

209. In bulk or timber?—In timber. First class for export is worth about 6s. 6d. That is what we sold our last shipment at in Auckland.

210. And second class?—We get for second class 7s. retail.

211. Do you know of the Huhutirau Block?—Yes.

212. Can you give us the names of the parties who acquired the right over that timber?—I do not know that I can. Mr. Stewart has been the negotiator.

213. Whereabouts is the block?—Huhutirau is on the Taringamutu River, near the main trunk line.

214. Do you know of any persons round about the King-country, and away towards Taumarunui, or on the coast, who are paying the Natives 2s. per hundred for their totara?—There is no totara round the coast.

215. Well, in the King-country or at Taumarunui?—I believe some are paying 2s. for sawn heart totara.

216. With regard to the new clause in the Bill: supposing the Natives were willing to transfer the timber land to the Maori Council for the Council to give a title to any European who desires to acquire timber rights, would you have any objection to dealing with the Council?—I have no objection to a good title if the Council can give it; but, unfortunately, they have not been able so far to give one.

217. The Council apparently has been in a position to be possessed of timber areas?—I was not referring particularly to timber areas. The Council so far does not seem to be able to give titles.

218. I am not speaking of land, but of land carrying timber: would you have any objection, if the Natives handed over their timber rights to the Council, to allow the Council to administer them?—No, I do not think any one could have an objection to that.

219. Which system would you prefer, dealing directly with the Council, or dealing for it in your own way by getting the consent and signatures of the Natives?—I am very well satisfied with the way we have been managing it so far.

220. You consider it would be far more satisfactory to deal direct with the Natives, notwithstanding the enormous expense involved in getting the signatures and paying agents?—Well, the Council would submit it to auction very likely.

221. That would be your objection?—There would be no possibility of direct dealing in that way.

222. Supposing that were the case, if the timber land were transferred to the Council would you not prefer to compete for it in the open market if the Council had the right to administer it on behalf of the owners?—It would depend upon the terms. I have already said I like dealing with the Wellington Land Board, a Government Department, for timber.

223. Would you prefer to deal privately with the Natives than to deal with the Council, supposing the Council had the right to deal with the timber on behalf of the Natives and to dispose of it by public auction?—I have no objection. I have tried to help the Council as much as I can in land matters.

224. I take it, from the provisions in your agreement, that you would like to see the Natives get fair value for their timber?—Yes.

225. You would have no objection to the Council disposing of the timber by public auction if the timber country of the Natives were transferred over to it?—No. As I read the Act, we have power to deal with the Natives, and to apply for ratification to the Council under clause 28.

226. With regard to your preference for a Judge of the Supreme Court to deal with this matter, do you not think a Judge of the Supreme Court is not in a position to deal with agreements in regard to timber on lines that would suit Europeans or Natives, because they have no knowledge?—The main question is the legality of the transaction.

227. We have it from you, and also from Mr. Skerrett, that you are perfectly sure the thing is legal?—Yes; and we have already given evidence that the prices we are paying are at least on an equality with the Government prices on its own timber.

228. You would have no objection to legislation being drawn up for the purpose of enabling agreements or contracts with Natives for timber rights to be submitted to some tribunal—either the Native Land Court or Native Land Council—for review before confirmation?—I think the law already provides for that.

229. However, you would not object to any clause that might be brought down to carry out that intention?—So long as it is not retrospective. That is why I support the Council in land matters, because it is set up to see fair play as between the Natives and the Europeans.

230. You know the law with regard to Native leases—that they have power to review and power to refuse confirmation?—Yes.

231. A system of that kind you would not object to?—No; certainly not. I would like to tell the Committee that there is a sawmiller on land near Rotorua who will submit himself to the Committee to give evidence, and produce his agreement, if required. He has just erected a mill that has cost £5,000, near Mamaku, and does not want to come unless it is absolutely necessary.

232. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] Can you say of your own knowledge that this sawmiller is similarly situated to yourself?—I want to bring out this point: that within a mile of the mill the Estates Company have large areas of bush land that they are selling for £2 10s. per acre, and have so sold it within the last few weeks.

233. Whatever he has must stand on its own merits?—Yes; I was only speaking on behalf of the Maoris—as a sort of comparison. I refer to David Lundon. Because he has dealt with the Maoris he is to be ruined.