

1909.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

No. 220/1909. PETITION OF FELIX CAMPBELL AND 476 OTHERS, *RE* GREY NATIVE LEASES TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

(MR. JENNINGS, CHAIRMAN.)

Brought up 15th December, 1909, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 8TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1909.

Ordered, "That a Native Affairs Committee be appointed, consisting of ten members, to consider all petitions, reports, returns, and other documents relating to affairs specially affecting the Native race that may be brought before the House this session, and from time to time to report thereon to the House; with power to call for persons and papers; three to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Te Rangihirua (Dr. Buck), Mr. Greenslade, Mr. Herries, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Kaihau, Mr. Mander, Hon. Mr. Ngata, Mr. Parata, Mr. Rhodes, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. CARROLL.)

PETITION.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of New Zealand, now assembled.

THE humble petition of the undersigned lessees, sublessees, tenants, and residents of the Native portion of the Town of Greymouth sheweth,—

1. That the lessees of Native reserves numbered 31 and 32, Greymouth, labour under serious disabilities in having to pay heavy ground-rents, with periodical revaluations every twenty-one years, to the Native owners for the sections of land comprising the Maori Reserve in the Town of Greymouth.

2. That the reserve numbered 31 contains 600 acres, about 400 acres of which is closely built upon, and comprises the business portion of the town. Europeans settled upon this land forty-five years ago, and at that time the said reserve was worth at the outside £300. Since then the Borough Council has expended £18,719 in improving this portion of the municipality by constructing streets, footpaths, drainage-works, and gas and water supply, and maintenance of the same, and the Harbour Board has constructed the harbour wharves at a cost to date of £670,000, to the betterment of the Native property.

3. That the unimproved value of the Native Reserve is now about £110,000, and the Natives draw about £3,000 per year rents. The Natives themselves have not spent one shilling in the development of their estate. They have not, as a European would by law be compelled to do, laid out and made any roads, footpaths, drainage, or other works; neither have they given any land for public purposes or health resorts.

4. That the title under which the lessees hold is a twenty-one-years lease with right of renewal on readjustment of the rent, which rent in the event of disagreement is settled by arbitration, the whole cost of which must be borne by the lessee.

5. That the Public Trustee, who acts as trustee for the Native owners, has now commenced to revalue the land as the leases fall in, and assess the rental at 5 per cent. on the unimproved or rating value, so that every twenty-one years the Maoris will be paid more than the actual value of their land, which will press very heavily on the lessees.

6. That it was never anticipated, when the reserve was settled, that the unimproved values should be increased as they have been, and that the Natives should be exempt from any liability in respect of cost of upkeep and rates.

7. That the Natives should be placed on the same footing as Europeans as regards laying out, formation, and metalling roads, footpaths, bridges, and drainage-works before dealing with their lands.