

WELLINGTON, TUESDAY, 13TH JUNE, 1905.

Bishop WALLIS examined.

*Witness*: I have heard that certain statements have been made at Otaki, and I desire to make the following statement to the Commission: I have been Chairman of the Trustees of the Porirua College Endowment since January, 1895. The trustees hold this estate on behalf of the General Synod of the Church of the Province of New Zealand, commonly called the Church of England. They retain their office during the pleasure of that Synod, one of the conditions of their appointment being that they shall resign their office whenever they shall be called upon to do so by the General Synod, or by any person or persons lawfully acting under the authority of the General Synod on that behalf. Further, they are bound by the constitution of the Church to administer their trust in such manner and for such objects or purposes as the General Synod shall from time to time direct. On the 15th February, 1898, the General Synod ordered the trustees to apply forthwith to the Supreme Court of New Zealand for power to expend the net rents and profits arising from the trust in accordance with a scheme on which the Synod had determined. This scheme is set forth on page 6 of the printed "Statement by the Trustees and Judgment of the Supreme Court." In accordance with this direction, the trustees petitioned the Supreme Court in July of that year that the trust might be varied in the manner above referred to. The Court in May, 1899, declined to adopt either the scheme proposed or the counter-scheme filed by the Solicitor-General on behalf of the Government. The trustees then submitted another scheme which, though opposed by the Government, was approved by the Supreme Court in September, 1900, with certain modifications which brought it into closer agreement with the General Synod's scheme. The trustees reported their proceedings to the General Synod in January, 1901, but no action was taken by that body. In March, 1901, the Solicitor-General appealed against this decision of the Supreme Court to the Court of Appeal, which decided that the property of the trust had reverted to the Crown. The trustees thereupon in September of that year applied to the General Synod for direction. The Synod ordered them to appeal to the Privy Council against the judgment of the Court of Appeal. This appeal was successful. The trustees again reported their proceedings to the General Synod in 1904, and again no action was taken by that body. The trustees therefore claim that they have acted throughout in absolute loyalty to the General Synod of the province. I have mentioned these facts at length to support my contention that to the General Synod alone belongs, so far as the laws of our Church are concerned, the power of determining the application of the trust, and that I have no more voice in this matter than any other member of that Synod. It is, however, my duty to inform the Commissioners of matters connected with the administration of the trust, and as Chairman of the trustees I have directed that all such information as they may desire shall be supplied. I am happy, also, not as trustee but as the Bishop of the Church of England in the Diocese of Wellington, to offer an opinion on some of the matters connected with the Porirua trust. First, I would plead that time has not been given to test the efficiency of the scheme approved by the Supreme Court. Though this approval was given in 1900, considerable uncertainty prevailed as to whether it would be carried into effect until early in 1903, when the judgment of the Privy Council was published in this colony. Application was also made to that Council by Wi Neera and others that the property should be restored to the descendants of the original donors. This application was dismissed only a few months ago. Natives who sympathised with the applicants were naturally disinclined to send their boys to the college in Wairarapa, or to take any step which might be construed as an acceptance of the scheme approved by the Supreme Court. A reference to the scheme will show that this impression is incorrect, but it may take some time to remove it from the minds of the Maoris. At Clareville College there are now three scholars from the West Coast, two of them of the Ngatitotoa Tribe, who are supported by the Porirua trust, though none of these come from the neighbourhood of Otaki. I would respectfully draw the Commissioners' attention to the fact that the donors did not ask that the trust should be administered for the benefit of their own descendants; even Europeans were to be admitted to its benefits, though this the trustees do not desire. Thirdly, it would be extremely difficult on account of (1) the smallness of the funds and (2) the difficulty of obtaining well-qualified teachers to maintain efficiently two separate colleges, one on the East and one on the West Coast. And, seeing that on account of the first of these considerations each college would be compelled to receive but a small number of scholars, the usefulness of the influence of one scholar upon another (which is a very important factor in colleges) would be materially reduced. The stimulus to energy in manual work, which is not congenial to many Maori lads, would be also seriously diminished if one boy or two were learning shoemaking, one or two others carpentering, &c. For these reasons especially I trust the Commissioners will see their way to recommend that the present scheme shall have a trial before it is superseded. I wish to add a few more considerations with regard to an amalgamation of the Porirua and Otaki trusts, which I hear has been urged. (1.) These trusts differ in character. The trustees of the former are subject to the direction of the General Synod; the trustees of the latter are not. Again, the Porirua trust is for a college—that is, for lads who are to receive not a higher education in the English sense, but an industrial training; the Otaki trust is for a school for children. (2.) A proposal in this direction has been made to the General Synod (of which the Ven. Archdeacon S. Williams, who, I understand, advocates such action, is a member) and rejected by that body. The trustees of the Porirua estate thought at one time that it would be beneficial, and approached the New Zealand Mission Board, which is trustee for the Otaki estate, in order to ascertain its opinion. The Board in February, 1897, took the following action: "A resolution of the Porirua College Trustees having been considered, in which it is proposed that the Otaki school should be transferred to trustees appointed by the General Synod, on condition that a large sum of money from the Porirua trust be made available for promoting its efficiency, it was resolved, 'That the Board is prepared to accede to the proposed arrangements on condition that the school continues to be conducted in accordance with the terms upon which the trust is held.'" In January, 1898, just before