

3258. You do not know what interest there is on the part of any of his relations in this?—I do not think that any of his near relations have any interest whatever in the confirmed-lease grants.

3259. Did he render you material assistance?—Well, sir, of course, any person who knows the working of these things would know that a Native could not render you any material assistance—you must rely on yourself.

3260. But I put you the question advisedly. I will put it in this way: Was his connection with the case valuable, so far as you observed, or useless?—It was valuable, inasmuch as it made the matter legal. That was the only thing. I may say, it was not only his case. I had three Assessors on that coast, and I found all the Assessors in the same way—they are superstitious about the matter, and are afraid of witchcraft, and that sort of thing.

3261. Was it in 1886 you acted with Te Kahui?—Yes.

3262. Since that time, what have you been doing with these leases?—My next work was to attempt to get some of the confirmed leases surrendered, and new leases given under section 13 of the Act of 1884. I made arrangements, I think, for either nine or ten of these leases to be surrendered on terms as agreed upon between the lessee and the representative Natives of the different grants.

3263. But since then?—It was found, sir, that all the Native owners would have to agree; and we found that could not be done, and abandoned all further negotiations.

3264. You mean the Act said so?—The Act said so. It was quite impossible to get the Native owners to agree. Sometimes the Natives of Parihaka would do nothing in their case; then other Natives were away—dead, and so forth—and we ceased negotiating.

3265. Since then what have you been doing?—I took no further steps, except to collect and distribute the rents, until 1887.

3266. Had you anything to do with the legislation of 1887?—Nothing whatever; but I made a suggestion to the Public Trustee with reference to the Act of 1884.

3267. And you were still acting in respect of the rental?—Yes.

3268. On the inspection of the estates?—No: not under the confirmed leases. There is a difficulty in getting hold of the leases to know what the terms are.

3269. A difficulty in getting hold of the leases?—Yes.

3270. Are not the counterparts in the hands of the proper authority?—I am not aware that there was any proper authority.

*Mr. Wilson*: The Public Trustee has had to get information as best he could through Mr. Rennell. There were no leases really until they were confirmed.

*The Witness*: I believe in a number of cases there were counterparts; but, as far as I am concerned, I could not recognise them as such. The only leases I could recognise would be those with the Governor's confirmation on them, or certified copies. The mere fact of the Natives saying, "This is a counterpart of the lease" would not by any means convince me.

*Mr. Levi*: The Natives have some of the counterparts, because they handed some to me.

3271. *Mr. Peacock*.] You are speaking of the original leases with the Natives, but not the confirmed leases?—Yes. Not the confirmed leases. These are the original leases. No doubt, when they were made, the Natives got counterparts.

*Mr. Wilson*: When the leases were confirmed no means were taken to keep the leases back so that the tenure of them could be taken, and the leases must have been returned to the lessees without any communication between the Government Buildings authorities or the Native Department and the Public Trust Office.

*Mr. Peacock*: And there was no attempt at registration?

*Mr. Wilson*: Some of them were registered, no doubt.

*Hon. the Chairman*: When they were surrendered I presume you got them, Mr. Wilson.

*Mr. Wilson*: No, sir. We did not ask for them, because the surrender is only a tentative act. They are not surrendered absolutely.

*Mr. Mackay*: The leases were illegal, and they could not be registered until they were confirmed.

3272. *Mr. Peacock*.] But in the case of their being confirmed?—They could be brought under the Land Transfer Act.

3273. As a matter of fact, it was not done?—As a matter of fact, the surveys in regard to a number of the cases were very irregular and badly done, and the surveys would not pass the Land Transfer Office.

3274. *Mr. Stewart*.] Did you allow the rents at any time to fall into arrear, Mr. Rennell?—Not if I could avoid it.

3275. What period was the longest in which the rents remained unpaid, or any of the rents?—In one case, McGregor's, it was three years. We have had one Supreme Court case against lessees, and found, from knowledge not in our possession at the time of taking out the writ, that it had been transferred. The lessee had become insolvent, and transferred to his brother; and we lost the case.

3276. It has been stated here that the Public Trust Office has allowed rents to remain uncollected for a considerable time: is there any real foundation for that?—There is not; nearly the whole of the rents under Public Trustee's leases have been collected to the 30th June, 1890, and there is nothing due practically; but it is different with the confirmed leases. There are so many legal questions here, there is some difficulty.

3277. You endeavoured to negotiate for the surrender of certain leases?—Yes.

3278. In whose interest did you wish them surrendered?—It was a mutual agreement.

3279. Why should you interfere in the matter at all, then?—I was asked to, from my position as Reserves Trustee.

3280. By whom?—By both parties.