

go there. I would say, "If you have bought it, drop it; the first loss is the best. Rather go to Canterbury, and pay £5 an acre, and get a good piece of limestone under your feet."

252. Are you aware that the railway is being surveyed through a portion of this Puninga Block?—Yes, I was told so when in the district.

253. And that the main road passes through it?—Yes; it is surveyed to go through the upper part of it.

MONDAY, 8TH OCTOBER, 1877.

HON. D. POLLEN examined.

254. *The Chairman.*] Dr. Pollen, you have seen the order of reference appointing this Committee to inquire into certain land transactions in the Piako District. We wish to know with regard to this exchange between the Government and Mr. Frederick Whitaker, sen. Can you give the Committee any information about that?—The only information I have is contained in the Parliamentary records. I endeavoured to get a Bill passed in the session of 1875, to sanction a proposed exchange of land with Mr. Whitaker in the Piako, but the Act was not passed.

255. What was your object in trying to get this Bill passed?—My object was to facilitate the purchase of a large block of land in the Piako District, by enabling us to give to the Natives certain lands in the Piako Block, to which Mr. Whitaker was entitled.

256. Was there no other way of arranging in order to acquire this land?—I believe there was none. At that time Tarapipipi was the principal owner, and the granting of this land to him was the condition on which the Government could acquire the block they were purchasing.

257. How did you become aware of Tarapipipi's opinion?—Personally, and by reports from Mr. Mackay.

258. Was it not tried in any other way to negotiate with the Natives? Could it not have been done in the usual way without making this exchange?—It was quite clear to me at the time that there was no other way of getting a satisfactory arrangement made than that I pointed out when the Bill was before the Legislature.

259. I understand from Mr. Mackay that this land was being all bought by the Government, and it was intended to give Mr. Whitaker this Te Puninga Block in exchange, acre for acre, for 14,000 acres in the old Piako Block; but subsequently, we are informed, the Bill was thrown out, as you have already stated, and the Government appear then to have allowed the Proclamation to lapse over this Te Puninga Block, and to have allowed Mr. Whitaker to carry on negotiations with the Natives themselves?—I am not aware that the Government allowed the Proclamation to lapse.

260. It lapsed on the 22nd October last?—There were no means of renewing it.

261. We have also evidence that the Government could have bought this Te Puninga Block apart altogether from this claim of Mr. Whitaker's, and that the most valuable half of the block belongs to other Natives than those Ngatipoas?—I have no knowledge of that, nor do I know that any member of the Government has.

262. Do you think it was right to introduce a Bill or take such an important step in a matter in which the Government had not concerned themselves?—You are speaking of a later time. After the Bill was rejected, then with respect to this block I do not know that I or any member of the Government concerned ourselves about it.

263. They did not concern themselves with the view of buying this Te Puninga Block?—That is more than I can tell you. If you wanted me to give evidence respecting the facts, I will give it, but I will not submit to be cross-examined in this way. I have not the papers before me. If you tell me what you want to know, I will give you the information. I have no desire to conceal anything.

264. I would like to know what object there was between Mr. Whitaker and the Government for the exchange?—It is on record, and I myself made that contract with the perfect assurance that it was necessary to make it in order to accomplish a work which the Government had in hand then—the acquisition of this large block.

265. Where is that record to be found?—It is in the office. Do you mean the contract with Mr. Whitaker?

All the contracts with Mr. Whitaker in respect of these lands.

266. *Hon. Mr. Reynolds.*] We have tried to get all the information from all the departments, and nobody seems to know anything about it?—About what?

267. *The Chairman.*] The transaction with Mr. Whitaker?—It is as clear as daylight. It is on record. You have only to ask for it.

268. Do you know anything of this land personally?—I do not.

269. Then you cannot speak as to the respective value of the land which Mr. Whitaker is to acquire, and that which is claimed by him in Drummond Hay's Block?—I do not know. I know he has a legal claim to a large piece of land in the Piako Block.

270. After taking this 18,000 acres (Te Puninga) and Drummond Hay's Block (14,000 acres) from the large block which Mr. Mackay was acquiring, do you know anything of the balance?—No, except from the reports of Mr. Mackay. The variation in quality of the whole may be judged from the fact that the price we undertook to give varied from 6d. to 2s. 6d. an acre.

271. Did the Government think it desirable to acquire this block of land, which witnesses say is probably worthless, and to give up this Te Puninga Block, part of which we are told was sold at £1 an acre, by Mr. Whitaker, before he acquired it?—That is a question you can hardly expect me to answer. I think it is exceedingly undesirable that, as Chairman, you should put such a question to me. I expect courtesy, at least, and not to be accused of dishonesty. My hands are infinitely cleaner of Native land dealings than yours are.

272. My honor, as a gentleman, in dealing with Native lands, has never been impugned. What actuated the Government in making this exchange with Mr. Whitaker? Why was it neces-