102. Are you sure of your ground—that if the applications are lodged they must then be heard by the Commissioners?—No. We are at their mercy. If they choose to gazette them they must be heard or struck out.

103. I understand what you suggest to the Commissioners is that we should make a presentation to the Government with reference to the 20th March being the last day for lodging applications, and that there should be a reduction in the amount of fees demanded. You would suggest that the scale of fees be modified, and that there should be a temporary cessation of hearing?—That the time of hearing should rest with the party applying, to take place, say, within six weeks or a month after the next session of Parliament.

104. *Mr. Mackay.*] Until the end of the present year?—I should not wish to deprive the Natives of any right of relief where they have any *bona fides*. A month after the session ends would suffice.

104A. *Mr. Rees:* It is doubtful if the Commissioners (Messrs. Edwards and Ormsby) have power to adjourn. The Legislature seems to have run away with the idea of endeavouring to make the Commission self-supporting. If you will be good enough to let the Commissioners have the report you spoke of they will be much obliged to you.

WI PERE sworn and examined.

105. *Mr. Rees.*] What are you?—I am a Native chief residing in this district. I am acquainted generally with the procedure of the Native Land Court in ascertaining title to Native lands. The expense the Natives are put to is very great. I am aware of instances where the Natives have had to come a long distance to attend sittings of the Court held in the neighbourhood of European settlements. In the case of the Native Land Court sitting at Cambridge, the Natives had to come from Taupo and Rotorua, and other distant places. The expenses were so great that the value of the land was absorbed in the outlay incurred attending the sittings of the Court. A company that supplied the Natives with provisions charged for it, and the amount they had to pay equalled the value of the land. There was nothing left for the Natives. The Waipiro Block is another instance. The Natives who attended the investigation of title of that block have no land here. They had to pay for the cost of living. They were brought here, a distance of some seventy or eighty miles from their homes, to attend the Court at Gisborne. In some cases the whole of the land goes in expenses, in others a large portion of it—that is, for supplying food for those who have to attend. In many cases, where they have friends, the burden falls on the latter, as they supply the food, not that they had any interest in the land being dealt with. I am aware of the Nuhaka case, in which the Natives were compelled to go a long distance to the Court to have their claim investigated. The proper place for dealing with that claim was Wairoa. Yet, notwithstanding that, the Natives were compelled to go to Hastings. The Natives resident about Hastings had no interest in the land. I know of other cases that the investigation of title has been commenced in one Court, and then shifted to another Court, at a different place of hearing. In some cases the hearings would take place at some distant locality, through the influence brought to bear on Judges by persons having interested motives of their own. In some cases the Natives themselves would have the cases heard at a distant place, so as to prevent those having a claim from attending, and getting put in as owners. Thus it would happen that persons having minor claims would not go to the trouble of attending. They would not be able to find the necessary money to enable them to attend and pay the Court fees; consequently their claims would not be entertained by the Court. The fees demanded by the Courts is very heavy indeed, and frequently injustice is, in consequence, done to the Natives. If the money is not paid each day the Court will not hear the case. A Native, therefore, if he has not money, must forfeit his claim to have his case heard, or rely upon the generosity of his friends, who may perhaps have some regard for him. If the fees are not paid he is excluded altogether from the case. It is not a Native custom for each person to have his portion of land individualised. Prior to the advent of the pakeha there was no such thing as individual ownership. The land was held by hapus. If in rough country each owner were to have his share individualised the cost entailed for survey, adjudication, and other expenses would amount fully to 5s. an acre, and the land itself might not amount to more than 3s. an acre in value. The total value of the land in such cases would be absorbed in costs so incurred, and nothing would remain for the Natives. The Tahora Block was one of large area. The title was ascertained at Opotiki. A large number of Natives had to attend. They had no money. I had to provide for them, and the expenses incurred at the hearing, which I paid, amounted to £200. The case was first heard at Opotiki. A rehearing subsequently took place at Gisborne; but the expenses at the latter place were much less. The country is poor. It (the Tahora Block) is subdivided into areas for the several hapus, but if it were so divided that each person got his individual share he would receive about 50 acres each. The land would not pay for such surveys. It would have to be sold to pay expenses, and no good would result to the Natives from such a mode of subdivision. The area of the Tahora Block is over 200,000 acres. I am aware that there are certain lands held under joint tenancy. There are lands held under Crown grants issued under "The Poverty Bay Grants Act, 1869." On a grantee dying, if he had not parted with his interest, it reverted not to his next-of-kin, but to the survivors in the grant. These lands are mostly held by Europeans. In some cases the judgment of the Courts is good, and at other times it is not. A decision in rehearing is final. In some cases the Natives are satisfied with the judgment delivered by the Court. In others they are not. Instances are known of cases in which the parties before the Court, although not having any proper claim to the land, succeed in making out and establishing a strong case, and are consequently admitted as owners. The Court is deceived by the evidence they put forth. If a person attempts to contradict such a witness the Court objects, and will tell such a person to sit down. Now, in such instances, if the cases came before a Committee of Natives they could speedily detect the falsehoods in the evidence,