

41. Could you supply that information to the Committee later on?—Yes.

42. You say there were between thirty and forty owners present, and there were 108 owners altogether. Do you consider that a majority at a meeting of between thirty and forty members should be allowed to dispose of the freehold interest of the other Natives in a block of 50,000-odd acres of land?—That is the intention of the Act, is it not?

43. I am asking your opinion, because I take it that you are supposed, in your capacity as President of the Maori Land Board, to look after the interests of the Natives when a block is being disposed of?—Perhaps I might make that clear. I have never yet known a case where the Board has alienated the interest of any dissentient owner. I am going a little bit ahead, I know, but there were a number of dissentient owners at the first meeting, and I think that accounts for a good deal of what transpired subsequently.

44. What do you mean by "what transpired subsequently"?—That was one of the reasons why I thought it desirable that the first meeting should be adjourned.

45. What was the voting at the first meeting?—A statement has been made in evidence that there was a majority in favour of the resolution in regard to only one block. That is incorrect. In Block 1f there were $24\frac{181}{430}$ shares in favour of the resolution, and $20\frac{48}{168}$ against selling. In other words, the majority in that block—the largest block—was in favour of the sale. In Block 1g there was no voting at all: the Natives were unanimously against the sale.

46. What is the area of Block 1g?—2,969 acres. 1f is 26,480 acres, and that is where there was a majority in favour of selling. In 1h there were $7\frac{8}{15}$ shares in favour of the sale and 11 against it. In 1j there were 5 shares in favour of the sale and $3\frac{1}{7}$ against. So that in that block also there was a majority in favour of the sale.

47. You have given us the shares: would you mind giving us the voting of the individuals?—The Act does not require us to take any notice of the voting of individuals. The voting is governed by the relative interest. In 1f there were eighteen Natives in favour of the sale and nine against. In 1h there were seven for and five against. In 1j there were four on each side.

48. Leaving that for one moment, by what authority did you convene the meeting? I know you were requested to convene it, but by what authority?—There is statutory authority.

49. In what section of the Act?—Section 341.

50. That section reads, "(1.) A meeting of the owners of any Native freehold land may at any time, on the application of any such owner or of any person interested, and shall, on the direction of the Native Minister, be summoned by the Maori Land Board of the district in which that land is situated. (2.) Every such meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Board appoints, and shall be summoned in manner prescribed by regulations. (3.) No meeting duly summoned in the prescribed manner, and no resolution passed thereat, shall be invalidated or otherwise affected by the circumstance that any owner has not in fact received notice of the holding of that meeting." Do you know section 356 of the Act?—Yes.

51. I want to call your attention to subsection (3) of that section. I will read the part of the section in which I am interested: "No meeting of assembled owners shall be summoned under this Part of this Act to pass any such resolution as is referred to in paragraph (f) of section three hundred and forty-six of this Act (relating to the approval of a proposed alienation), except upon the written application of some party to the proposed alienation, who shall at the same time pay to the Board the prescribed fee. (2.) The application shall contain a statement of all the material terms and conditions of the proposed alienation. (3.) The application shall then be considered by the Board, and if it is of opinion that the proposed alienation is one which may lawfully be made, and which is not contrary to the public interest or to that of the Native owners, the Board may call a meeting of the owners to consider the proposal." Paragraph (f) of section 346 provides that the assembled owners may pass a resolution "That a proposed alienation of the land or any part thereof (other than a purchase by the Crown) shall be agreed to." Let me call your attention to this paragraph of section 356: "The application shall then be considered by the Board, and if it is of opinion that the proposed alienation is one which may lawfully be made," &c. Were you of opinion that the proposed alienation might lawfully be made?—Section 341, subsection (1), I think, answers your question—"shall, on the direction of the Native Minister."

52. That is exactly what I want to get at. If it had not been for the direction of the Native Minister you, as President of the Maori Land Board, would not have considered it your duty to call the meeting?—I did not say so.

53. Then, I want you to choose one of these two alternatives?—There was no alternative.

54. Here is the alternative: either you were of opinion that the alienation might lawfully be made, and therefore convened the meeting, or else you took your directions from the Native Minister?—We took the direction of the Native Minister.

55. It was not because you thought the alienation might lawfully be made?—Of course, we had not considered the question.

56. Were you of opinion that the alienation might lawfully be made at that time?—We had not gone into it—we had not formed an opinion.

57. Then you did not consider that point when you convened the meeting?—No.

58. You simply convened it because you were instructed to do so by the Native Minister?—That is so.

59. There is provision in the Act with regard to a fee—a fee is required before the meeting is convened?—Yes.

60. Was the fee paid?—Yes.

61. Who paid it?—The solicitors.

62. Who were they?—Mr. Dalzell.

63. On behalf of Mr. Lewis?—Yes.