

1314. Then seventy-five owners to a block would be a fair average?—I dare say it would. This, of course, is only approximate.

1315. Just so; we are merely getting an idea as to the number. It is not a return of figures that we want, but a return of the extent to which this thing has been done. You would say that you think that many more than the number shown on the list you have before you has been accomplished?—Yes; but the reserves got smaller towards Waitotara.

1316. Do you think that these would amount to about half as much more as those you have given us?—I cannot say.

1317. As far as your knowledge goes that represents the average for the whole lot?—As far as Hawera only.

1318. That list, then, represents thirty blocks of land, with an aggregate number of over two thousand owners?—Yes. I may say that there is no difficulty in arranging the matter where the Natives will assist, but it is extremely difficult where they will not assist.

1319. There is difficulty where the Natives do not accede?—Decidedly.

1320. In what number of these did you fail in making an arrangement?—I did not fail in any. The Native Land Court has allocated a good many of the interests since, and I do not think that, out of the whole of the interests which I dealt with in these blocks, twelve have been altered by the Court. But a good many have never been touched by the Court, and may be altered yet. So far there are comparatively no alterations.

1321. Do you think that, supposing the onus were cast upon the Committee, or upon the Native owners and the Commissioner, there would be much serious difficulty in getting the matter arranged?—If the Natives were willing there could be no difficulty that I can see.

1322. It would depend to some extent on their willingness to assist?—Yes; if they are unwilling it is very difficult to do. You are compelled, then, to do it with a minority of the Natives, and you are consequently never sure of what may follow.

1323. If the minority, however, assist, you can do something approximate that may go before the Court?—Yes.

1324. And thus materially assist the Court in arriving at a decision?—No doubt.

1325. At what comparative cost to the owners did you make these arrangements?—In the case of the one that I did about a fortnight ago—the day before Good Friday—the cost was about £5 2s. 6d.

1326. How many owners were there?—Twenty-one, and 2,000 acres of land. Of course the sum I have mentioned does not include proportion of my salary, and general cost in Public Trustee's Office.

1327. But it includes all the fees that were paid?—I will tell you exactly what it included: Trap hire, one day, £1, with a few shillings additional for the driver's dinner, horse-feed, and so forth. My own expenses came to 10s.; I paid a man 2s. 6d. for the use of a room to conduct the business in; and the Assessor, who took three days to come from and go back to his own place, was paid at the rate of 22s. 6d. a day, with 5s. a day extra for his horse.

1328. You did not want the Natives to go to a distant Court?—No; I and the Assessor went to them, at their own place.

1329. And they were not disturbed from their ordinary labours?—No; they merely lost a day over the matter.

1330. What I mean is that they were not dragged about to distant places, as is the case when they have to attend the Native Land Court?—No.

1331. Is that a fair sample of the way in which you have managed those things that you have spoken of?—Yes, wherever the Natives were willing to assist.

1332. What did you do when the Natives were not willing to assist?—In that case I got the information from those Natives who were before me, and then, with the aid of the Assessor and a few of the Natives, I compiled the list.

1333. And published the list?—I sent one or more copies of my definition to the head Natives.

1334. Can you form any idea of what the cost would be in that case. Take the cost of the case in which there were twenty-one owners by way of comparison?—The expenditure in this case is more likely to have increased than decreased. I forget the amount, but it will appear in the return.

1335. What would be the cost after partition, if the case necessitated a sitting of the Native Land Court, and the Natives went to the Native Land Court?—It is not yet partitioned.

1336. What would be the cost of ascertaining what you have done if it had to be taken before the Court?—I am not in a position to say. I have heard through the Judge that it costs £5 a day, every day a Court sits.

1337. How many days would it take?—That depends entirely upon the Judge.

1338. Have you ever known a case settled in the Court in a day?—I have never known a case similar to the one now quoted. The Court would partition on the map. I can hardly give you a comparative idea.

1339. What is the shortest time you have known a case to be settled in the Court with this partitioning on the map?—I can hardly answer that question.

1340. You do not think that, with the Natives assisting and assenting, there would be any difficulty in arranging things without any serious cost or trouble?—No. Of course where there were a number of cases, as in the commencement, the cost was much less per grant, because I followed the work on day after day. This case was one by itself, and it would cost more on that account.

1341. You had to make a journey specially for it, and this, together with the time and expense involved would combine to enhance the cost?—Yes.