

351. Have you seen any fires coming from the railway towards the plantation?—Yes, I have seen plenty of fires. They are a common occurrence.
352. What is the cause?—The engine.
353. Can you remember a big fire three years ago?—Yes.
354. Where were you?—I was carting bark in the plantation.
355. Do you remember the afternoon train going past?—No, I do not. I was about the shed unloading the bark.
356. When did you first see the fire?—It was on the 16th I saw it.
357. You did not see it on the first day?—No.
358. In what direction was it coming next day?—It was coming from the Whangamarino end of the plantation.
359. I suppose you were one of the men who fought the fire?—Yes, I was the first man there to put it out.
360. Did you go over the part that was damaged and see the damage?—Yes, I have been all over it.
361. Did you see that the fire connected with the swamp and the railway?—Yes, you could see then that the fire had come from the railway.
362. I suppose you had some difficulty in putting it out?—Yes.
363. You sent for assistance?—Assistance came without being sent for.
364. Did the men who came to assist speak of another fire?—Yes.
365. When did it occur?—It was in the Government plantation.
366. On the previous day?—I think so.
367. Did they say it was caused by the engine?—Yes.
368. They had been beating out a fire near the line on the previous day?—Yes.
369. I suppose you see engines passing frequently at nights?—Yes.
370. Do you see them belching out cinders?—I cannot say they do.
371. At any rate, you think the fires are caused by the train?—Yes.
372. Can you remember a fire about a year after the big fire?—No, I was not employed there then.
373. Have you seen Maoris digging on the plantation side of the railway?—No.
374. They have never dug in the big swamp?—Not that I am aware of.
375. Were there Maoris down the line in 1896?—Do you mean a large number of Maoris digging gum?
376. Can you remember of any Maoris about here digging gum?—I do not think so. It was about that time I was away in Hamilton sick.
377. But at the time of the big fire?—At that time there were no Maoris.
378. There were none that season?—No.
379. You saw no one else about who was likely to start the fire?—No.
380. As a witness of the fire, you thoroughly believe it originated from the train?—Yes. At any rate, a year ago I saw a fire started by an engine. I was on the high land at the time, and a train came by, and a fire started immediately afterwards.
381. *Mr. Cooper.*] How far were you away?—Half a mile. Then, the season after the big fire I got my tent burnt. It was about a chain off the line, and the fire started just after a train had passed.
382. Had you left any fire in the tent?—No. It was at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and I was at work at the time.
383. You have known of Maoris being about here?—Yes.
384. But on the 16th December there were none?—No, none were employed.
385. I do not ask you if they were employed?—There was not one about that I am aware of.
386. You cannot say if there were any about on the 15th?—No, there were none about.
387. You did not see any?—No.
388. How far was the shed in which you were working from the place where the fire started on the 15th?—I was two miles away in a straight line.
389. *Mr. Oliphant.*] Would it be two miles away?—No, I do not think it would be.
390. *Mr. Cooper.*] You do not know, then, who was in the swamp on that day?—It was impossible to see.
391. All you know is that Mr. Young had no Maoris in his employment on that day?—No.
392. *Mr. Oliphant.*] Do you remember when the Maoris were digging gum?—I think it was when I was away in Hamilton sick.
393. Have you ever been able to cross the swamp in the direction the fire took?—No.
394. It is not impossible for anybody to cross it?—You can cross it now in one part.
395. At any rate, it is too wet to dig gum?—Yes.
396. You never saw gum-diggers in the swamp?—No.

JOHN FARRELL, SWORN.

397. *Mr. Cooper.*] What are you, Mr. Farrell?—A ganger.
398. You were a ganger in December, 1896?—Yes.
399. Were you in charge of the length here at that time?—Yes. The whole of the part on which the fire took place is within my length.
400. What can you say about the fire on the 15th December?—I reported to the department about the fire.
401. Did you see the origin of it?—No.
402. When did you first see anything of it?—I did not see any fire at all, but I saw where the fire was supposed to have been.