

WEDNESDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER, 1903.

FRANK THOMAS MOORE, of Johnsonville, examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are aware that the Native Affairs Committee have been taking evidence in connection with clause 31 of the Maori Land Laws Amendment Bill, as regards Europeans dealing with Natives in reference to timber?—Yes.
2. Have you had any transactions with the Natives in regard to their timber?—Yes.
3. Have you any agreements with them?—I have.
4. Can you produce them?—Yes.
5. I may tell you that the Committee have agreed not to make public the full contents of these agreements, but previous witnesses have given all the information in connection with them that the Committee desired; and if you keep the agreements and read out a sort of *précis* of them the Committee can ask you questions regarding the terms under which you have entered into the agreements with the Natives for timber rights?—Yes. The agreements are for a block of land in the Puketapu Block. [Witness explained provisions of agreements.]
6. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] What is the area of the Puketapu Block?—Six thousand acres.
7. Does that represent the timber part of it—six thousand acres of timber land?—Yes.
8. Where is Puketapu situate?—Near Taumarunui—about five miles from it.
9. In the Rohe Potae area—the King-country?—Yes, in the King-country.
10. *Mr. Jennings.*] Is it between Taumarunui and Piriaka?—No; it is up the river from Taumarunui.
11. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] Have you seen the land yourself?—Yes.
12. You have been over it?—Yes.
13. What does the timber consist of?—Totara, matai, rimu, and kahikatea.
14. What are the proportions—is it chiefly totara, chiefly matai, chiefly rimu, or what?—Chiefly rimu.
15. Is there a fair percentage of totara in the bush?—Yes.
16. Is it good totara?—Yes, fairly good. There are some faulty trees, as is usual in totara forests.
17. How many feet would it cut per acre?—Taking the whole six thousand acres, there is a lot of useless bush—it is not all milling-bush. I dare say two-thirds of the area contains fair to good milling-bush which might average 100,000 ft. to the acre.
18. *The Chairman.*] That is the average in the whole timber-area?—No; two-thirds of the block would average that.
19. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] How far away is it from the Main Trunk Railway line?—About six miles, I estimate it.
20. It would be necessary to have a tram-line, of course, running from the block to carry the timber to the Main Trunk Railway line?—Yes.
21. Would that be fairly easy of construction, from the nature of the country?—The nature of the country in there is difficult. It would be fairly easy for that country, but it would not be an easy matter—it would be costly.
22. Who have you contracted with—presumably with the owners of the Puketapu Block?—Yes.
23. Are you satisfied yourself that you have dealt with all the owners?—Yes; we have obtained the signature of every Native who is an owner in the Puketapu Block.
24. You have seen the order of the Native Land Court?—Yes.
25. And you have gone through the names?—Yes.
26. You have got all the signatures of the Natives?—Yes. The reputed successors were taken.
27. To represent the deceased's interests?—Yes, that is so.
28. And, in some cases, trustees for minors?—Yes.
29. They may, or may not be, the successors and trustees when the legal award is made; but, however, they are the reputed ones?—Yes.
30. In obtaining signatures for your agreements, whom did you employ?—Mr. John Grace, a licensed interpreter, of Tokaanu.
31. Do you represent yourself, or a company?—I represent a company.
32. What terms did you make with those you employed to secure the signatures to your agreement?—I paid them £1 10s. per signature.
33. And, on completion, anything in the way of a bonus or lump sum?—Not to the interpreter. That was his full payment and travelling-expenses. There was no bonus beyond that.
34. Did you make any special arrangements with the leading chiefs of the owners? Did you enter into any special agreement with any of the chiefs owning the land?—We entered into an agreement with Te Heuheu. We negotiated with him for the whole thing. He was the only man, as a matter of fact, we negotiated with. The Natives intrusted him to deal with their land, and we negotiated with him.
35. Did you make any agreement with him, so far as he was personally concerned, as to the remuneration he was to get when the agreement was completed—for his work or whatever influence he might have with his people?—We did.
36. Well, state just briefly what the nature of it was?—We undertook to pay him—to cover the cost of travelling the country with the interpreter and obtaining the deed for us—£500, and upon his doing this work for us another £1,000 in the course of two years, providing everything was satisfactory. This is a personal agreement, and quite outside the other agreement.
37. What is the nature of your contract? What do you contract to do, and what do the Natives contract to do?—We contract to pay them 2s. 3d. per 100 superficial feet for totara; on matai, 10d.; on rimu, 8d.; and on kahikatea, 6d.