

lands has possibly to proceed before he secures a registrable title to the property. With few amendments, necessitated by amendments in legislation, his statement will apply to-day if "free trade" in Native lands were resumed.

Mr. Ernest Bell, in reply to the questions put by the Commission of 1891, said (see G.—1, 1891, pp. 162–63),—

"The person dealing may not have had previous experience. He may be a *bona fide* settler going for the first time to take up a block of land, and he has entered into a contract on his own account with the Natives for lease or purchase at a certain consideration. If he is wise he next consults a lawyer, and has a search made, which elicits the fact that there is a large number of Native Land Court fees outstanding, which he has to pay, and an enormous survey lien, which he is also called upon to pay. The piece of land for which he is negotiating may be 100 acres out of, say, 1,000 covered by the lien. He is told, however, that he must pay the whole of the survey lien on the 1,000 acres, because there is no person who can or will apportion the survey lien to the 100 acres. He then has his deeds prepared, and he pays interpreters in different places where signatures have to be obtained for the usual indorsement and interpretation. He then takes his deed to the Stamp Office, as he has to have it stamped before it passes the Trust Commissioner. He is there told that rates have been accumulating upon this block since the year 1, and he is mulcted, first of all, in a proportion of the rates that have accumulated on the land. He has probably had some difficulty in getting all the signatures, and perhaps he has not been able, through the Natives living in different parts, and through the difficulties that are always connected with the obtaining of Native signatures, to get all the signatures within the three months from the date of the first signature. The Stamp Office then proceed to assess the duty. They first of all assess the Native duty of 10 per cent. upon the capital value of the lease, or 10 per cent. upon the principal. They then tell him that, as he has not presented the deed within the prescribed three months from the date of the first execution, he must pay 100 per cent. fine upon this 10 per cent. duty. . . . They then tell him that the ordinary duty is at the rate of 7s. 6d. upon every £50 (in the case of a purchase), and that he is fined the maximum penalty for the ordinary duty also. He then has to pay the fee required in the Trust Commissioner's Court, and the Trust Commissioner may make requisitions before giving his certificate. Either before or after he has passed the Trust Commissioner for adult signatures he has to go to the Supreme Court for the passing of the alienation of minor's interests by the trustees. There are certain affidavits and fees which have to be made and paid in the Supreme Court, and he has to pay his lawyer's bill for going before the Judge. After he has got his deed through these ordeals he presents it for registration. He is then informed that it appears he has been purchasing from some successors. Evidence is required that the succession duties on the succession orders have been paid. He probably has never heard about the succession duties at all, but he is told that he cannot register until he pays them. He then has to go to the trouble of getting from the Property-tax Commissioner an assessment of the deceased Natives' share. He then has to prepare the papers for the Stamp Office and send them up for execution. The interpreter has again to be called in and the whole business gone over again. When the deceased's estate duties are paid—and he has also to pay fees for copies of succession orders to be lodged with his deeds—he then is told that upon payment of certain other fees, and probably one or two liens which were omitted before, he will get his deed registered. And after all this he may be told that his title is not good, and a caveat may be lodged. A petition may be presented to Parliament complaining of the whole transaction. Then the petition is considered by the Native Affairs Committee, and the unfortunate man has to come down to Wellington, attend before this Committee, and pay all his witnesses' expenses. The Native Affairs Committee refer the petition to the Government, and the Government may order a further inquiry to be made by the Trust Commissioner. During the recess the Trust Commissioner holds the inquiry, and states that he is satisfied with the transaction, and thinks that the title ought to issue. By the time that this