

107. *Mr. Remington.*] Have you made any arrangements with the European settlers in the Raetihi district to take any of their timber?—No.

108. Have you heard of any sawmillers who have?—I cannot say I have.

109. Do you know whether there are any mills established there at the present time?—Yes.

110. How do they get their timber away?—I think they ship it from Pipiriki, and send it down by steamer. They are much nearer than we are. We are many miles further away.

111. Are you aware of any other agreements having been entered into for cutting Native timber in that district?—No, I do not know of any.

112. Did you base your estimates of the value of timber on the cost it would be to get it away to the market?—Yes, we always do that.

113. I mean, had there been a railway-station within three or five miles of where you propose to cut the timber, would you have given more to the Maoris for the timber?—No; we have calculated that there will be a railway there some time, and that that would be a means of getting the timber away. We considered that it would be a fair value, as we know there will be an increased freight.

114. You understand the nature of the proposed legislation regarding timber?—Yes.

115. And you consider that it would have a retrospective effect?—Yes.

116. So far as the agreements you have entered into are concerned, would you have any objection to them being submitted to any competent tribunal for the purpose of estimating whether fair consideration was given to the Natives under the circumstances?—I think it would be fair to have that referred to our solicitors; but I do not think we should make any objection, as far as I can tell.

117. Did you intend establishing a mill at an early date there?—Under the conditions of the agreement, we have to make a start in about two years. I am not quite sure, but I think there is some clause to that effect in the agreement. We are looking forward to putting the plants we have at Dannevirke up there.

118. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You have practically five years before you can sell timber from there?—Yes.

119. *Mr. Remington.*] In the meantime are you paying the Natives anything for the use of this land?—On the completion of the deed we are paying them £800 on top of the royalty we agreed to pay.

120. *Mr. Wi Pere.*] Are you not willing to submit this agreement of yours to the Maori Council to be approved of by them? That is all this clause proposes to do?—I am not prepared to say that definitely just now. I would like some little time to consider that.

121. I understand you to say that your people are afraid of the effect of this proposed legislation?—That is so.

122. Have you read the clause that proposes to deal with these timber agreements?—I think I am acquainted with it.

123. And what part of it are you afraid of?—We understand our rights are to be cancelled, and we are to have no further dealings or rights of cutting timber.

124. Which part of the clause provides for that?—We understand that it is of a retrospective nature.

125. Can you quote any part of the section which says so?—I would like to look at the clause. [Clause referred to.] Our deed has not been done through the Council.

126. This clause 31A reads that "Every sale, contract, or agreement for the sale or disposal of timber growing or standing on any Maori land," and so on; "provided that in case of any such agreement entered into before the passing of this Act application may be made to the Council for ratification of the same"?—Yes.

127. And upon such application the "Council may, after inquiry and subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, ratify, or modify and ratify, any such agreement": perhaps it is that power to modify that distresses you?—It seems to me that it is a matter for our solicitors, and I would not like to say anything about that.

128. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] How far is this Raetihi bush over which you have acquired the right to cut timber from the route of the proposed railway-line?—The railway-line is surveyed through a corner of the block.

129. Which is the nearest railway-station at the present time to the block?—Mangaweka.

130. Is Ohakune a station?—Ohakune is the name of a small township there.

131. Does the railway route go near Ohakune?—I understand it does.

132. How far is that from Ohakune?—I think probably a mile and a half.

133. And how far is your block—that is, the near edge of your block—from Ohakune?—Within probably a quarter of a mile to some of it.

134. Then, how does the statement you have given in reply to Mr. Fraser come in, when you answered that this block is fifty miles from the railway?—He asked me this question, "What is the nearest station at the present time?" and I said, "Fifty miles."

135. So that when the railway-line is constructed it will actually run on the edge of the block that you have acquired the right to the timber over?—That is so.

136. In fact, the near part of the block is not more than a mile away?—Yes, I understand that is where the surveyed route is.

137. Have you had any lengthy experience in milling?—Since I was about twenty years old I have been at it.

138. *Mr. Herries.*] Do we understand that you have started at Raetihi?—We have not yet.

139. Is it your intention, when you start, to employ Maori or white labour?—There is a clause in the agreement providing for both.