

34. Was there not this involved in it: that the Assets Company would not reduce their claim; that they refused to reduce it?—I do not think they refused actually to reduce; they would not reduce to the low amount the Government offered. The Assets Company, I believe, had an offer of a larger amount.

35. *The Chairman.*] It appears to me to be a small price, if the average value of the land is what has been stated?—No doubt the Government would have to safeguard themselves under any arrangement which they might make. There would be a loss, no doubt, all round, but there would be no total loss.

36. *Mr. Taipua.*] Is it your wish that the Government should take over these lands and cut them up for settlement?—Yes, for this reason: that the Natives will save a portion of their land instead of its being sold under the mortgage. The Government or a Board, a corporate body, could settle the whole business. All parties would benefit, and considerable litigation would be avoided.

37. Do you think if the Government were to do as you desire, that would result in great loss to the colony?—No; because the Government would only take the land over at a valuation.

38. Do you think that the result would be favourable to the Natives of the districts where these lands are situated if the Government took over these lands?—Yes, I do.

39. *Mr. Kapa.*] Do you think the Maoris would obtain much benefit if the Government were to take over these lands, and in place of the company were to carry out the arrangement you have described?—The company (the East Coast Settlement Company) cannot carry out the arrangement, because the company has spent all its money; but the Government could partially do so.

40. Would the Government do as much for the Maoris as the company would have done?—It could not put them in as good a position as they had before, because the money has been lost; but this loss might be wiped off in the course of some years. The Government would be able to manage the land without the costs and other expenses that a European company would have to meet.

WEDNESDAY, 8TH JULY, 1891.

Mr. WI PERE examined.

41. *The Chairman.*] Will you make a statement to the Committee, as briefly as you possibly can, of the main features of the case?—I presume that Mr. Rees has stated most of the facts relating to this matter. I will simply supplement what Mr. Rees has stated by making a short statement. The object of handing over these lands to a company was to have them settled.

42. I wish to explain to you that Mr. Rees gave evidence regarding the company's land, and your petition is altogether on a different subject?—I wish to give evidence upon Mr. Green's petition, and afterwards give evidence regarding my own petition. Immediately after these lands were handed over to the company all sorts of trouble and difficulty cropped up. Many of these difficulties were caused by the state of the law. In spite of all the efforts made, this question is still in a very unsatisfactory state. The shareholders have received no benefit whatever, nor have the Maoris. On the other hand, the Natives have suffered very deeply on account of the loss of their land. No use has been made of the lands, which was the real object in handing them over to the company. The whole of the money raised by the company has been expended in paying salaries and meeting other expenses, but the Natives received no share, or only a very small portion. As these troubles went on increasing, Mr. Rees and myself determined to go to England. On arrival there, certain people consented to advance money to take these lands out of the hands of the bank. The negotiations were almost completed when a telegram was sent by the Premier of New Zealand, finding fault with our mission. The result was that the people who had promised to help us were afraid to do so, so we came back to the colony. I came to Wellington to see Sir Harry Atkinson, and remonstrated with him for sending such a telegram. I asked him who was to relieve my people if all their lands were taken. The Premier replied, that he would back up the Natives; he would assist them. I then asked him to cable to Mr. Rees, in England, withdrawing his first telegram. This was in the evening. He said he would cable next morning. Next morning I waited upon the Premier at his residence with a companion, when he told me that Mr. Rees had started for New Zealand four days previously; that it would be best now to wait till Mr. Rees arrived in the colony, when a settlement would be made. I sent a letter to wait on Mr. Rees at Hobart, asking him not to quarrel in any way with the Premier, as I had already interviewed him, and to leave the matter in my hands. Subsequently, the Native Minister (Mr. Mitchelson), and the Hon. Mr. Richardson came to see us at Gisborne. They inspected the lands in question, with a view to the Government taking them over. Eventually the Government went out of office, and I do not know whether anything further was done. I have just been informed that these lands will be offered for sale by the bank on this very day; but the bank has been requested to stay its hand for the present. I do not for a moment agree that the company has obtained all these lands properly. They have no right to some of the blocks; they have no legal right; and the company are responsible for the trouble which has come upon the Natives through their want of energy in making use of the lands handed over to them. Some of the lands are restricted; but on account of the desire of the Native owners to reap some benefit from these lands they handed them over, notwithstanding the restrictions. In spite of all these troubles, I am most anxious that a satisfactory settlement shall be made. I wish the Government to intervene and take these lands out of the hands of the company by making some arrangement with the company. I believe the Government could get the lands by paying a portion of the money claimed to have been advanced. I do not admit the correctness of the whole of the liabilities to the bank; they have been greatly exaggerated. When I say that I would like the Government to take the lands over I do not mean that the Government should acquire them entirely to the exclusion of the Natives, because these are the only lands owned by a great number of Natives. These blocks comprise the whole of their lands, and it was only on account of their desire to see them put to a good use that induced them to hand them over to the company. What I mean is that the Government should advance sufficient money to pay off the claim of the bank,