

SESSION II.
1906.
NEW ZEALAND.

USURY ON LOANS TO MAORIS

(REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ALLEGED); TOGETHER WITH
MINUTES AND EVIDENCE.

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 17th October, 1906.

Ordered, "That there be laid before this House a return showing the evidence upon which Commissioner Smith based his report in connection with the alleged usury on loans to Maoris at Hawera."—(Mr. MAJOR.)

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Governor.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In pursuance and exercise of the powers in that behalf conferred on me by Your Excellency's Commission dated the 6th day of August, 1906, whereby, after reciting that allegations have been lately made from time to time respecting the practices of certain persons lending moneys at exorbitant rates of interest to aboriginal Natives of New Zealand interested in Native reserves vested in and administered by the Public Trustee of New Zealand under "The West Coast Settlement Reserves Act, 1892," in anticipation of the rents payable thereunder, whereby the said Natives are impoverished, and are prevented from paying for the necessaries of life required by them, and otherwise degraded, Your Excellency was pleased to appoint me to be a Commissioner for the purpose of making inquiry into the following matters and things, namely:—

- (1.) Whether the allegations that moneys are lent to such Natives at usurious rates of interest are true;
- (2.) Whether the Natives are thereby impoverished and prevented from improving their condition;
- (3.) What should be done by legislation or otherwise in order to prevent a continuance of the alleged evil, if it should be found on inquiry that such evil exists and that such prevention is desirable in the interests of the Natives affected thereby,—

I have the honour to report as follows:—

I. I opened the inquiry directed by the said Commission at Hawera on Thursday, the 23rd day of August, 1906, and continued the same from day to day until Thursday, the 30th day of August, 1906.

1—G. 1.