

66. You have heard a good deal about the selfish interests of the Rotorua people?—I have not heard much.

67. Will you tell the Committee whether you were invited to come and give evidence before the Committee?—I was asked by the settlers to come. I was also asked by the Taupo Totara Timber Company if I had any objection, and as I had been asked first by the settlers I said I would come.

68. Then I take it you did not come actually out of disinterestedness?—It was not disinterestedness on my part, because I want the continuity of the line.

69. The price you really paid for the carriage of your goods is so small that if it were privately owned or State-owned it would make very little difference to you?—I do not know anything about that. I have been served with the line at a reasonable cost, and I want no change; neither do the Atiamuri settlers.

70. You referred to the conditions in the South Island and the poor land, and the conditions around Putaruru so far as frosts are concerned: do you find the frost affected the new grass that you sowed?—Very little—not nearly so much as I was led to believe it would. If you roll your ground well and get it consolidated the frost does not affect it very much.

71. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Supposing the line was fixed up for passengers, as is suggested, would you get your goods dumped down where you wanted them?—By the company?

72. Yes?—I cannot answer that. You know the value of getting your goods down to where you want them as well as I do.

THURSDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1912.

ARCHIBALD WILLIAM BLAIR sworn and examined. (No. 10.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—Barrister and solicitor, and a member of the firm of Skerrett, Chapman, Wylie, and Tripp. I appear on behalf of Te Heu Heu and his family. They have very large landed interests in the Taupo district. The land they own is approximately about 100,000 acres. A large portion of it—roughly, about a half—is affected by this particular railway, and the remaining half is affected by a contemplated railway to be constructed by the Tongariro Timber Company. I am instructed by Te Heu Heu to say that so far as concerns any land on the north of Lake Taupo in which he has an interest—and he is by far the largest landed proprietor there—he cordially supports the petition in every way, particularly in the amended way in which Sir John Findlay has now made the offer on behalf of the company. On the south-western portion of Lake Taupo Te Heu Heu, and the Government also, have very large holdings, and with regard to them he desires me to point out to the Committee that they have entered into a contract with the Tongariro Company for the construction of a railway which, in terms of the agreements now subsisting, is to be completed before the 1st March, 1916. That railway will run from Tokaanu to Kakahi—that is the nearest point on the Main Trunk line from Tokaanu—and that is the intended end of the railway. I have got for the Committee's information a plan showing the intended destination of the railway by dotted lines, and the lands affected by this contract marked in red ink. I have a printed copy of the original contract which was made between the various Natives and the Tongariro Timber Company. A statute was passed which empowered the Maori Land Board to sign on behalf of the Natives. It is done by statutory power included in the Native Land Laws Act of 1909. That contract provides for the sale and purchase by the company of timber, and contains also elaborate provisions for the construction of the railway. The contract was made on the 23rd September, 1908, and on the 21st December, 1910, an amended deed was agreed to which extended the time within which they were to construct the railway, and also made a reduction of 25 per cent. all round on the royalties payable for the timber. That was done in order to assist the Tongariro Timber Company to complete the railway. The point I am asked to make with regard to all lands to be affected by the Tongariro Company's railway is that, so far as the lands are concerned, the various owners interested have by a reduction of the royalties virtually done their share towards assisting the construction of this particular railway. Objection was taken because it was thought possible there might be a compulsory rating of the land, but I am aware that that claim has been abandoned. I would point out to the Committee that we would like the Committee to exclude from the question of construction of the line from Putaruru to Taupo any lands which will be affected by the Tongariro Timber Company's railway.

2. Will you give us the part on the map you wished left out?—The exact point at which we suggested the line should take is a point called Waikaka [map referred to]. That constitutes the boundary of the Aotea Maori Land District and the Warareki Land District. It roughly divides Lake Taupo into two portions. That is all I have to say to the Committee. I put in for the convenience of the Committee a map showing the Crown portion of the Tongariro Company's land.

3. Has the company got a lease over all that?—Yes, they are affected. Te Heu Heu is interested in the white lands, but possibly they are not affected. This is the draft of the amended agreement which was adopted with some slight modifications by the Court [produced]. Mr. Ngata is familiar with the whole of these matters. He sat on the Native Commission with Sir Robert Stout and knows the history. Before that Commission this matter was gone into and an agreement came to.

4. You say the first agreement was made in 1908?—That is so.

5. And that legislative power was taken in the Act of 1909?—There was a special clause put into the Maori "washing-up" Bill in 1909 to enable this document to be signed by the Maori Land Board on behalf of all the Natives.