

3361. And you have credited them in that way?—Yes; that is the way we reckon our accounts.

3362. The lessee does not do that?—Yes; I have no doubt they are all the same.

3363. In all cases where the lessees paid in July, 1889, they deducted the costs of the award chargeable to the Natives, and that was not afterwards claimed for them notwithstanding the Suspension Act?—No; we held that it was legal as long as it was paid before the Act was passed.

3364. In reference to the negotiations under section 30 of the Act of 1884, you say you had arranged nine leases: what do you mean by that? Who did you arrange them with?—What section did you say?

3365. These surrenders under the Act of 1884—section 30?—Yes.

3366. As to these nine cases in which you say you arranged them, how do you mean that you arranged? Did you arrange the rent first with the lessees?—No; it was discussed between the lessees and Natives. They had made their arrangements practically before they came to me.

3367. In those nine cases, or the majority of them, were these arrangements only made with the chiefs of the Natives, or all of those concerned?—Only representatives of them. That is where the difficulty came in.

3368. Were not these rents arranged for an increase in every case of the rents on the old average?—In one case they reduced the rents from 15s. to 10s. The rent, you will observe, in that lease was 15s. an acre at the time of rearrangement.

3369. It was originally 5s., then 10s., and 15s.?—Yes; it was reduced from 15s. to 10s.

3370. It was on the old average?—Yes.

3371. Were there not some of the cases in which the old rent was increased?—Yes.

3372. How many cases—do you remember?—In nearly all the cases, but it was then on improved values.

3373. The old rents were increased?—Yes.

3374. You say it was impossible to complete these nine leases, and that the reason was that the Natives could not be got together?—Yes. The Public Trustee required the actual written consent of every Native.

3375. If the Act had been amended so as to make the consent of the chief Natives, or of certain Natives appointed, sufficient, or such as those chiefly interested, could not these arrangements have been carried out?—I made a report to the Public Trustee suggesting an amendment of the Act in the direction you have spoken of.

3376. And you think that Act could have been carried out?—Yes. My idea would have been to give notice in Maori to each of the grantees, calling a meeting, and to let the majority of those present at the meeting decide.

3377. And you think that would have been a satisfactory way?—I think it would at that time. Of course the Act of 1887 alters the matter considerably.

3378. Now, Mr. Rennell, I want you to tell the Committee what the arbitrators had exactly to do in making their awards?—I cannot do that; I must decline to answer that question. Their duties were laid down by law; I could not say.

*Mr. Stewart*: They are laid down in the regulations. They say they took the regulations as the basis of their consideration of the cases.

*Mr. Levi*: My object is this: Mr. Cowern said the arbitrators had a great deal of work extra to what an ordinary arbitrator would have, in checking certain things, &c. These are things which Mr. Rennell would know of.

3379. *Mr. Levi*.] In the first place, they had to appoint an umpire; that is so, is it not?—I could not say.

3380. Was there any difficulty in getting the names of the grantees?—No.

3381. Not any of the names of the grantees?—There was some difficulty in finding out where they lived.

3382. You have been connected with these reserves for a very long while?—Yes.

3383. And you know a good deal about them?—Since the year 1884.

3384. And you were in the district several years before?—Yes, before any Crown grant was issued.

3385. Do you know anything about the value of land in the district at all?—Yes, generally; not specially.

3386. Of course there has been a fall in land-values since 1881?—Yes.

3387. But is it not a fact that there has been in the last year or two a rise in land-values?—Not in the last year or two. Since somewhere about October, 1889, there has been a slight rise. At the beginning of 1889 I think things were at their worst.

3388. After you took charge, did any of the lessees make inquiries of you as to the meaning of the Act of 1884—as to whether they could get renewals?—I do not quite understand that question.

3389. After you took charge in 1885, did any of the lessees come to you to make inquiries as to what renewals they were entitled to?—Under the Act of 1884?

3390. Yes?—I have no doubt at all but what they did. I held a meeting at Patea. It was a meeting of Natives with the lessees.

3391. When was that?—That would be somewhere about April, 1886, just as I finished my definition of interest, before I left the district of Patea. I may, perhaps, say that the Natives would have agreed to the renewal of the lease if the lessee, Mr. Symes, would have given £100. They demanded £100, and wanted me to ask him for it. But they asked him themselves, and Mr. Symes laughed at the demand and declined, and the meeting broke up.

Address by Mr. FREDERICK J. WILSON, Solicitor in the Public Trust Office.

*Mr. Wilson*: I wish to say a few words in the same way as the professional gentlemen present. I would say first that the primary object of my being here was that an answer might be given to any attack upon the Public Trust Office. I respectfully submit that there has been no direct attack, and that there is nothing to refute in the evidence which has been given. The Public Trust Office has, of course, not been immaculate, but it has done its best to administer these