

93. Two thousand five hundred pounds?—Yes.

94. And what did you propose to do with it?—It was for me then, with my committee and Pepene's committee combined, to go through our accounts; and the accounts that were found right and proper we would pay.

95. With the £2,500?—Yes; but we never got the £2,500.

96. Have the Natives been paid for the block?—Yes; but the majority of them would not pay the 10 per cent., and have not done so.

97. Do you know whether the Natives have been paid for the block?—As far as my knowledge goes, they have.

98. You are not quite sure?—No. There may be a small minority not yet paid.

99. Do you know how payment was made?—It was agreed that an agreement should be drawn up and signed by them, pointing out to the Board that they wished 10 per cent. deducted from their share, to go towards the cost.

100. The agreement was to go to the Board?—It was only an agreement between the Natives, myself, and Pepene Eketone regarding the costs. It had nothing to do with the Board.

101. You were retaining 10 per cent. of the price received for the freehold?—Yes, from those who would agree to it. It was optional. If they wanted to sign it they could do so, and if they did not want to they need not.

102. *Mr. Dive.*] You were practically getting an order for £2,500?—Yes.

103. *Mr. Massey.*] How were the Natives paid?—They were paid under their orders.

104. Who paid them?—The Board.

105. Did the Board deduct the 10 per cent.?—Not in the books of the Board, but under the agreement.

106. The 10 per cent. was withheld?—No. First of all, the agreement was read to the Native, and if he agreed to it, well and good; if not, he got paid in full. If he agreed, the 10 per cent. would be paid over to the Costs Account, and the balance handed to him. The President of the Board had nothing whatever to do with the transaction.

107. Did he not approve of the transaction?—No, he neither approved nor went against it; he was simply carrying out the wish of the Natives there.

108. Was the 10 per cent. paid?—Yes.

109. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Was £2,500 deducted?—No.

110. *Mr. Massey.*] Not the whole of it?—No, and there is no chance of getting it, because all have been paid, and in many cases nothing has been deducted.

111. Who received the money that was paid?—The President was to hold that in trust, and to draw it at any time we required it.

112. You were to have drawn it?—Myself and Pepene.

113. And Mr. Hardy?—No, only we two.

114. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] What amount has been paid to that Costs Account?—I should say about £1,300 or £1,400.

115. That is the amount that was deducted on the authority of these people who signed the agreement?—Yes.

116. *Mr. Massey.*] Pepene Eketone was one of the owners?—Well, his wife had an interest.

117. He was interested in the block?—Yes.

118. He was a large owner?—No.

119. But he was exceedingly anxious to sell?—Yes.

120. And he receives this money in addition to the value of his interest in the block?—I could not say whether he is an owner, but his wife had an interest.

121. *The Chairman.*] Have you any other statement to make?—That is all.

122. *Mr. Massey.*] Coming back to this £800: you seemed to suggest to the Committee that there was no alternative other than accepting the offer made by Mr. Lewis or going on with litigation. Are you aware that there was another alternative?—What was the alternative?

123. It is scarcely necessary for me to tell you, as a gentleman well up in this sort of thing, that it was open for the Natives to hold on to the freehold interest, and, if they wanted to sell, to approach the Government and request them to take over the interest of the Natives in the land. My point is this: they were not compelled either to sell to Mr. Lewis or go on with the proposed litigation, unless they felt so inclined; they had still the freehold interest in the block, and it held good?—Yes.

124. You are quite clear about that?—Yes.

125. About the £800 which Mr. Bell required, it was to be held in trust—it was not to be handed over to Mr. Bell?—No.

126. It was to be held in trust, in view of certain possibilities in connection with the proposed law cases?—Yes.

127. The litigation would mean at least one Court case—perhaps several: there might be a case in connection with each of the blocks?—Yes.

128. There might be appeals from the decisions of the Supreme Court?—Yes.

129. And the cases might go against the Natives, in which case the other side would be entitled to costs?—Yes.

130. Therefore it was necessary to provide against possibilities?—That is so.

131. What I am trying to show is that there was nothing unreasonable in the suggestion of Mr. Bell that a trust fund should be set up?—Oh, nothing whatever.

132. I do not know whether you counted the Natives at the first meeting of assembled owners, but you told us, I think, that there were twenty-five on one side and eight on the other?—Approximately so, to the best of my knowledge.