

WEST COAST COMMISSION.

PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

[NOTE.—For convenience of reference the numbers run consecutively, whether in Questions or Proceedings.]

FIRST SITTING, AT HAWERA, WEDNESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 1880.

The Commission met in the Town Hall, Hawera.

Present : Sir W. Fox, K.C.M.G., and Sir F. Dillon Bell, M.L.C.

The Commission, under the hand of His Excellency the Governor in Council, and issued under the Seal of the colony, appointing William Fox, Francis Dillon Bell, and Hone Mohe Tawhai, Commissioners under the provisions of "The Confiscated Lands Inquiry and Maori Prisoners' Trials Act, 1879," was read in the English and Maori languages.

The Commission then adjourned.

I.—NATIVE EVIDENCE.

AT OEO, THURSDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 1880.

1. *Ihaia Ngakirikiri*, of Opunake, said: I wish to welcome you both here. What I said last night was only to clear the way for our proceedings to-day; to-day we will get on with the work. We are glad that you have come here in person. We have seen the *Gazette* which preceded you, and we welcome you here to meet us. This is our meeting-place, and we will either succeed in setting the land right now or fail. Come to complete the promises and arrangements made to us here in former times. Finish the work of this district, between Taungatara and Moutoti. The land between these two places we call Opunake. Mr. Richmond said to us about the Government reserve of 1,400 acres at Opunake, that it would extend from the sea-beach up to the River Waiaua for two miles, then branch across to the River Otahi, and thence continue along the stream to the sea. He told us that this block would be taken, but that a portion would be reserved to us. He also promised that we should have a return of 5 per cent. on any sales in the Opunake Township. That is all I have to say about that at present; but I wish to ask you now to let us have the Crown grants for that land. There were two principal chiefs in that district—Wiremu Kingi Te Matakatea, now a prisoner, and Arama Karaka, who is now dead. We are the descendants of Arama Karaka. According to our Native customs he claimed from Taungatara to Otahi; and, according to our Native customs, from Otahi to Moutoti also belonged to Wiremu Kingi, whose people are still living there: they are very numerous. What we wish is that the Crown grants should be issued, for we cannot tell what Government will be in power from time to time. We had five sections given to us for allowing a road to be made through our ancient burial-ground at Korongopiko. This was a very old burial-ground of ours, existing from the time of Tu Whakararo. His tribe was the Ngaiwetenga. We are descended from him. What we wish is that you should give us the Crown grants for these sections. They are near this burial-ground, but we should like them moved to the road, and pieces given us near the road, where we could cultivate and fence them in. It is only now that any of the Taranaki people have come forward and appear before this Commission. This land here is Taranaki, and the boundary of our ancestors commences at Tawhitinui and extends to Mangawhero, at the top of Mount Egmont. Our land is on the side of the Taranaki mountain down to the Karakatenga, which is a Maori pa; and the possession of it dates from ages back. The chief of this pa was Tahurangi. This land has all been taken by the Ngatiawa. I ask you to consider my claim to the land taken by the Ngatiawa on the other side of Mount Egmont. It is no use for me to look to the Taranaki people, because now they have gone over to Te Whiti.

2. *Hone Pihama*, of Oeo, said: The land which has just been referred to, extending from Moutoti to Taungatara, is what I spoke to you about last night. I hope that this land will henceforth be secured to the descendants of the two chiefs who have been named by Ihaia. What I understood from the notice given to us at the time was, that the land was from Taungatara to the mountain and from Moutoti to the mountain. [The Commission desired the Natives to approach the table, and pointed out to them on the map the original boundaries fixed in 1866, showing the reserve beginning at Moutoti and extending to the mountain on the north, and from Moutoti along the coast to Taungatara, and following that stream up to the mountain.] What we require now is that we should have documents under your hands showing that this land will be secured to us the descendants of these people.

3. *The Commissioners*: The Commissioners know that the reserve you have been speaking of was made by Mr. Richmond in the year 1866, and that from that time it has never been altered by any Government. We do not know whether or not there has been a Proclamation issued by the Governor making it secure to you. We will telegraph at once to know whether that has been done;