

93. Does this Bill relieve the trustees?—It relieves them, so far as I know, of the trust.

94. And you do not know whether that relief of the trust relieves them of all responsibility up to that?—Whatever responsibility was theirs this relieves them.

95. Is there not a paragraph in clause 3 affecting this? Does not that alter the power of the Native Land Act? I see under this clause, that under certain conditions, the bank may take possession of the land after exposing it to auction?—No; that has been explained by Mr. Bell in answer to another question. "The bank shall not without the consent of the Council sell or cause to be sold any of the lands comprised in the securities before the thirty-first day of August, one thousand nine hundred and four; but on and after that date the bank may without such consent sell the whole or any of the lands comprised in the security whereof it is then mortgagee, either under the conduct of the Registrar of the Supreme Court or otherwise, and the bank shall not be required to give any of the notices required in respect of Native lands before a sale by the mortgagee thereof; and nothing in any Act relating to Native land shall prevent the bank from becoming the purchaser of any of such lands sold under the conduct of the Registrar of the Supreme Court; and it shall not be necessary for the bank to wait until the said thirty-first day of August, one thousand nine hundred and four, before giving notice by advertisement and otherwise of its intention to sell all or any of such lands on or after that date." That is an agreement arrived at between the two parties to obviate the necessity of giving notices.

96. Are you able to speak upon the question of putting the administration of these lands into the hands of the Native Council?—Yes.

97. Supposing I myself, for instance, had a strong objection to handing over the land to the Native Council, what is the move to prevent competent business-men from administering the lands instead of the Native Council?—I think the Native Council would be a competent body.

98. Do you think the Native Council is a good body to administer an estate in the condition in which this one is?—I think it is possible that they will administer it all right.

99. If you were dealing with a large complicated estate of your own would you hand it over to the Maori Council or into the hands of good business-men? Which do you think would result in the greatest realisation of an estate?—Well, perhaps, a good business-man who was fitted and used his own judgment and discretion would be the best man, but, from a public point of view, I think it is more satisfactory to have a statutory body responsible for the management than a private individual, considering all the complications. Of course, the management of the estate itself can be put in the hands of a capable man, but the authoritative power will be with the Council.

100. I think this Bill places the power absolutely in the Maori Council?—Yes; they will be responsible, but a manager will be appointed.

101. Then, do I understand that the control of these lands will be primarily in the hands of the Maori Council, who will delegate their powers, but that the bank will be the real controlling body?—The bank will keep its control over the estate to a certain extent until it is paid off. These lands will rest in the Maori Council. The Maori Council at any time, with the bank, can arrange in regard to the realisation of the lands, the proceeds, of course, going to the bank in reduction of the debt. The management of the stock and of the land itself can be arranged with the bank for the period of the two years.

102. The administration of the estate will be in the form of the Maori Council?—Yes.

103. Do you think that is the best form of administration?—I think so, under the circumstances.

104. Putting "under the circumstances" aside, do you think that any four Natives who are likely to be appointed to the Maori Council would be better trustees, so to speak, than the two trustees who have had the estates for some years past?—Yes, taking other things into consideration.

105. You have a very humble opinion, then, of the trustees themselves?—The two trustees who have been the trustees in the past never had the management of those lands. They were merely the nominal trustees, and any bad results that have obtained as the outcome of that administration cannot be settled on the trustees, but with those who were actually engaged on the management. The Maori Council now will have this advantage over the present trustees: they will have the titles vested in them, and they will be directly responsible for any failure or success of management. The trustees never held that position.

106. Then, do you think the Government should not be induced to alter the provisions of the Bill and allow this estate to be wound up by competent business-men?—Well, there is nothing to prevent that from being done, but I do not think it would be right. I think if you want to retain the confidence of those immediately interested—the Native owners—I think they should be allowed a voice in it.

107. Mr. Malet, in giving evidence, spoke of the original sum secured being £58,000?—In 1892 it was about that.

108. Will there be no accounts procurable for the Committee to see how that debt has increased?—No; but we have come to an agreement to have these accounts gone into and settled by competent accountants.

109. I should like to get an idea of the interest and law expenses: is that obtainable?—That was the point of difference between the bank and ourselves. We say we could never get any accounts.

110. Did the bank ever supply you with accounts—with interest-charges every year?—No.

111. Or do you know how much was paid in litigation?—No; that was the trouble all along. There was no way in which the trustees could arrive at a knowledge of the accounts. The accounts in a general sort of way were sometimes submitted to the trustees, and sometimes to the Validation Court Judge, but there was no regular treatment of those accounts at all.

112. Have the trustees no power to examine the accounts?—We had a Receiver, but the bank ignored the Receiver, and would have nothing to do with him.