

inasmuch as, whichever way the issue was ultimately decided, an adjustment by legislation would have been necessary in the final resort. But amended legislation should not have been enacted without notice to the beneficial owners and without their having had the fullest opportunity of being heard.

53. In these circumstances Mr. King suggested to counsel for the lessees that amending legislation should be devised, and the appeal by the lessees from Mr. Justice Blair's judgment not proceeded with. This course was suggested by Mr. King on or about the 14th August, 1935, but nothing of any importance was done until the 25th September, 1935, when a conference was held in Hawera. At that conference there were present Mr. King and Mr. Anderson (solicitor for the Native Trustee), and, for the lessees, Messrs. W. O. Williams, Meuli, Robinson (secretary of the Lessees' Association), and Houston. A discussion took place which lasted the whole morning. The representatives of the lessees adhered to and contended for the wording of the 1892 Act as they understood it (which was contrary, of course, to Mr. Justice Blair's judgment), and at one o'clock the meeting broke up, nothing having been agreed.

54. At that stage there is an unfortunate difference in the recollection of events as between Mr. Anderson and Mr. Houston. Mr. Anderson says that at 1 o'clock there was an adjournment for lunch and the parties were to meet again at 2 p.m., and that when he and Mr. King returned at that time none of the lessees' representatives had arrived, and, after some inquiry, Mr. King and Mr. Anderson were informed that the lessees' representatives had departed for Wellington. Mr. Houston says that it was decided when the meeting adjourned that the matter should be further discussed with the Native Trustee in Wellington and that representatives of the lessees should wait on the Prime Minister to make representations. Be that as it may, there was evidently a misunderstanding, and the representatives of the lessees left that same afternoon for Wellington.

55. On the following morning, the 26th, they first met Mr. Campbell, and then, by arrangement, they met the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Mr. Forbes, and there were also present the Right Hon. Mr. Coates, the Hon. Mr. McLeod, the Hon. Mr. Masters, the two latter being M.L.C.s from Taranaki, the last named being a Minister, and Messrs. Wilkinson, Dickie, and Smith, three members of Parliament (Mr. Smith being also a Minister), representing Taranaki constituencies. After lengthy discussion, according to Mr. Houston, Mr. Forbes indicated that "the matter would be favourably considered and urgency accorded as requested." The official report of the deputation reports the statement of Mr. Forbes thus: "He had not yet had an opportunity of discussing this matter with the Department, but that would be done. It would be advisable to get the support of the representatives of the Maori race—the Members of Parliament—so that they might feel that a fair thing was being done. Legislation of such a nature as that suggested came before the Native Affairs Committee and the Maori Members would see it there. In any alteration of the Act that might be made he would be very pleased also to consult with Mr. Wilkinson, so that those interested might be communicated with and have an opportunity of discussing the clause." Mr. Campbell's attitude was that the matter should not be left as it was under Mr. Justice Blair's judgment, but the details of any proposed legislation would have to be settled and agreed to. The Prime Minister indicated the importance of the parties coming to an agreement as to the terms of the proposed legislation.

56. On the 14th October a discussion took place by telephone between Mr. Anderson and Mr. Houston, at which the latter says: "I made it clear to him" [*i.e.*, Mr. Anderson], "that the lessees would not be prepared to come to any arrangement which would have the effect of incorporating the provisions of the Valuation of Land Act and that the idea of proceeding purely on the Government valuation as a basis would be quite unsuitable to the lessees." Mr. Houston formulated alternative suggestions to which it is not necessary to refer further than to say that according to his suggestions "the