

FRIDAY, 21ST JULY, 1854.

PRESENT :—

Mr. Hart, in the Chair.

Mr. King

Dr. Monro.

Mr. Sewell

Mr. M'Lean was present to give evidence.

In answer to the preliminary questions put by the Chairman,

Mr. M'Lean described himself as a Commissioner for the purchase of Native lands; resident in Auckland.

The examination was then continued by the Chairman.

Have you had any and what opportunities of becoming acquainted with the character of the Natives and their transactions.

Yes, I have known the Natives of New Zealand for these last fourteen years, and since the year 1844 I have had several transactions with them connected with the purchase of land. I have found them very fair in most of those transactions in adhering to their agreements when thoroughly understood.

Do you think any large number would repudiate an engagement?

Certainly not, if they thoroughly understood the nature of the engagement.

Looking at the New Zealand Company's purchase deeds, do you think that the Natives at the time understood them?

I do not think the Natives at the time understood them.

Why do you think so?

Because the subject was foreign to their ideas.

Is there anything on the face of those deeds to show that the Natives were aware of what they were doing?

I do not think that they were fully aware of what they were doing. They were aware that they received certain articles of goods for lands to which there were no defined boundaries, according to their understanding, and they were not under the impression that they were finally alienating that land, or any portion of it, but that they were merely giving a right to the Europeans to settle upon it as a protection against other tribes.

Looking at the names of the places mentioned in the deeds, and the names of the Chiefs signing, were those Chiefs entitled to dispose of all the lands mentioned in the deeds?

Certainly not of all the lands. I think the claims of the persons who signed were very limited in comparison with the quantity they sold.

How were the rights of the Natives to land to be ascertained?

By occupation, or conquest followed by occupation.

What do you mean by occupation?

I mean the right of cultivating, fishing, bird-snaring in the forest, and various other rights that the New Zealand tribes exercise over the district in possession.

What methods were open to the Government for obtaining possession of New Zealand for colonising purposes?

A fair and equitable purchase of the lands from the different tribes who had a claim to it throughout the Islands. I mean by a fair and equitable purchase, such a one as would take sufficient time to enquire into the rights of the different tribes. It was not possible to take possession of New Zealand for that purpose by conquest.

Did you know Mr. Barrett?

Yes; he was a whaler, residing in Queen Charlotte's Sound, and had a great deal to do with the Company's purchase. He was not competent to translate the deeds.

How many acres of land are there in this island?

28,000,000 of acres.

Of these, how many have been purchased?

4,500,000 of undisputed purchases.

Do you know what was the quantity in 1847?

Not more than 1,000,000 of acres.

How long do you suppose it would take to purchase all the land now unpurchased?