

104. I take it, then, that you were so satisfied with the legal opinion given by your solicitors that you did not consider it necessary to apply for an Order in Council for these blocks?—Yes.

105. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] How do you pay the Natives—monthly, or when?—Quarterly.

106. Are their interests defined, so as to enable you to know the proportions?—Yes; they are defined by the Native Land Court.

107. Who gives the receipts for the money?—It is done individually in most cases. The trustees sign for the children.

108. And the other Natives come and take their share?—Yes.

109. Hitherto they have worked together as a body, with no disagreement among themselves?—Yes. Of course, there are occasional minor disagreements, but they settle them themselves. There is no dispute about the division of the money, because that is laid down by the Native Land Court.

110. Speaking of the Taupo Timber Company, you have no direct knowledge, except what you have gleaned from their report, as to the price and terms, and other things?—No, except common hearsay.

111. Do you know whether they ever negotiated or tried to get land along the Main Trunk Railway line?—Yes.

112. The Taupo Timber Company?—It was not the Taupo Timber Company, but it would be people representing them—at Taumarunui.

113. Practically the same people?—Yes.

114. And they failed to get timber leases along the railway-line at Taumarunui?—It was generally reported that they were not satisfied with the timber.

115. You do not know that they have been refused permission by Order in Council to treat for a lease of timber along the line?—No, I do not.

116. But you do know that they had been negotiating?—I know they were up there examining the land for a considerable time.

117. That is in the vicinity of where you are?—Yes; in the vicinity of the Hohotaka Block.

118. Were there others besides yourselves and the Taupo Timber Company engaged in negotiating for timber rights there?—Yes, there are others.

119. And they did not succeed?—Yes, they have succeeded.

120. What others are there besides yourselves in that locality?—I can only speak from hearsay.

121. But there are no mills at work except yours?—Only ours.

122. Of course, you are aware that all that land is within the prescribed area—within the Rohe Potae?—Yes.

123. Where the State decided there should be no private transactions or negotiations in land?—Yes.

124. You were in the district, I presume, at the time of the purchase of the Waimarino Block by the Government?—Yes.

125. At that time, and immediately afterwards, were there parties or companies after timber land in that part of the country?—I do not think so. This is quite a new thing. I explained yesterday that we were practically driven on to the Maori land there because the Wellington Land Board asked us to put up a mill to complete a contract for sleepers instead of splitting them, but when we had cut out the land they had allotted us we could not get any more from them.

126. And therefore you were forced on to the Native land to carry on your timber operations?—Yes.

127. I suppose you were the pioneers of the sawmilling industry in that district?—Yes, with the exception of a Maori-owned mill, we are the only sawmillers in the King-country.

128. All through the Native-land-purchasing operations of the Government you were the only millers carrying on a timber business?—Yes.

129. You do not know of any others who made the attempt?—No; of course, there have been numbers of others cutting sleepers and firewood.

130. I mean apart from that?—Yes.

131. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] I would like to get you away back to Hohotaka: I think you said a while ago that the timber was sold first class at 13s.?—Ordinary building-timber. That is virtually the first class.

132. How many grades do you give for totara?—Four grades.

133. Should I be right in saying that the first grade would be sold at 13s.?—No; totara is classed differently.

134. *Mr. Mander.*] What average of timber per acre would you consider there is on this Taupo Block?—I do not know that I am competent to judge. The manager told me they had so far cut 80,000 ft. to the acre.

135. Do you think it would average half that—40,000 ft.?—That is what they put it at in their prospectus.

136. Your timber you said averaged 30,000 ft. to 40,000 ft.?—Yes.

137. What do you consider the royalty worth on your own block—the totara—per 100 ft.?—1s. 6d. is what we are giving. That is equivalent to 2s. on sawn timber.

138. If there were 40,000 ft. per acre on that land it would be worth £30 per acre?—If it was all totara, but it is not all totara.

139. I do not suppose it would be unreasonable to value it at £28 per acre for royalty?—I put my own valuation, roughly, at about £13 per acre on the Hohotaka Block. Of course, there is a certain amount of kahikatea and other timbers amongst it.