

33. You mentioned the names of three gentlemen to whom you had spoken who considered that the country would be better for having licensed houses?—Yes; there was no talk of any other alternative.

34. Do you think that those persons would look at this question from a travellers' convenience point of view? They were in the habit of travelling about the country?—Yes, they did travel about the country, but I do not think they looked at it from a travellers' point of view.

35. But the convenience-of-a-traveller consideration might have influenced them to a certain extent?—I do not know.

36. Do you favour licenses?—I favour a change, but as to the alternative as between licenses and any other system I am not prepared to say. I am not able to decide upon that point.

37. Do you favour licenses under State control or other licenses?—I do not know anything about that.

38. *Mr. Hall.*] Are the Maoris in favour of having a population vote?—Yes, I think so. *Mr. Ormsby*, who represented the Ngatimaniapotos, brought that up very strongly at the Te Awamutu meeting. They do not know anything about the Gothenburg system.

39. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] How would you propose to give them a vote?—I understand you would have to legislate specially to meet the case of the King-country. I do not see why you should not make special provision to meet the case for all adults in the King-country. You might take a referendum on the question.

TUESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1900.

Mr. W. CUSSEN examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee will be pleased to hear any statement which you may have to make, Mr. Cussen?—Well, I may say I have been in the King-country for about twenty years, on and off. When I first went there there was no sly-grog selling in the country. No grog was allowed in the country, and it was not until the Europeans went into the King-country that the selling of liquor was commenced. Things have very much altered, however, since then, and now there is a very great deal of sly-grog selling carried on, and I know for a fact that spirituous liquors are taken up into the King-country and sold at 7s. 6d. per gallon to the Natives. There is scarcely a settlement in the country where there is no sly-grog selling. If any member of the Committee has any questions to ask I will be pleased to answer.

2. How long ago is it since you first went into the King-country?—I should say about twenty years.

3. Have you been in the King-country recently?—Yes; I came down from the King-country about a fortnight ago.

4. I believe you have been living there. Is that so?—Yes; I have been living there off and on. I have been there every year—sometimes for six or eight months.

5. What part of the King-country have you been in?—Well, I have been pretty well right through it.

6. You know, of course, that there are certain parts of the King-country—the Waikato electorate, for instance—where licenses are granted?—Yes. There is a licensed house at Tokaanu and at some other places, I believe.

7. Do you know the frontier of the King-country?—Yes, I do.

8. Did you say that some twenty years ago there was no sly-grog selling in the King-country?—Yes, I said so. There was none.

9. But there is sly-grog selling there now?—Yes, in every settlement, liquor of the worst description.

10. Do you think it possible for the police to stop it?—It is quite impossible.

11. Do you think the police have been doing their duty in trying to stop the sly-grog selling?—Yes. It is impossible to stop it as things are at present.

12. Do you think it would be possible to smuggle liquor into the King-country from the sea-board?—Yes, it is quite possible. It can be taken up by pack-horses.

13. Are there any hotels near what we may call the frontier?—Yes; there are licensed houses at Kibikihi, Te Awamutu, and at Alexandra, now called "Pirongia."

14. Are there any Native settlements near these places?—Yes; one of the largest settlements is at Whatiwhatihoe, only three miles from Alexandra.

15. And Whatiwhatihoe is within the prohibited district?—Yes.

16. And it is only three miles, you say, from Alexandra, where there is a licensed house?—Yes.

17. I suppose, too, there are Natives on the other side; I mean in the prohibited district?—Yes.

18. Is there any difference between the conduct of the Natives without and within the prohibited districts?—No; they are about the same. Some are very temperate.

19. How about the Natives at Otorohanga and Te Kuiti; is there any difference there?—Only at the time when the Land Court is sitting. There is a deal of drinking then, but at other times they are fairly sober. In the settlements where they keep the grog you very seldom see any drunkenness. I myself never saw a man drunk in his own settlement.

20. Do you mean that they go away from home to drink?—Yes. They drink most when they are attending the Land Court meetings.

21. What has been the general effect of imposing fines upon the sly-grog offenders?—Directly they are summoned they sell as much grog as possible, in order to make up for the fines.

22. In your opinion the police have done their duty, and it is absolutely impossible to stop the sly-grog selling?—Yes.