

Right Hon. R. J. Seddon then moved, That the Bill be reported to the House this day, and that the petition of Raiha Puaha and eleven others be referred to the Government for consideration. This was agreed to. (See I.—3, Reports.)

A letter from Messrs. Stafford, Treadwell, and Field *re* Kapiti Island, received after the Bill had been considered, was read as follows:—

SIR,— Government Insurance Buildings, Panama Street, Wellington, 16th December, 1897.  
*Kapiti Island Reserve Bill.*—We have just learned that this Bill is before the Native Affairs Committee for consideration this morning. We are unaware what attitude the Native owners adopt towards the Bill beyond the fact that several of them have informed us that they are opposed to it.

We are, however, concerned on behalf of several clients who are interested in the island, in particular Mr. Malcolm McLean, the present lessee of the larger portion of the island. This gentleman holds leases of practically the whole of the Rangatira, Kaiwharawhara, and Maraetakaroro Blocks. These leases are not entirely complete, for the reason that in some cases there are signatures wanting, but they are valid documents, which the Native Land Court will confirm. Mr. McLean has for the past eighteen months been in possession under them, and has made his home there, and effected improvements. It would therefore be grossly unfair that the Bill, if favourably considered by the Committee, should not protect our client's leases.

In respect of all portions of the above land to which our client has not an absolutely confirmable lease owing to want of signatures, he is the holder of the balance of the term therein acquired by Mr. H. A. Field, M.H.R., in or about 1881.

Mr. McLean is also the owner by purchase, which has been duly confirmed by the Court, of 12½ acres, being one-fourth of the Rangatira-Kapiti 4A Block.

Our Mr. Field is the owner in fee-simple, under a confirmed transfer, of 12½ acres, part of Rangatira Kapiti No. 4A. Block, which he bought as a building-site for the use of his family in the summer. He is naturally averse to this land being taken from him. He also holds a confirmed mortgage over the interest of Hanikamu te Hiko, containing 100 acres, in the Waiorua Kapiti No. 5 Block, Section No. 2.

We shall be happy to afford any other information which may assist the Committee in this matter.

Yours, &c.,

STAFFORD, TREADWELL, AND FIELD.

The Hon. the Chairman, Native Affairs Committee, House of Representatives.

It was resolved that all evidence in connection with the Kapiti Island Public Reserve Bill be attached to report.

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 15TH DECEMBER, 1897. (Mr. HOUSTON, Chairman.)

HEMI KUTI examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee wish you to state in as few words as possible anything that you have to say in support of the petition against the Bill now before the Committee?—The Committee has before it the petition that we have sent in, and what we have now to say is in support of the request contained in our petition. What we above all other things desire is to retain this land in our possession. This land has been the support—the mother's milk—of our ancestors and ourselves from the time of their coming from Kawhia, and it is the only land now remaining to the Ngatitōa. The Ngatitōa hapu still are, as they have always been, supporters of the Government, and they have sold all their other lands to the Government—more than twenty millions of acres—that is, in both Islands. Well, the purchase-money received by the Ngatitōa for lands sold by them has been spent. We are now at the present day in occupation of the island. We live upon it. From the time of the *Raupatu* (conquest) up to the present day we have been in continuous occupation. During recent years the land has been under lease, and we receive the rents from time to time. Now, our descendants will not be able to live on money, but they will on the land. The money that I alluded to just now as the purchase-money of lands sold to the Crown has melted away; and, as I have said before, this is the only land that we still hold in our possession, and that we would be able to leave to our descendants. Another thing is that Kapiti Island is a desirable possession in this way: By its natural resources it provides a lot of food—birds, fish, potatoes—food of all kinds; in fact, no part of the main-land provides food so abundantly as this island. This, then, is the point of view from which we look upon the present proposal. We ask the Government to take into consideration these facts, and come to our assistance. I was asked to condense what I had to say, but I think I have pretty well stated what we desire.

2. *Hon. J. Carroll.*] What rents are you getting from the island?—Some of it is leased as high as 2s. per acre, some for 1s. per acre, and some less. What I wish to point out is that as soon as these leases have expired our descendants then surviving will go back to the island to live, recognising that it is, as I have said, a place that provides abundant supplies of food.

3. Has any part of the island been sold by the Natives at all?—Yes; the southern end of the island was sold about fifty years ago by Te Rauparaha—the original conquering Te Rauparaha—to Brown.

4. Was Te Rauparaha then in a position to have sold the whole of the island if he had liked?—I do not think he could, because he was not the only chief; the Ngatitōa was a big tribe.

5. *Mr. Monk.*] How many acres were sold?—About 617 acres.

6. *Mr. Stevens.*] What is the total annual amount of the rents received by the Natives?—It is not much. As I have stated just now, some of it is let at 1s. per acre, and some over that price. Of course, there is the 600 acres to be deducted from the 5,000 acres in the island. I should think the average would be over 1s. per acre.

7. Is the average rent 1s. 6d. per acre, do you think?—Well, I do not know what my neighbours are getting—they have entered into a new lease; I think it is on a sliding scale.

8. With whom have they entered into the new lease?—Mr. McLean.