cases they have ploughed and cropped the land.

370. When were these improvements made?—They commenced to make them immediately after they took possession of the land, and they continued improving until the land was in a good condition for carrying stock.

371. Have any improvements been made of recent years?—I do not know that there have been any special improvements in the way of building. Ross had his house burnt down, and he built another on the land leased to him.

372. When was that?—About two years ago.

373. Was the new one better or worse than the old one?—I think it was something better.

374. Has there been any fencing done of late years?—In some cases there have been additional fences put up.

375. How long ago?—I could not say exactly.

376. About how long?—I do not know; they are often putting up fences; I cannot say.

377. *Mr. Pratt.*] Was the house that was burnt down insured?—I think it was.

378. *Mr. Levi.*] Do you know of any special improvements since the Act of 1887?—No; I do not know of any special improvements since the Act of 1887.

379. Since the Act of 1884?—I do not recollect any since 1884; nothing except the general improvement that is always going on—the ground getting into better condition. There have been lands ploughed, cropped, and again laid down in grass.

380. Any bush-clearing?—Yes; there has been a little bush-clearing.

381. How long ago?—They are always clearing a little bush about the place.

382. I wish to ask you a few questions as to the administration by the Public Trust Office in regard to these confirmed leases: has it been satisfactory in all respects?—Not in all respects. The Natives complain that the rents are not properly collected. There are some rents still in arrear—over four years in one instance; think in other instances there are arrears of over three years.

383. There are other reserves the rents of which are in arrears?—I believe so, but they are doing their best to get them in.

384. Are there any other matters in which you consider that the Public Trustee's administration has not been satisfactory?—The Natives also complain that the Trustee does not consult them about anything. I do not know that that is very much, but they do complain of that in regard to the Reserves Trustee. For myself, I think that he is most painstaking in regard to seeing that the Natives get their rents. I do not think he has made any mistakes as far as I know. I think myself the Natives themselves have no complaint to make in that particular.

385. Are you acquainted with any of the confirmed lessees?—Yes; I know them all.

386. Are you friendly with any of them?—Yes; I am on friendly terms with them since they came to the district. I believe I have offended many of them in taking up the stand I have in this matter, and they have "boycotted" me to a considerable extent.

387. Do you know anything of their attitude and feelings in reference to these arbitration awards under the Act of 1887?—No, I cannot say.

388. There are several other settlers in the district besides lessees of Native lands?—Yes; the district is full of settlers.

389. Do you know what they think of them? [*Mr. Bell objected to the question. Objection allowed.*]

390. As you know a great deal about the whole of these affairs, what, in your opinion, should be done for the better administration of these lands? [*Mr. Bell again objected.*]

*Hon. the Chairman:* I understood Mr. Levi to ask the witness his own opinion as a person concerned, being an executor under a certain will, and, therefore, virtually an owner. That being the case, his evidence on this point might be considered of value.

391. *Mr. Levi.*] What, in your opinion, should be done?—In the first place, the Natives desire what I think they should have—namely, that the whole of the work done by the Arbitration Court should be rescinded—that they should revert back to the original leases. That would be satisfactory to the Natives.

392. I want to know from you with regard to the administration by the Public Trustee?—There is considerable jealousy of the Public Trustee. They think, if there was a committee for the administration of the land, it would be an improvement, and be agreeable to the Natives.

393. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you mean Native or European?—Native, or Native and European.