

83. You say that the two Waiteti agreements were made in December, 1902?—Yes, that is so.

84. And the Okoheriki agreement is dated August, 1903?—Yes.

85. The Crown Lands Boards Regulations were issued on the 26th September, 1901, and I see that your agreements are made with the Natives since those regulations were issued: have you acquired Crown timber up that way since the regulations were issued?—I have not seen the regulations you refer to. My only knowledge of the price of rimu timber is that the general price paid is 6d., and I know of thousands and thousands of feet which have been sold at that figure; in fact, I know of any quantity that has been offered by Europeans at 4d.

86. What is your objection to clause 31 in the Maori Land Administration Bill?—My objection to it is that the clause—as I suppose it will—affects my title with the Natives in this timber. I do not think it should do so, because I have gone into the bush with the object of benefiting the Natives as well as myself. There would be equal benefit to both sides. Numerous other blocks have been offered to me, which I have refused, because I have the block I wanted. As I said before, we are not in any shape or form speculators in bush. We are going to erect a *bond fide* mill and work this patch, but outside of this I have no wish to go. If this clause affects my title I have, of course, the strongest objection to it personally.

87. Supposing these lands contained milling-timber, and were transferred to the Maori Lands Council, would you not prefer getting your title, to cut that timber, direct from the Maori Council, instead of going to the expense of appointing agents and a number of people to acquire the signatures of the Natives privately?—I would prefer to get the title from the Maori Council if it were possible to get it. In the early stage of my negotiations, which have extended considerably over twelve months, I approached Judge Edgar and Judge Gill and asked them if it was possible for the Council to take the matter over, as I would be quite agreeable to assist the Council to get these lands if it were agreeable to the Natives and they would give me the sanction I already hold; and the reply I got from both those gentlemen was that they were quite sure the Council would do that. I immediately went back to the Natives and had a conversation with them. I suggested to them that they should put these lands under the Council, with the recommendation that my arrangement should be carried out. But the reply I got from the Natives was, "We are satisfied with the arrangement we have made, and are prepared to handle the money ourselves; at all events, we are not at present ready to hand it over to the Council."

88. *Mr. Remington.*] Then, the Natives are not willing to hand over these lands to the Council?—That is the difficulty.

89. *Mr. Fraser.*] They are very intelligent Natives up there, are they not?—Yes; one of them came to me and read clause 31 himself. That was positively the first intimation I had of it.

90. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] Supposing a clause were drafted for this Bill, embodying all the conditions under which the Crown Lands Board disposed of its timber to the public, would you have any reasonable objection to a clause of that kind?—If you tell me now that the price of timber has been raised 1s. since I have made my arrangements, I would certainly object to paying 1s. after I have arranged to pay 6d., which was the highest possible price paid at the time.

91. Supposing the clause is drafted for the purpose of reviewing the transactions in Maori timber, and that the conditions in regard to its disposal should be the conditions which are embodied in the regulations under which the Crown Lands Board disposed of Crown lands timbers?—Any alterations may take place in the law in the meantime in regard to the disposal of timber by the Crown Lands Board, but probably those regulations would not have induced me to enter into a speculation at the time I did. I entered into the speculation in good faith at the time.

92. Leaving your agreement out altogether, and taking legislation in regard to dealing with Maori timber, would you have any objection at all to a clause bringing into operation the provisions under which the Crown Lands Board under new regulations are disposing of their land?—That is asking me to set aside my agreement and take my chance.

93. Supposing your agreements are not legal documents, to what tribunal would you agree to submit the review of those agreements? Would you allow the Maori Council to review them?—I would rather the Supreme Court reviewed them.

94. *Mr. Willis.*] There has been no disagreement between you and the Natives, I suppose—you have worked in harmony up to the present, and they are perfectly satisfied in all respects?—Yes.

95. With regard to the profits, after paying expenses of felling and cutting, and taking into consideration the cost of hauling, and that you have to allow this 17½ per cent. discount, do you consider you are getting an unreasonable profit on the timber?—I can assure you there is very little in it at the present prices. I have three miles of carting to do from the mill to the station.

96. *Mr. Mander.*] Have the Government sold any land adjoining these properties of yours, or in the vicinity?—They have.

97. They have bought it from the Natives?—Yes.

98. Have you any idea what they gave for it?—The Natives told me they got 3s. an acre for the land, bush and all.

99. And you say you are giving an average of £10 10s. per acre?—Yes.

100. And do you not buy the land?—No; we do not want it.

101. What do you consider the percentage of loss between log and sawn timber?—It is very large in rimu.

102. Thirty-three per cent.?—Fully.

103. Do you pay on log-measurement or mill-measurement?—Log-measurement.

104. *Mr. Fraser.*] You tell the Committee that the Government have purchased land adjoining these timber-areas of yours at 3s. an acre?—So the Natives informed me.

105. What class of timber was it? Equal to or better than what you have?—Near Mamaku I should say it was better.