

63. On the question of the price of the timber?—He could call in expert evidence the same as any other tribunal. We could defend the rate of the royalty before any tribunal whatever.

64. *Mr. Fraser.*] Following up the questions put by Mr. Carroll, you have been instructed and advised that these transactions are legal?—Yes.

65. You say you would not object to the Government taking a test case into the Supreme Court?—I do not know that I would put it in that way.

66. Do you say you would not object to the Government taking a test case into the Supreme Court with regard to the validity of your transactions in lieu of legislation?—Yes, I would like the matter settled.

67. In preference to legislation?—Yes.

68. Of course, you would add the proviso that your costs should be guaranteed?—Certainly, I should like to add that.

69. Speaking as a business-man, do you consider it right that the Government should take proceedings to force you into a Court of inquiry in a matter of this kind?—No.

70. Do you not object to the Government interfering in a matter of this kind, where you deal with the Natives on a fair basis?—I certainly do. We have been at work for over twelve years, and it seems to me rather late in the day to raise the question.

71. Have the Government purchased any lands in the vicinity of these blocks?—Yes.

72. Can you tell the Committee the price the Government paid for those lands?—The land adjoining Tiroa was bought for the Government at 3s. an acre.

73. Timber and all?—Yes.

74. Have you any idea of the area that was bought?—It is a very extensive area.

75. How long ago was that?—I suppose it was completed—I am speaking from memory—three or four years ago.

76. I want to take you to the Mangawhero Block?—Yes.

77. That is an 800-acre block?—Yes, the bush part.

78. Are you aware that the Government negotiated for the purpose of that block?—I do not know that they particularly negotiated for the purchase of it; but for an adjoining block the price was 6s. an acre.

79. For land of a similar class?—Yes; in one subdivision of the Mangawhero bush.

80. *Mr. Remington.*] Is that similar timber country to what you have acquired?—Yes.

81. *Mr. Fraser.*] You have cut 600 acres out of the Mangawhero Block?—Yes.

82. How much have you paid the Natives up to the present?—Between £6,000 and £7,000.

83. You have still 200 acres to cut?—Yes.

84. And further payments have still to be made to the Natives?—Yes.

85. Do you know the land that is leased by the Taupo Timber Syndicate?—I have been through it.

86. Do you know the area that they have leased from the Natives?—The bush is between 6,000 and 7,000 acres. I have only their own figures to go by for that.

87. It is given as 6,245 acres in their prospectus: what class of timber is that?—Chiefly totara—a very good class of totara.

88. Is the 6,245 acres the area of the timber or the area of the whole block?—I can only go by their own statement; it is the area of the timber.

89. And it is chiefly totara?—Yes.

90. Do you know what the company are paying the Natives for that?—They say themselves they are paying £2 an acre.

91. You are aware no doubt that they were given permission to go on this block by Order in Council issued by the Government?—Yes.

92. You have had considerable experience in timber, I presume?—Yes.

93. I would like to ask you, as an expert, what, in your opinion, would be a fair price to pay for that 6,245 acres?—I hardly think that is a fair question. It is a hard question to answer right off.

94. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You have not been on the block, have you?—Yes.

95. Right over it?—I have been over it in several directions.

96. *Mr. Fraser.*] Perhaps you will have no objection to saying this: that as a totara block it is of the very highest order?—Yes, it is of the very highest order.

97. I do not know whether you have already given it, but it does not matter if you repeat it: in the Tiroa Block what is the freight on the railway to the market?—Three shillings. That is, to our big market—Auckland.

98. And you give the freight from the Hohotaka Block as 3s. 11d.?—Yes. We are now paying £6,000 annually for freight. That is altogether apart from the timber we do not pay freight on, and does not include the fares paid by employees travelling on the line, and the freight for what goods, &c., they get up.

99. Is there a clause in your agreement with regard to the Natives checking the output?—Yes; they are empowered to check the output by the agreement, and, as a matter of fact, they do appoint generally two of themselves.

100. Has there ever been any expression of discontent among the Natives?—No; just the opposite.

101. Then, we can safely say it is an amicable and friendly arrangement between the Natives and the Europeans?—Decidedly.

102. Did it ever occur to you to apply for an Order in Council for permission to deal with the Natives?—No. I have applied in other cases, and have not succeeded in getting them.

103. For timber rights?—Not for timber rights; but where I live I have tried to get an Order in Council for land for a home, and cannot get that.