

Henare Potae, Meiha Ropata, Raniera Turoa, Tuta Nihoniho, and others. They have spoken to me on the subject, and as to the direction legislation was likely to take. I saw from their views that they were alive to all that was going on when they were putting these questions to me.

158. *Mr. Carroll.*] From your knowledge of the Natives in the past and up to the present day, do you think that they have the confidence in their chiefs and leading men that they used to have? Would they intrust the control of their property in the same way that they used to?—Not blindly. There are certain principal chiefs that they respect in their tribes, but generally they would not. They rather mistrust a good many of them.

159. That has been brought about by the action of the chiefs themselves?—Yes. They have simply betrayed the trust reposed in them for their own benefit.

160. In fact, they regard them with suspicion?—Generally they do, for the very reason that in many cases of leasing, where the rents have been received by the receivers, they have not distributed the money among the people.

161. And do they not entertain some suspicion with regard to the Government in reference to dealings connected with the past?—No; I think not. They look to the Government in a more responsible way—in a different light from independent chiefs. If a method were devised whereby the revenues derived from the lands would be administered through the Government it should be laid down very clearly, so that no suspicions would arise.

162. *Mr. Mackay.*] The rents would be paid direct to the beneficiaries?—Of course, in the administration by the chiefs they have never been bound by any laws.

163. *Mr. Carroll.*] Was not that the objection the Natives had to “The Native Land Administration Act, 1886”? Was it not the fear that the Government would resume power over the land?—No; I think it was the heavy fees that they objected to. There were so many contingent expenses in connection with the laying-off of roads, &c., all of which were deducted from the land, the Natives having no say or controlling voice. That is what frightened them.

164. Was it not because they knew that the money received would be handled by the Government officer?—Yes, subject to all these deductions; but the Natives had no say in the matter.

165. *Mr. Rees.*] Was it not an element of their distrust that they lost all control of their lands?—Yes; they had no say whatever in the matter.

166. They had to assent to bring in their lands?—Yes.

167. Do you think, if that Act provided for a species of oversight for the Natives, and the moneys of each block to be distinctly set apart, the Natives to have a partial control and to make reserves for themselves, that some such plan as that would do?—Yes; I think it would. I think it was because the Natives lost full control, and on account of the heavy charges, that they were afraid to act under the Native Land Administration Act.

168. Do you think, where the Natives would agree among themselves to appoint a limited number to control and direct what should be done with the land, do you think they would work in concert with the Government—that that would be satisfactory to the Natives?—I have in view that there would be some sort of control of that sort.

169. *Mr. Carroll.*] Suppose there were a hundred owners in a block, a Committee would be appointed, intrusted with the power of leasing the land, and when they wished to lease that land they would have to speak to the Government officer: would you approve of that?—Were not those the terms of the Administration Act of 1886?

*Mr. Rees:* No. The Commissioner did everything under that Act.

*Witness* (in reply to *Mr. Carroll's* last question): Yes, of course. That is the same idea that the Natives should retain some control over the dealings with their land.

170. *Mr. Carroll.*] Suppose that principle were agreed upon, would you make it compulsory to appoint that Committee?—

*Mr. Rees:* It was optional under the Act of 1886. They could do it or not do it.

*Witness:* Where there were good grounds for an Act of compulsion I would say Yes—in the case, for instance, of a block of land lying idle.

171. *Mr. Rees.*] That would be all such blocks? That is what *Mr. Carroll* wants your opinion upon. Would it be advisable to leave it to the option of the parties, or would you say it should be the law?—Before doing that you should first ascertain what lands the Natives required for their own purposes.

172. If provision were made in the first instance for lands that they required, would it be well to act so with the balance? This would more particularly affect large blocks of land in the interior—land adapted for large runs?—Yes. It would undoubtedly be to the advantage of the Natives to have these lands made available for settlement.

173. *Mr. Carroll.*] I want to deal with one class of cases—rough land in the interior—what we may call the waste lands of the Maoris, where it would be necessary to spend money in improvements before the land could be made productive. Do you think in such cases the system mentioned just now would be the most satisfactory for dealing with those lands?—I say, Yes, decidedly. I do not hesitate. I do not hesitate in saying that it is to the benefit of the Europeans and Natives to have such a system, but more particularly to the owners of lands at a distance from European centres.

174. Those are lands that have passed through the Court, having a large number of owners, and are utterly unworkable under the present system. Now we come to lands more adjacent to European centres—lands like Makauri, Ruangarehu, Kaiti, &c. Would you apply the same system to these?—Well, I think, if they were not being utilised, I should say Yes.

175. Would you not think that this class of lands—lands near European centres—were fit lands for individualisation?—No. We have lots of instances of it. You can at once tell the land near European centres that belongs to the Natives. They do not utilise their land. They have too much land, and they do not use it, they have so much. Unless the land is in a state of production the Natives should be compelled to make it productive.