

6. Petitioner is in error as to commission charged. Seven and a half per cent. commission is charged on the rents collected from leased lands, and on the lands held by Natives under occupation licenses only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is charged. No commission whatever is charged for collecting rent from the petitioner for the land she holds under lease above mentioned.

7. Native reserves are taxed under section 38 of "The Land and Income Assessment Act, 1900." The section reads: "With respect to persons owning land as joint tenants, tenants in common, copartners, cotrustees, or on joint account the following provisions shall apply: (1.) They shall be assessed jointly, and shall be jointly and severally liable for the due furnishing of returns of such land and for the payment of the total ordinary land-tax thereon. Provided that one exemption only in respect of such land shall be allowed where any exemption is authorised by this Act. (2.) Such tax shall be stated and levied separately and distinctly from any other tax chargeable on the same persons, or any of them." Tax is paid only on the lands leased. No tax is payable on the land held by the Native owners under occupation licenses. This taxation is severe on the Native beneficiaries, but the only remedy is by fresh legislation. As the law at present stands, the lands being held jointly are assessed as though owned by one person. No exemption is allowed to the Natives on their respective interests.

8. The statement in paragraph 8 of the petition as to the position of these lands is not correct. The petitioner must be aware of the fact that these lands were originally confiscated and subsequently returned to the Natives under a trust to be held for certain beneficiaries and their direct successors. The West Coast Settlement Reserves are vested in the Public Trustee in fee-simple upon trust for the Native owners, who have only a life interest in the proceeds of the reserves.

9. In reference to the statement by petitioner that the leaseholders are about to agitate with the intention of acquiring the freehold of these reserves, if such a petition is to be presented to the House it will be opposed by the Public Trustee.

10. In the year 1888, on account of general depression, &c., West Coast Settlement Reserve lessees were granted a reduction in their rentals for a period of five years. Under the present condition of things, however, this is not likely to occur again.

J. W. POYNTON,
Public Trustee.

The Clerk, Native Affairs Committee,
House of Representatives, Wellington.

No. 483, 1904 (Mr. Parata).—PETITION OF HENI TE RAU.

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

1. THAT your petitioners, with many relations and hapu, are owners of land, Grant 5238, situated at Urenui, and now administered by the Public Trustee: and that the said grant was not intended to come under the control of the Public Trustee, being set apart for my hapu, whose ancestors held and occupied these lands long before the war, and were all loyal to the Crown during the troublous times, and have always remained loyal.

2. That your petitioner has obtained Native Land Court orders of partition, survey plans, paid all fees for the same, and 54 acres by the above titles were leased by her some eight or nine years ago, with homestead and farm of 350 acres adjoining.

3. That notwithstanding all this, and the many years of occupation, the Public Trustee, under the great power given him, last October gave her tenant notice not to pay her any more rent, as the 54 acres were part of reserve vested in him, and whatever agreement existed between your petitioner and tenant was of no value, and therefore the rent must be paid to him.

4. And this notice was followed up by threatening letters, stating that if the rent demanded was not paid by the 30th instant the tenant would be treated as a trespasser. The Public Trustee again writes, "I trust, therefore, you will forward me without delay cheque for the half-year's rent ending the 31st October, otherwise this Department will have to resume possession of the 54 acres."

5. That your petitioner was ignored and treated as an interloper in the matter, no notice being given her, and she knew nothing of it till her tenant wrote and sent the letters of demand: for he did not understand their meaning, as he had paid her the rent for years.

6. And that your petitioner and relatives are not allowed to occupy their land without a license issued by the Public Trustee or a lease granted by him to occupy the land and pay him rent for the same, as though they were not the owners, and charging 7 per cent. for collecting and paying it back to them.

7. That these are most cruel and unjust laws they are subjected to under the great power given to the Public Trustee; they feel that their liberty, independence, and rights are taken away, and treated like slaves in bondage; they have no protection, no say in what is their own heritage and Crown-granted to them, their heirs and successors for ever.

8. That when the said grant was issued it was for the sole use and benefit of those in the grant, without reference to the Public Trustee. The title being inalienable is sufficient protection without the care of Public Trustee, and we can lease and deal with our own land to better advantage, thus saving the 7 per cent. charged by the Public Trustee.

9. I and my family have for years paid rates and taxes as British subjects, which can be seen by reference to the Tax Department. I have brought up and educated my family without the care of private or public trustee or help of any kind.