

209. *Hon. Mr. Mitchelson.*] But not the £3,000?—It was never explained to me that the £3,000 was to be used for such a purpose, but explanation to that effect was made as regards the £10,000.

210. *Mr. Rees.*] As regards the £3,000, did you not understand that it was to be used for the same purposes as the £10,000, only having deducted from it whatever moneys were expended on, or charges made against, those other blocks, as in the case of Pakowhai—say, the charges against Pakowhai?—It was never explained that the £3,000 was to be dealt with in that manner; it was never stated that any portion of the £3,000 was to be spent on any other block; had it been so explained, it would have been clear.

211. Did the Natives supply any money, first of all, for the deeds or costs of settlement with Johnson?—No, we did not.

212. Or for surveys?—What surveys?

213. The Maraetaha, Kopua, and Pakowhai?—No; we gave no money for surveys.

214. Do you now know that Wi Pere and myself commenced an action against Johnson to compel him to fulfil his agreement?—You did.

215. Do you know that the costs of that on both sides, which we had to pay, amounted to over £600?—I do not know how much that action cost.

216. Now, going into the company's matters more particularly, the Pakowhai people have received nothing from the company, or from Wi Pere, or myself as regards their land—that land?—No.

217. Then, if the land be sold altogether without receiving any payment, they will lose their land?—Yes, that is so. The land has gone, and we have received nothing for it.

218. Do you know that the company, in good faith, believed they were helping to open the whole country for settlement; and was not that the reason the Natives allowed the land to go in the first instance, so as to enable the whole of the lands to be thrown open for the settlement of the people?—The real reason why we consented to sign the documents was because we were told that we, as a committee, would have the administration of these lands. We thought that under that safeguard, being Maoris, our lands would not be lost. Another reason was that we thought you would be able to carry out the suggestion made, of acquiring Maraetaha from Mr. Johnson. The Natives who still had shares in that block, as well as those who had already sold to Mr. Johnson, were most anxious to retain it. That was another reason why we signed. There were many other suggestions which you made at the time and which caused us to consider those proposals favourably, one of these being that the committee was still to have a voice in the management of the land. I was one of the committee selected by the vote of my people. I never had any wish or intention to injure my tribe. Now, notwithstanding thirteen years have elapsed since you first came to see us and arrange these matters, none of those favourable prospects which you held out to us have been fulfilled. On the contrary, we now ascertain that everything has ended in disaster; not one benefit has resulted. But before you came to see us, and our committees were set up, and you and Wi Pere got the management of the land, we were receiving a good income from our lands every year through the rents paid to us by Mr. Johnson. After the land was handed over we never received a single benefit. The result is lamentation and weeping and vain repining at what has occurred. This is why the Maoris in our district have sent a petition to this House, in the hope of obtaining some relief.

219. You say you received no benefit: do you remember me paying money to get you out of prison?—Will you explain?

220. Do you remember me having to pay £40 to get you out of prison, where you were placed on a judgment summons?—That is a personal matter that does not affect the owners of the land. I am speaking on behalf of the general owners of the land.

221. If myself and Wi Pere had your money, I ask you, how is it—and you are the only person who says this—how is it that for twelve or thirteen years no word was ever spoken to us about it?—You are quite right in asking that question; the people murmured among themselves, but I do not think that any demand was made on you.

222. Are you not aware that I was forced into the Bankruptcy Court through the liability I took upon myself in connection with these Maori lands; that my house and property, everything I had, were sold?—I did hear that you were made a bankrupt, or had to go to the Bankruptcy Court; but I never knew that it was on account of our lands.

223. On account of the liability I had taken upon myself for the Maori lands?—I do not know that that was the result, for you did not do a great deal for our lands after all; you never expended any money in the way of improving our lands; you never drained them, or fenced, them, or grassed them. It was we, the Native committee, who had to do all the works. The £3,000 and the £10,000 was more than sufficient to pay for all this.

224. Do you know that Wi Pere was at the expense of £4,000, which he had to borrow upon his own personal land, and which he now owes?—I do not know that Wi Pere ever incurred a debt of £4,000 when working on our behalf. He may have incurred such debt while dealing with his own and other lands, but not in dealing with ours.

225. You are right about the Pakowhai, but I am speaking about the general Maori lands?—I have confined my statement entirely to my own lands. I am speaking in regard to my own lands. Let the committees set up for other blocks speak in regard to them. I can only speak in regard to my own lands.

226. *The Chairman.*] There is one thing, witness, you do not make clear, with regard to the action you brought against Mr. Rees and the company: what became of that?—Our object was to smash up the company and recover possession of our lands.

227. It was not brought for a special sum, was it?—No, it was to break up the company; it was an attempt to get back our lands. As I have already said, I do not clearly understand why the action fell through.