

30. There is no explanation as to that in the Bill; is there any such provision as that in the Bill?—We are endeavouring now, at the present time, to find out some reasonable direction in which it may be framed, but in the present Bill provision is made as to how money may be obtained. Now subsection (2) of section 32 of the Native Lands Settlement and Administration Bill of last session provides: "The Minister, if satisfied after conference with the Minister of Lands, that the proposed works and expenses are reasonable and proper, may, in his discretion, authorise the sums applied for, or any less sum, to be advanced to the Board out of moneys to be appropriated by Parliament out of the Public Works Fund: Provided that the total which under this section may be advanced to any one Board in any one year shall not exceed five thousand pounds."

31. There is nothing in that clause?—What is the good of asking questions like that. We are trying to arrive at something now. Subsection (3) of the same section reads: "The amount of such advance, together with interest thereon at the rate of five pounds per centum per annum, shall, by force of this Act, be a charge upon the income derived from the land benefited by the works, such charge being so adjusted as to be proportionate to the benefit." Supposing the expense incurred in the leasing of a particular block of land reaches as much as 6d. an acre, and the lands are leased for 1s. an acre, well, half a year of the rent pays off the expense.

FRIDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 1899.

Mr. WI PERE's examination continued.

*The Chairman:* When the Committee adjourned yesterday, I understood that Mr. McLean wished to ask Mr. Wi Pere some questions in regard to the statement that he made.

*Mr. Kaihau:* But I have not finished my questions yet.

*The Chairman:* I understood you had. However, I would just remind you not to occupy too much of the time in continuing questioning Mr. Wi Pere.

1. *Mr. Kaihau:* Then, what you said yesterday, Mr. Wi Pere, was, shortly speaking, this: That all the Maori lands in the East Coast district were to be placed under the administration of this Board?—Yes, if the people owning the land handed it over to the Board to administer; but I added that all Native lands in that district which are at present unencumbered would come under that provision of the Board Bill, which prohibits any further purchase of Native land, the lands which are handed over by the owners to the Board for the Board to deal with would be dealt with by the Board, even where such lands handed over by the owners to the Board were encumbered or unencumbered; having been handed over to the Board the Board would administer them. The owners would have a perfect right to hand them over to the Board for the Board to work and administer.

2. Then, if the owners were not willing that the Board should have the control and management of their lands, the Board would have no right to touch them?—That is so. The Board to have no right to interfere with lands which the owners were not willing to submit to the control of the Board; but the owners of such lands would themselves be entitled to farm or otherwise work the land as they saw fit. But what I do say is this: that if the Board is constituted, and if owners of certain lands decline to submit their lands to the control of the Board and neglect to work them themselves, after the lapse of three or four years it should be competent for the Board to step in and compel them to work the lands.

3. Then, I understand that you advocate that this Board Bill should be passed as an entirely optional measure—that it shall be entirely at the option of the owners whether or not they see fit to submit their lands to the control of the Board?—Yes, but that the principal provision with regard to the prohibition of sale contained in the Bill should become law, and apply to all the lands the moment the Bill is passed whether they are encumbered or otherwise; but the administrative powers of the Board should not be exercised until it is seen whether the owners desire that it should be done.

4. That is what I say; shortly speaking, you mean that if the owners are not willing that the Board should administer their lands, the Board will not have power to administer them against the wishes of the owners?—Yes; but if such owner should refuse to submit his land to the control of the Board, and is simply holding on to it for the purpose of letting it grow weeds and briars, and does not intend to utilise the land at all, then a clause should be inserted in the Act empowering the Board to take the control and management of such land out of the hands of such owner. But if the man is working and utilising the land, then the Board would have no right to deprive him of it.

5. Yes, well, I understand that it is entirely optional with the owner?—Yes, what I say is this: the principal desire of Native owners, generally speaking, is that they should retain the mana of their own land. Let them retain the mana of their own land, but they must work the land. If they like to work the land with their own hands, well and good, but if they like to put the Board in the position of their hands and let the Board do the work for them that will also meet the case; but if a man persists in holding on to his land then I desire to say that that man should have no power to lease it to any one, because if this man is allowed to be approached by private Europeans with a view to leasing his land he will simply be, as has always been the case, entirely at the mercy of those unscrupulous people who are known by the names of lawyers, interpreters, and other dishonest people of that kind, and they will simply end in humbugging and hoodwinking him and giving him perhaps 1d. per acre for his land.

6. But that is not a reply to the question?—Yes; but I am giving these discursive replies to questions that are put to me for this reason: I want all my listeners to understand that I am a man who thoroughly grasps the position. I do not want to leave it open for any one of them to