

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1892.—(Mr. Houston, Chairman.)

PETITION OF HEREWINI TE TOKO AND TWO OTHERS.

To the Hon. the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

SALUTATIONS,—

The humble petition of us, the undersigned, concerning our land, the Kaitaia Block, sold by us to the Government through Mr. John Lundon.

We were paid at Rawene, and Mr. Millar gave us the money by cheques in the post-office.

Directly we received our cheques Mr. Lundon asked us to give them to him; that as soon as he reached the hotel (J. Flood's) he would hand them back to us. We were dubious in our minds whether it would be wise to hand over our money to Mr. Lundon, but supposing that some further formalities required by the Europeans had to be gone through we gave him the cheques, and after reaching the hotel Mr. Lundon gave us cheques to give to the people who had sold their shares in the block.

Subsequently we discovered that a portion of the money had been kept back—was missing—and we did not get the full amounts for our shares as paid us by Mr. Millar.

These are the sums which have been lost, viz., Herewine te Toko, one cheque, £87; W. Rikihana, two cheques of £30 and £57 respectively, = £87; Hone W. T. Papahia, three cheques, each £21 15s. = £65. We did not see Mr. Lundon take—i.e., deduct—this money, as we never authorised him to do so; nevertheless we are perfectly clear as to the amounts contained in the several cheques paid to us by Mr. Millar, which were all handed over to Mr. Lundon.

Afterwards Raiha Tamaho applied to the Government for the portion of her money which was missing, and £108 15s. was restored to her.

After this we applied to the Government to pay us our money which had been lost, but we received a reply stating that the Government had not got any of our money, that it had all been paid by Mr. Millar—namely, £217 10s. for each share. We three persons subscribing to this petition now pray your honourable House to make inquiry into the conduct of this European whom the Government have sent to purchase our lands.

There are other of our relatives who, like ourselves, lament the loss of the purchase-money of their shares.

Let Parliament consider what ought to be done in the way of redressing the wrong we have suffered through the loss of our money.

HEREWINI TE TOKO,
H. T. W. PAPAHIA,
WI RIKIHANA.

WI RIKIHANA sworn and examined.

The Chairman: You had better first make a short statement in connection with the petition, and then questions can be put to you.

Mr. Rikihana: Mr. Lundon came to me at Opanaki. He explained that he had been sent by the Government to purchase the Kaitaia Block, and asked me what price I was willing to accept per acre. My wife was present at this interview. I replied that we had sent a request to William Swanson to advertise the land as being under offer at £1 per acre. Mr. Lundon replied that this was too much. He then produced a paper, which appeared to be a telegram, and explained that it was a communication from the Native Minister, authorising him to give 4s. per acre. I replied, I will not agree. He stated that in his opinion this was a very large price to give for the land, and that he had come to us actuated by his love for the Maori chiefs. I again stated the price was small. My wife then asked who would pay him for his work? He said, "Oh, after my work is finished." But I inferred from his conversation with my wife that the Government were to pay him. I advised him to go to the chief owners of the land; and that I would not agree to his terms. He then went to Herewini te Toko. I do not know how long he was at Hokianga when I received his telegram. This telegram asked me to go to Hokianga, saying that Herewini te Toko had signed the deed of sale for £130 10s. I did not go. I replied saying I could not go because my child was sick. Some time afterwards there came to me a European called Edward Howe, who explained that he had been sent by Mr. Lundon to fetch me to sign the deed of sale. I then went, and reached Rawene at night. I went to Howe's house, and whilst having something to eat Mr. Lundon arrived. I then went with Mr. Lundon to his house. We slept in the same room. Mr. Lundon explained that he had agreed to give a much larger price on account of his love for the Maoris, that he could now give an additional 6d. per acre, making 4s. 6d. Mr. Lundon asked me what amount I would like each cheque made out for. I said, "Do not arrange about payment to me yet. Wait till we have a talk." I said, "You must pay the expenses I have been put to in coming here before I agree to sign." He said that this would not be right. We had a long dispute about this, and then went to Robert Cochrane's house; and Cochrane explained, on behalf of Mr. Lundon, that it would not be right for me to get more than those who had already signed—viz., £130 10s. Cochrane then produced a document or list showing the people who had signed. All this was for the purpose of showing that, as they had received