

tracing, much of the work could be done by agreement outside. As the Commissioners are aware, there was power in the Act giving the Native Land Court jurisdiction to give effect to any agreement that was come to outside. The Court agreed to an adjournment, but stated to me that it would not be for any great length of time, but, so long as we could come and report occasionally that progress was being made, further adjournments would be granted. The meetings then began. I think all the gentlemen who are here, who know much about the Maoris, will agree with me that when I say that all the Muaupoko were present, it is the common way of speaking, but it does not mean that every single man and woman was there. It is the common way of expressing the thing. Well, the matter began. I asked Kemp for the railway-line. It then transpired—I had not heard it before—that there was a deed in existence by which Kemp either purported to transfer the railway-line to the company, or promised to do so when in an actual position to do so, and I sent to Wellington for that deed. The deed came up, and I recognized that it was in the handwriting of Sir Walter Buller. But there had been a most material alteration made in it—evidently subsequent to the execution of the deed. An interpolation in a different handwriting, in different ink—a totally different consideration, and not initialled in any way whatever. There was an Act in force then and now, called the Railway Construction Act, and in that Act there was a clause to this effect: that if any Native Land Court were satisfied that the Maoris had agreed to transfer any piece of land for railway purposes to a company, the Court was empowered to give a title direct to the company. I pointed out to Kemp that I could not produce the deed—that it was not only valueless, but a forgery; but I said, “Perhaps the Court will be satisfied if you go into the box and say you are willing to transfer the land.” It was left at that; then they went on with the division of the block. The next question was the 400 acres for a township. Kemp, as I have said, was at that time on crutches and only occasionally came to see the people, or they would come in to see him. There was a tracing hanging up in a conspicuous place, and whatever was assented to was put on the tracing for the people to see. I went to the Muaupoko, and I declare that, as fully as I was able, I explained to Muaupoko what I understood to be the law, namely, that every title to be issued by that Court under the then existing Act could not be anything less than a freehold title, without any outstanding equity whatever—a clear title to those persons in whose favour the order was made. I tried to explain this, and I believe it was perfectly well understood. I went fully into the particulars I have given with regard to the township, which were submitted to the Government, and I went further. In consequence of communication I had with Kemp, I stated to the Natives assembled not only that these tenth sections would be returned, but how great an advantage it would be to have this township in their midst, and that the money for the township would be available to pay all the internal subdivisional surveys of the block. I have heard it said that it was the then existing survey liens on the block that were to be paid. I did not understand it so. What I told the Natives was that, supposing the block was divided into sections, those subdivisions would be all paid for out of this money, so that each man and woman who got a section would get it free of charge. They unanimously agreed to the township. I then pointed out to them that it would be necessary to vest this 4,000 acres in somebody who could make a transfer to the Crown, and they unanimously chose Kemp as the person in whom the township was to be vested for the purpose of selling to the Crown on the conditions as stated. There was not, so far as I have heard, one word of dissent, except in one particular. It appeared there was a man of the name of Hoana Puihi, who had residence within the portion shown on the map as being the 4,000 acres which it was intended to sell, and he raised some question about his cultivations and house. But, as I understood it, he waived his objection in consideration of the great advantage it would be to them to have a township, and in consideration of the tenths to be returned to them, but I am instructed now to inform the Commission that he had a private arrangement with Kemp, touching his own house and cultivation, of which I knew nothing. I propose to call him, and he will tell his own story on that point. I say that, so far as I know, and so far as the public meeting was concerned, he waived his objection to the township, and it was unanimously agreed that it should be vested in Kemp, for the purpose I have said. I then pointed out these two blocks that had been settled, and put them on the tracing and left it up, so that anybody who did not happen to be at the meeting, if he came in later on and made objection, should know exactly what he was objecting to, and it could be considered. I then pointed out to the Muaupoko, and specially to Kemp, that the law would require that every person in this title, whether they were registered or certificated, must get something out of the block in his own name or in company with others, and that therefore it would be now necessary to classify the people and allot to everyone something. The classification was proceeded with, and it transpired, so far as I can recollect, that there were certain chiefs who had been admitted to the title, and it was decided to make a complimentary award to them, and I think it was 512 acres. It transpired, on going through the list and classifying them, that there was one man whom nobody knew; but it was at last suggested that his name was in twice and was in one case wrongly written. I said, “There is the name; we will give him a square foot up in the corner, to dispose of him.” It transpired that a number of persons had been omitted from the title of 1873 accidentally, and there was a great deal of discussion amongst them in preparing a list of those persons; it lasted at intervals for days and nights. At last a list was prepared purporting to be a list of those persons, and it contained forty-four names. Well, the list was left stuck up there; I do not remember that any person took charge of it. In Block No. 3 one class of owners, numbering 106 persons, were said to have very superior rights; to be of the first-class, and they were to get 105 acres each, and the block was calculated to give them 105 acres each, and it was distinctly explained to them that the award was really 100 acres, but there were five added to provide for road purposes. We thought the surveying of it was also provided for, so that each man or woman got 100 acres absolutely free. Then came the question of into what class were these forty-four persons to be put; and, so far as I could see, it was unanimously