

*The Chairman.*] I have been to Native dances myself, and have seen them conduct themselves as well as Europeans.

*Mr. Lawry:* Better.

*The Chairman:* A statement like that should not be made unless it is borne out in fact.

266. *Mr. Lawry.*] How often does Mr. Gittos go to Otorohanga?—I do not know.

267. Does he go there once a year?—I think much oftener.

268. *The Chairman* (to Mr. Ellis).] Do you know anything of this alleged immorality?

*Mr. Ellis:* The Natives and Europeans resented most bitterly the statement made, and that it should be said to be the best to prohibit the Natives for that reason. I spoke pretty plainly before the Police Commission, and the evidence did not support the statement made.

269. *Mr. Hall-Jones.*] Then, Mr. Gittos was not justified in making the statement?—No. It was thought that Mr. Isitt had made it, and it caused a very bitter feeling throughout the King-country. It should have been supported by the clearest evidence before it was made.

270. Have you seen any of this alleged immorality?—No, I have not personally. Of course, Maoris are not moral according to our standard, but promiscuous immorality is not a fault of the Maori woman any more than with us.

*The Chairman:* No one should make a damning statement like that when there are not the actual facts to bear him out.

*Mr. Ellis:* I should like to say that Wahanui had a paralytic stroke about two years before he died, and that gave rise to the supposition that he was insane. His breathing was also thickened, and affected his voice.

TUESDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1900.

CHARLES HURSTHOUSE examined.

*The Chairman:* We have asked you, Mr. Hursthouse, to attend here to-day to give us what evidence you can on the famous King-country license question. The Committee has already taken the evidence of several gentlemen, including Mr. Fraser, the member for Napier, Mr. Hone Heke, Mr. Ngata, Mr. W. Cussen, Mr. Ellis, and the Rev. F. W. Isitt. The Committee has decided that we can only hear direct evidence, not hearsay. Knowing of your long residence in the King-country, you being the first white man through there, we will ask you to give all the information you can. You may give it yourself in your own way or in answer to questions. Probably you will give it better in your own way. We will be pleased to hear anything of the state of the King-country, the drink, and licenses from your own knowledge.

*Witness:* To begin at the beginning of the thing, I think the Maoris would never of their own free will have asked to have the country restricted in regard to the sale of drink. Somewhere about 1884 two or three prominent teetotalers (I do not know whether that is the sort of thing that you want) went through the King-country and asked the Maoris to sign a petition praying the Governor, or the Government, whichever it was, to withhold the licensing laws from that part of the Island. The Maoris signed the petition numerously. One of the local men who accompanied those gentlemen, who, I think, was a teetotaler, Mr. Arthur Ormsby, has since then changed his views entirely. Some years afterwards, I suppose about ten or twelve years after the Maoris had signed the first petition, there was, I believe, another petition, also numerously signed by the Maoris, asking that the restriction previously referred to should be removed. There has been no apparent result from that, the country being still under the restriction originally placed upon it. As far as the actual sale of liquor in the King-country is concerned, both the amount of drinking and the attendant immorality of the thing has been very very much exaggerated. At certain times it must be admitted Maoris will take it into their heads to run a publichouse in their own pockets, having a bottle in one pocket and a tumbler in the other. This, however, is very rare. I have only known it on one occasion. Also intermittently people at out-of-the-way places will send their pack-horse and get whisky and other grog by this means, and retail it, but that is not a continuous practice at all. The permanent sale of liquor takes place only at the centres of settlement—for instance, at Otorohanga, Te Kuiti, "The Tunnel," and at Kawhia and Mokau Heads; although, in regard to Mokau Heads, I can plead the virtue of never having purchased a drink there, and I think it is pretty difficult to get. If you would like to know what I think about whether licenses in the King-country should be granted or not, I would say that, admitted that the use of alcohol is a thing which should be discouraged, then by far the best way of discouraging it is to grant licenses. The reasons I would give for that conclusion are these: First, I think it is practically impossible to stop the illicit sale of liquor in that country; and, secondly, were licenses granted at the centres of settlement every license-holder would take very great care that there were no illicit sales taking place within a reasonable distance, at any rate, of his hotel. Under the present circumstances, the hotelkeepers on the border, north of the Punui River, are very willing and anxious to sell liquor in bulk to any persons. Of course, they sell it to persons who they know very well are going to carry it into the King-country, but in these cases the liquor is taken so far away from their licensed houses that they (the licensees) could not hope to get the retail custom from the people who consume it. That will always remain so so long as there is no license in the King-country. There are very easy means of getting liquor into the King-country. I have heard it suggested that all goods entering into the King-country by rail should be examined, with a view to preventing the introduction of liquor; but that is not the only road. There are two cart-roads leading into the King-country, besides two ports giving access—namely, Kawhia and Mokau. I do not know that there is anything more that I can think of, but I will be very glad to elucidate anything if you like to ask questions.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is about the length of the frontier or boundary of the supposed prohibited area?—I can only give a rough guess, but, including the sea-coast, I think it would be from two hundred and fifty to three hundred miles.